



Fair Start Scotland Evaluation Report 4: Overview of Year 3 (October 2021)



ECONOMY AND LABOUR MARKET

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1. Executive summary

Fair Start Scotland (FSS) is Scotland's first fully devolved employability support service. FSS was launched on 3 April 2018, with the aim of supporting 38,000 people towards and into the labour market, over an initial three year period. The key focus for the service is to provide tailored and personalised support to all those who participate.

This is the fourth FSS evaluation report published by the Scottish Government (SG). This report presents an overview of evaluation research relating to the third year of service delivery from 1 April 2020 up to 31 March 2021, and includes:

- a telephone survey of 1,027 FSS participants
- local area case studies in Fife, Greenock and Motherwell
- a survey of 349 individuals who left FSS early
- telephone interviews with 19 FSS participants
- survey of FSS providers on employment outcomes
- an economic evaluation of FSS
- analysis of Management Information data of the 10,357 participants who joined FSS in the third year

Reach of FSS

- FSS received 14,000 referrals in the third year (with 74% of those who were referred joining the service) and 10,357 people joined the service in the third year. This is a decrease from the 12,077 that joined FSS in Year 2, but demonstrates an improved rate of successful referrals over the three years (by 16 percentage points compared with Year 1 and by 5 percentage points compared with Year 2 of FSS).
- Compared to the unemployed population of Scotland, women, young people (aged 16-24), individuals from ethnic minorities, older individuals and those living in rural areas were underrepresented in the third year of FSS.¹ However, the service saw a higher proportion of disabled individuals, those aged 25-34, individuals with disabilities who had also been unemployed for more than two years, and those living in the 15% most deprived areas compared with the overall unemployed population of Scotland.
- Compared to the first and second year of delivery, Year 3 saw improvements in the number of women, young people (16-34) and those living in rural areas joining the service. However there were lower proportions of those with disabilities, older individuals, those from the 15% most deprived areas and those with disabilities and who were unemployed for more than two years.

¹ It should be noted that there was an increase in the proportion of missing demographic information during Year 3 and therefore results should be treated with a degree of caution.

- Just under a fifth of participants who engaged in the participant telephone survey were from a priority family group, identified as being more at risk of child poverty.

Motivation & Early Leavers

- Participation in FSS had a positive effect on motivation to find employment for 61% of participants in the telephone survey, with 35% reporting that their motivation to find work had 'increased a lot'.
- However there was some indication that those who have been out of work for longer periods, and those limited by a long term health condition felt less strongly about returning to work.
- The barriers to employment most commonly cited by participants were impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic (35%), lack of skills, qualifications and experience (14%) and lack of suitable jobs in their local area (14%).
- Of the 10,357 who joined FSS in the third year, 3,704 (36%) left the service early (i.e. left the service before the end of the pre-employment support period of 12-18 months and without having achieved a job outcome). This is significantly lower than the early leaver rate compared to Year 2 which was 51%. Young people (aged 16-24), those with a conviction and those who did not receive benefits were more likely to leave the service early than those who did not have these characteristics.
- The results of a survey conducted with a proportion of early leavers suggest that the most common reasons for leaving the service early were: participants didn't find the service useful (36%); they felt it wasn't being adapted to meet their needs (15%); or they had found employment (15%).
- The three most commonly mentioned recommendations suggested by early leavers to prevent participants from leaving early included: improving communication between the service providers and FSS participants; suggesting more tailored job opportunities; and being better at taking participants' specific needs into account when providing the service.

Process: Referral and Service Delivery

- Providers who participated in this year's local area case studies discussed the effects of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as their responses. Providers identified a number of positives including their capacity to switch to remote working with participants and pivoting towards the use of social media to generate referrals. Providers felt that a key strength of the FSS was its delivery model, in particular its flexibility and capacity to adapt to the changes brought on by the pandemic.

- It was also however noted that some of the improvements seen at the level of local delivery in last year's report, such as improved relationships between providers and local stakeholders had stalled to some extent. This is likely to have been caused or at least exacerbated by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Related to this were a number of challenges which were identified by providers and local stakeholders, most notably that they felt the local employability landscape in each area remains cluttered and confusing to navigate for participants as well as those engaged in the delivery of employability services.
- Providers also fed back that they felt the profile of participants they had been seeing since the onset of the pandemic had shifted towards those closer to the labour market and who therefore tended to have fewer barriers to employment.

Employability support

- As with previous years, participants were generally very positive about the usefulness of the support that they received. Also in-keeping with previous year's evaluation findings, the forms of support rated highest in terms of usefulness were not conventional forms of employability support but specialist support such as help with an addiction, help managing finances or debt and support for a physical health condition.
- Just over two fifths of telephone survey respondents who were in employment recalled being offered some type of in-work support. While survey respondents remained generally positive about the form of in-work support that they received, - with 77% noting that they found the development of an in-work support action plan useful and 80% noting the same with regards to one-to-one appointments - these ratings of usefulness have declined compared to last year's findings.
- There was some variation across different groups with regards to finding different types of pre-employment support useful, e.g. individuals from minority ethnic groups found several types of support less useful than white individuals.
- Two thirds of the telephone survey respondents reported no difficulty accessing support during the periods when government guidelines restricted the ability to meet in-person. However, 17% reported not feeling comfortable using technology and video conferencing, and 12% reported lack of access to the internet and lack of access to devices/technology.

Values and principles

- Consistent with previous years, a clear majority of participants rated the values and principles of FSS highly. 95% of respondents stated that they were treated with dignity and respect by FSS and 82% felt that the service took account of their individual needs and circumstances.

- 83% also felt they had choices about the support they received, 84% reported that the service offered support to improve their general quality of life and wellbeing, and 83% reported feeling they were in control of their progress.
- Similar to previous findings there were however variations in participant views of the service depending on their demographic characteristics, with women and those from ethnic minorities somewhat less likely to rate the service as highly as men and white individuals.

Moving towards work

- For those FSS participants for whom sufficient time has elapsed to allow for recording of employment outcomes, the FSS Management Information data demonstrates that 35% had moved into work. Further, 23% of these participants sustained employment for 3 months, 18% sustained employment for 6 months and 15% sustained employment for 12 months.
- There are some groups for whom starting and sustaining work seems to be more difficult, such as those who are disabled, lone parents, those with convictions, individuals from rural areas and those who had been previously unemployed for more than two years.
- With regards to those who moved into work the most common types of job included: elementary occupations (28%); sales and customer service occupations (16%); and caring, leisure and other service occupations (14%).
- Analysis of data collected by providers suggests that the proportion of individuals who moved into work and were receiving the living wage was 65% over the course of three years of delivery. It was noted that this figure had improved to 84% for Year 3 participants.
- Similarly, across the three years of delivery, 47% of participants who moved into work were employed full-time – with this increasing to 60% of participants for Year 3.

Economic Evaluation

- An economic evaluation of FSS using a social cost benefit analysis model, developed by the Department for Work and Pensions, demonstrated that FSS provided a positive return on investment with benefit-cost ratios of 1.4, 1.6, and 2.0 from the perspectives of participants, public finances and society, respectively.
- Findings suggested that there were considerable variations in the cost effectiveness of the service at a regional level, and dependent on the level of support that participants required.

- In particular it was noted that the lower than anticipated costs (when compared to FSS's original business case) were due to FSS attracting a larger proportion of individuals who were closer to the labour market than originally intended.

Reflections on Three Years of Evaluation

- This section of the report utilised evidence collected across the three years of evaluation and assessed these against the stated aims of FSS.
- It found that while FSS had performed well to date in relation to certain aspects, including delivering a service which embodies fairness, dignity, respect and voluntary participation and to some extent with reference to commitment to delivering a person-centred service, that there remained room for improvement with regards to its goals around delivering job outcomes, facilitating local alignment and integration and supporting those further from the labour market.

2. Introduction

2.1 Purpose

This is the fourth evaluation report published by the Scottish Government (SG) on Fair Start Scotland (FSS). This report presents an overview of research relating to the third year of service delivery (April 2020 - March 2021).

The report aims to answer the following questions:

- Who engaged with FSS?
- How well did the process of referral and service delivery work in Year 3?
- What has been participants' experience of the support they received?
- How well has FSS embodied its values and principles?
- Has FSS helped participants to move towards work?
- Does FSS represent value for money?
- How well has FSS achieved its main goals over the first three years of delivery?

It aims to do this by presenting an overview of findings from a variety of data sources, including:

- Three local area case studies in Motherwell, Fife and Greenock undertaken by independent contractors Rocket Science UK Ltd and Blake Stevenson. The case studies take an in-depth look at the local delivery of FSS via those who participated in the service as well as those who were involved in providing it. This includes FSS service providers, local and national stakeholders, and FSS participants. Individual² participant stories are included throughout the report.
- A telephone survey of 1,027 FSS participants undertaken by independent contractor IFF Research Ltd. Participants were a mix of those who had started in the third year of FSS service, and follow up interviews with those who joined in the first and second years of delivery.³
- Analysis of FSS service provider Management Information data on the demographics and background characteristics of the FSS participants who joined in the third year of delivery. In addition analysis was also conducted on a dataset which contains details of the types of employment participants moved into, where relevant.

² Reported under pseudonyms.

³ Please note that for the Year 3 telephone survey the new sample of FSS participants was drawn from a cohort of participants who joined FSS between Jan - Dec 2020. The longitudinal sample was drawn from those who joined the service between Jan - Dec 2019 and between Apr - Dec 2018. Further details on the telephone survey methodology can be found in Appendix 1: Evaluation methodology.

- An online survey of 349 participants who left FSS early.⁴
- 19 interviews conducted with FSS participants across Scotland by SG researchers. Participant interviewees were selected on the basis of having certain demographic characteristics known to be associated with either lower levels of engagement with FSS or poorer outcomes.
- Survey of FSS providers on FSS participants employment outcomes.
- An independent economic evaluation of FSS conducted by Alma Economics which determined value for money through the use of a social cost benefit analysis model and other value for money measures, as well as exploring the wider social impact of the service.

Further information about the evaluation methods used to gather the findings reported here can be found in Appendix 1.

Full details of the findings from the local area case studies, the participant telephone survey and the economic evaluation are published in three separate reports on the Scottish Government website, alongside this overview report.

2.2 Background

Fair Start Scotland is Scotland's first fully devolved employment support service. Employability powers were devolved through the Scotland Act 2016 and first exercised through the one year transitional services Work First Scotland and Work Able Scotland. The learning from those services and the overriding principles of dignity and respect were taken forward in FSS.

On 4 October 2017 the then Minister for Business, Fair Work and Skills, Jamie Hepburn MSP, announced the award of contracts up to £96 million to deliver FSS, with provision to be delivered by a mixed economy of public, private and third sector suppliers, in nine contract areas (Lots) across Scotland. In July 2020, Mr Hepburn announced the extension of service delivery for a further two years to March 2023. See Appendix 2 for more detailed information on the FSS service providers and contract areas.

Fair Start Scotland originally launched on 3 April 2018, with the aim of supporting 38,000 people over three years. The key focus for FSS is to provide tailored and personalised support to all those who take part.

Key elements of the service are:

- Participation is entirely voluntary

⁴ Early leavers are defined as those who leave FSS before the end of the pre-employment support period without having achieved a job outcome.

- 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 offers pre-work support of 12-18 months
- The service offers in-work support for up to 12 months
- Those who require specialist support to help them find work can expect to receive it
- There are national standards to ensure everyone receives a consistent quality of support across the nine geographic contract areas

The 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 public.

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

The [first FSS evaluation report](#) was published in June 2019, and covered implementation and early delivery in the first six months of services (to September 2018). The [second evaluation report](#) was published in November 2019, and covered the first full year of delivery (April 2018 – March 2019). The [third evaluation report](#) was published in November 2020 and covered the second full year of delivery (April 2019 – March 2020).

The key findings from the first three reports show evidence that:

- FSS is reaching participants with a range of different personal, social and economic characteristics, though there was room for improving reach, especially with regards to women, young people, and those from minority ethnic groups
- Most participants were referred by Jobcentre Plus (JCP) staff, though there was some evidence of an increase in third party referrals⁵
- Co-location of FSS services with existing employability or support organisations was an effective way to reach the wider community, and the development of strong relationships with delivery partners is crucial
- There was some feeling from providers that other outcomes apart from sustained job outcomes of more than 16 hours should be recognized

⁵ Third party referrals relate to referrals from outwith JCP.

- Participants in FSS reported that they recognised the benefits of the support, and felt treated with dignity and respect

This year's report is the final report which will cover aspects of service delivery, participant experience and outcomes. Phase 3 of the evaluation, which will cover long term outcomes and an impact evaluation, will be published by the end of 2022 at the earliest. For further information on the overall FSS evaluation plan, see Appendix 3.

It should be noted that this year's evaluation report includes analysis by participant group for the first time (see Chapter 9). For performance management purposes, the service groups participants into three categories: Core, Advanced, and Intense. The outcome payments associated with each category are designed to provide an incentive for providers to activity engage with those who need more intensive support, by making a higher payment available for their successful sustainment of a 13, 26 and 52 week job outcome. In this way, the Scottish Government sought to avoid the "creaming" and "parking" identified in evaluations of other employability programmes.

The characteristics of each group are defined in the table below.

Table 1: Characteristics of Fair Start Scotland service groups

Service Group	Primary Relevant Barriers	Likely key customer groups	Max outcome payment available per client
Intense	Disabled and in need of specialist support services, to include physical disabilities and learning disabilities; or severe and enduring mental health conditions; or likely to be over 5 years unemployed; or a significant proportion of the barriers within advanced.	Disabled Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Universal Credit (UC) (Any work prep group as long as they are not in work)	£10,422
Advanced	Unemployed for more than 2 years, and in addition the following barriers will be prevalent: Mental and/or Physical health barrier; or In recovery from addiction; or with a conviction and additional barriers; or Disabled and in need of a specialist key worker; or Housing issues. FSS Early Entry Groups – including lone parents; refugees; care leavers and those with convictions are eligible after 6 months of unemployment (this has now changed to Day 1 unemployed entry from April 2020)	Disabled ESA Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) 24+ JSA Early Entry UC (work-focussed interview group, work prep group, all work - related requirements group)	£7,083

Core	Unemployed for less than 2 years and/or health is not a barrier to work; and the following barriers will be prevalent: Skills deficit; or Literacy and numeracy requirements; or English language requirements; or Lack of confidence and resilience; or Environmental barriers: including travel, childcare, debt, a conviction (but no additional barriers).	JSA Early Entry UC (All work related requirements group) IS (Lone parents)	£4,626
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2.3 The context in which Year 3 happened

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the UK entered a period of deep uncertainty which affected all areas of life including the labour market. While last year’s evaluation only covered the start of the pandemic, this year’s report covers a time period when the impacts of COVID-19 were deeply established and resulted in significant changes to service delivery and the experience of participants on the service. This year’s report will therefore incorporate findings on how providers, SG and participants adapted to the delivery of and participation in FSS whilst in the midst of an unprecedented global health crisis.

It should be noted that due to COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown, certain elements of planned fieldwork were unable to go ahead this year, as was the case last year. This included some of the planned fieldwork for the research contractors, namely focus groups with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) staff and employers. In addition, the interviews with FSS participants were conducted over the phone and not face-to-face as originally planned.

3. Reach of Services: April 2020 – March 2021

This chapter describes who was reached by FSS in the third year of its delivery, using various data sources including sociodemographic information on those who joined the FSS service between April 2020 and March 2021. The chapter begins by addressing the following questions:

- What were the characteristics of those who started on FSS in the third year and how does this compare with the overall unemployed population in Scotland?
- Have there been any changes in the characteristics of FSS participants over the first, second and third year?

To address the above questions, the analyses focus on the protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010 including age and gender and the FSS early entry groups. The data sources used here include Scotland's Devolved Employment Services statistical reports and the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Annual Population Survey (APS).

Further, the chapter describes additional characteristics of FSS participants including level of education, time out of work and additional information on priority family groups⁶ based on the telephone survey with a representative sample of Year 3 FSS participants. The chapter finishes with an overview of what worked well, what could be improved and what is being done to make improvements.

It should be noted that there has been a considerable increase in the amount of missing data with regards to participants key characteristics this year. This has been linked to the data being collected over the phone by providers rather than in person, with early feedback suggesting that some participants do not feel comfortable disclosing protected characteristics information over the phone. As such interpretation of data for Year 3 should be treated with a degree of caution.

3.1 What were the characteristics of those who joined FSS in the third year and how does this compare with the overall unemployed population in Scotland?

Fair Start Scotland received 14,000 referrals in the third year of the service, of which, 74% joined the service.⁷ In total, 10,357 people started on the service in Year 3.

⁶ “[Every Child, Every Chance tackling child poverty delivery plan 2018-2022](#)” identified six ‘priority families’, family types that have a higher than average risk of child poverty: lone parent families; families which include a disabled adult or child; larger families; minority ethnic families; families with a child under one year old; families where the mother is under 25.

⁷ Based on data from Scotland's Devolved Employment Services: statistical summary, 25th August 2021 (Publication Tables August 2021, Table 1): <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-devolved-employment-services-statistical-summary-11/>; please note that these values refer to the

The number of referrals was lower by 18 percentage points compared with the second year, and by 21 percentage points compared with the first year of FSS delivery. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and consequently the temporary pause in referrals from DWP between April and June 2020 were the primary reasons for this decrease compared with previous years.

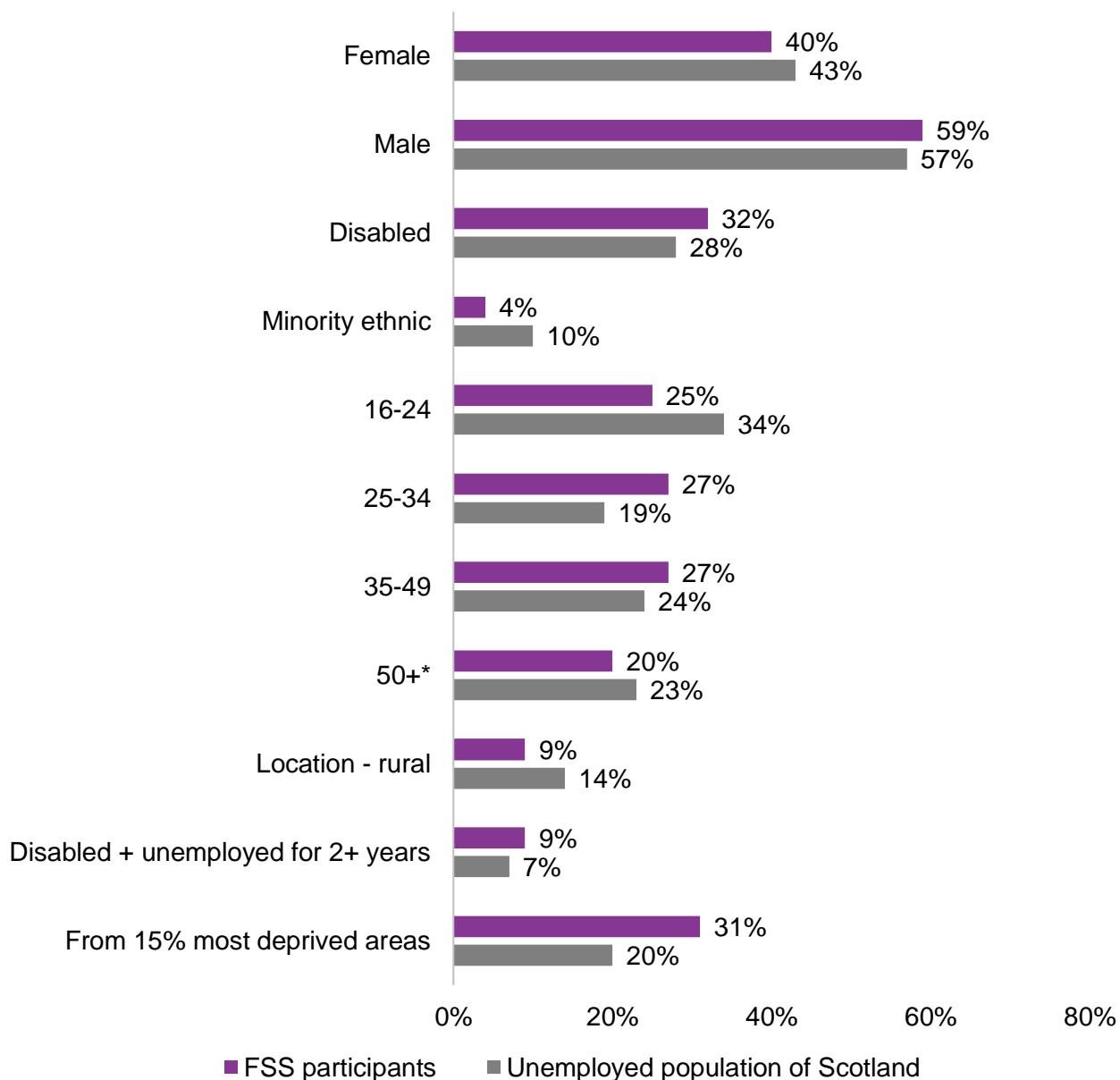
Although the number of people who started on FSS in the third year was lower compared with the second year, the conversion rate of those referred who went on to start was higher by 5 percentage points than in the second year and by 16 percentage points than in the first year of FSS delivery. This means that more people who were referred to FSS started on the service compared with the first and second year of delivery.

Figure 1 shows that compared with the overall unemployed population in Scotland, the third year of FSS had:

- A lower proportion of women
- A lower proportion of minority ethnic individuals
- A lower proportion of people aged 16-24
- A lower proportion of people aged 50-64
- A lower proportion of people from rural areas
- A higher proportion of people aged 25-34
- A higher proportion of people from 15% most deprived areas
- A higher proportion of people with disabilities
- A higher proportion of people with disabilities who were long term unemployed

proportion of those who were referred to FSS in the third year of FSS delivery and then went on to start on FSS. Some individuals who were referred during Year 3 did not begin engagement with the service until Year 4.

Figure 1: Comparison of characteristics (gender, disability, ethnic minority, age group, lone parent, rural location, living in the 15% of most deprived areas) between FSS participants who joined during Year 3 and the overall unemployed Scottish population



Source: Annual Population Survey Person dataset, ONS (Apr 20-Mar 21 dataset), FSS Management Information (MI) data including “Fair Start Scotland Year 3 Evaluation and Annual Reports: Accompanying Statistics” <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-start-scotland-year-three-evaluation-and-annual-reports-accompanying-statistics>

* APS data report 50-64 age group rather than 50+

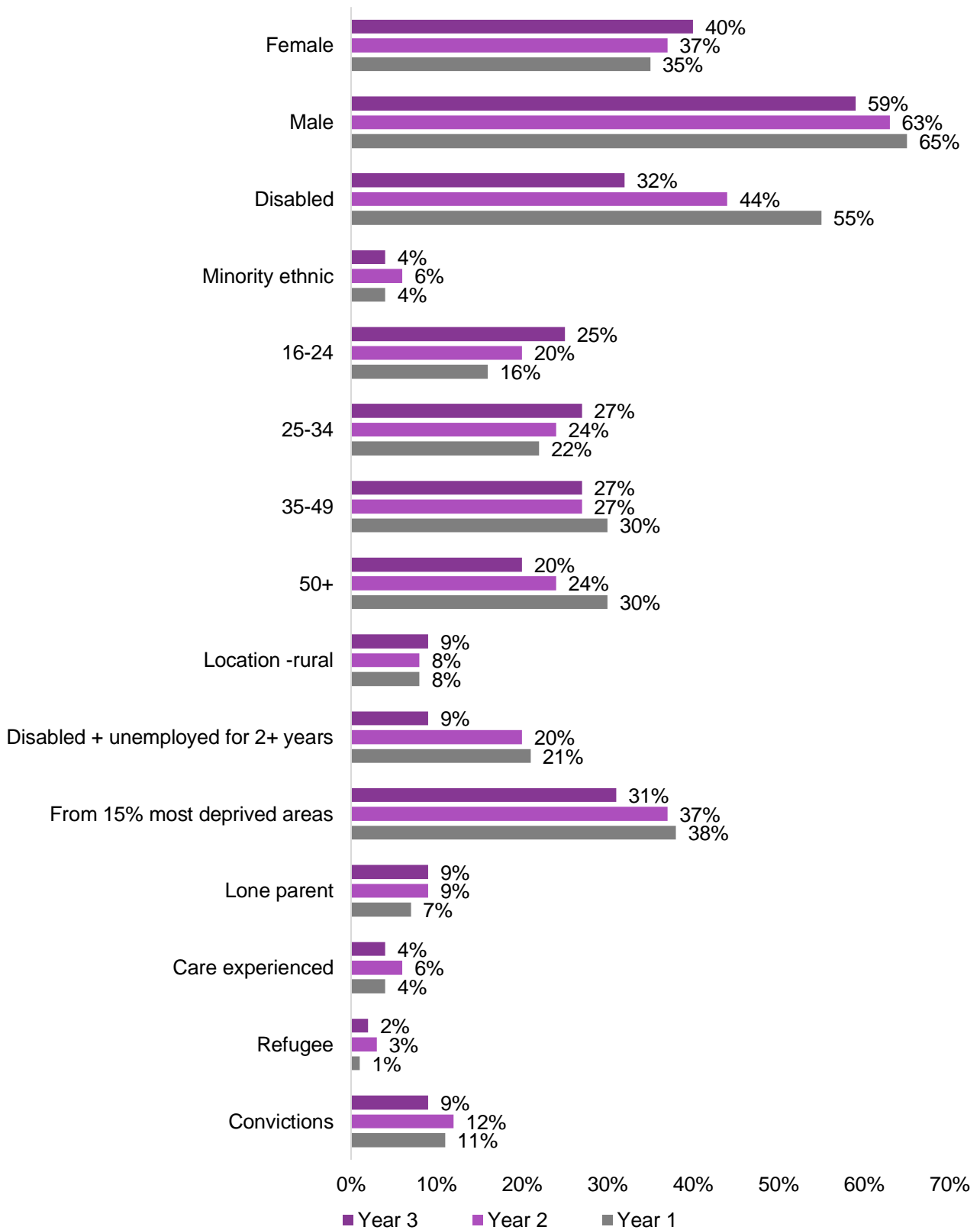
While there are currently no reliable data sources on the proportion of the unemployed population in Scotland who are lone parents, are care experienced, are refugees or have convictions, the shares of these groups among those who joined the FSS in the third year were as follows:

Care experienced: 4%	Lone parents: 9%	Refugees: 2%	Have convictions: 9%
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3.2 Have there been any changes in the characteristics of FSS participants over the first, second and third years?

Figure 2 compares the key characteristics of FSS participants across the first three years of service delivery. From this we can see that, compared with the previous two years, in the third year the proportion of women and the proportion of young people (aged: 16-24 and 25-34 years) has increased. The proportion of disabled people, those who were disabled and unemployed for 2+ years, those living in the 15% most deprived areas and those aged 50 or more has decreased in the third year compared with previous years.

Figure 2: Key characteristics (gender, age groups, rural location, being disabled and unemployed for over 2 years, living in the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland, minority ethnic, lone parent, care experienced, refugee and convictions) of FSS participants across Years 1-3*



Source: FSS Management Information (MI) data including “Fair Start Scotland Year 3 Evaluation and Annual Reports: Accompanying Statistics” <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-start-scotland-year-three-evaluation-and-annual-reports-accompanying-statistics>

* There was a considerable amount of missing data in the third year especially with regards to ethnicity.

3.3 Additional information on characteristics of FSS participants from third year

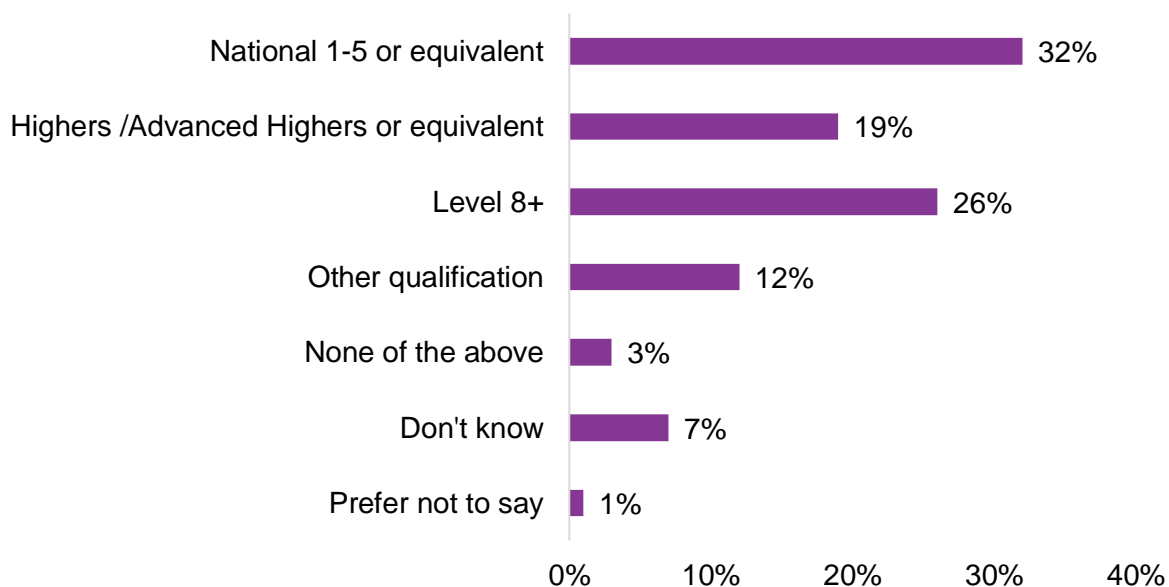
This section provides additional information on the characteristics of third year FSS participants based on the data provided through a telephone survey with a representative sample of Year 3 FSS participants.⁸ The telephone survey focused on collecting information on FSS participants' characteristics that were not available through Management Information data including level of education and whether participants were members of a priority family group.

The telephone survey also gathered information on the minority ethnic status of FSS participants. As there was a significant amount of missing data with regards to this characteristic in the Management Information data for the third year of FSS, the data from the telephone survey can help to provide more of a complete picture on the minority ethnic status of FSS participants.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of the highest level of qualification achieved by Year 3 participants. Around three quarters of FSS participants (77%) held National 1-5 or an equivalent qualification or above, with around one quarter (26%) having obtained the highest qualification level of Level 8+ (including degree or above, Higher National Diploma, SVQ4 or SVQ5). 12% had no formal qualification. Year 3 FSS participants were just as likely to hold any formal qualification as those in the previous years, but the qualification they held was likely to be of a higher level compared with the previous years.

⁸ Please note that for the year 3 telephone survey the new sample of FSS participants was drawn from a cohort of participants who joined FSS between Jan - Dec 2020. The longitudinal sample was drawn from those who joined the service between Jan - Dec 2019 and between Apr - Dec 2018. Further details on the telephone survey methodology can be found in Appendix 1: Evaluation methodology.

Figure 3: Highest level of qualification achieved by Year 3 FSS participants

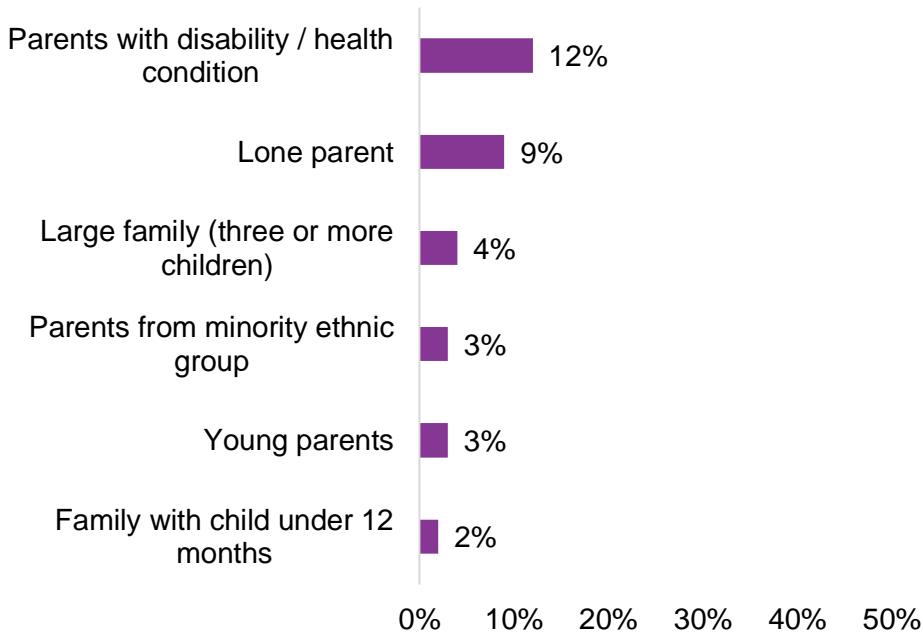


Source: IFF Research telephone survey of FSS customers: H3: What is the highest level of qualification that you have achieved? Base: All 2020 cohort (663)

Around a fifth (19%) of Year 3 FSS participants were members of a priority family group, most commonly these were parents with a disability or a health condition (12%). Figure 4 shows members of priority family groups as a proportion of the Year 3 FSS participants. The makeup of Year 2 and 3 FSS participants were similar. In the second year of FSS, 21% of participants belonged to at least one priority family group, of which 13% were parents with a disability or a health condition, 11% were lone parents, 2% were members of a family with three or more children and 4% were parents from minority ethnic group.⁹

⁹ Data on priority family groups was not collected in the first wave of the telephone survey.

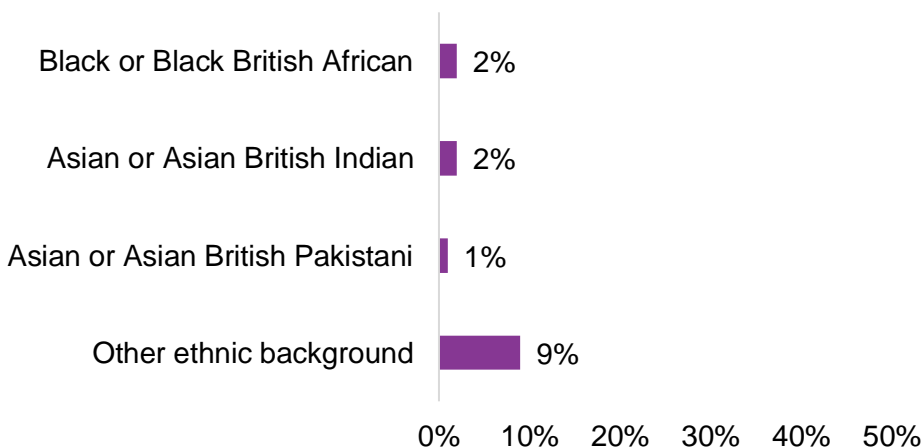
Figure 4: Membership of priority family groups among Year 3 FSS participants



Source: IFF Research telephone survey of FSS customers, Base: 2020 cohort (663)

Figure 5 shows the breakdown of minority ethnic groups for Year 3 FSS participants. With regards to minority ethnic status, the telephone survey indicated that the majority of Year 3 FSS participants were white (86%) and 14% were from minority ethnic groups. Compared with previous years, there was an increase in participation amongst people from minority ethnic groups of 8 percentage points compared with the first and 7 percentage points compared with the second year of FSS. This stands in contrast to the Management Information data collected by the service and could reflect a lack of willingness to disclose information to providers on the part of participants.

Figure 5: Ethnic minority status of Year 3 FSS participants



Source: IFF Research telephone survey of FSS customers: H4_W3. Which of the following best describes your ethnic background? Base: All 2020 cohort who agreed to provide demographic details (597).

What worked well?

The proportion of individuals referred to FSS who then go on to engage with the service has improved compared to previous years.

FSS also continues to reach participants with a broad range of social and economic characteristics, including those that may face additional barriers to employment.

Proportions of women and young people (aged 16-24) joining FSS were higher in Year 3 than in Year 2, which was identified as an area for improvement in previous evaluation reports.

Telephone survey results indicate that just under a fifth of FSS participants are part of priority family groups that have a higher than average risk of child poverty.

What were the challenges? / How could we improve?

While there has been some improvement, individuals from certain backgrounds with known barriers to employment continue to be underrepresented in FSS. Whilst recognising that SG funds specialist employability support for younger people in particular there is still scope to further improve on the proportions of women and rural residents who are engaging with FSS services. As there is conflicting evidence on the proportions of people from minority ethnic groups joining the service this is an issue that will need ongoing monitoring.

Furthermore there is an emerging pattern of declining engagement from those with the most significant barriers across the three years of delivery, including those with disabilities, the long term unemployed and those from more deprived parts of the country.

What is Scottish Government doing?

We recognise that a significant impact of COVID-19 has been the way in which it has affected the willingness and ability of more vulnerable people who may have been shielding to engage with public services during lockdown and beyond.

In addition to the new eligibility changes that we made in Year 3 and in response to the COVID-19 labour market challenges, we redefined the entry point for long term unemployment from 24 months to 12 months, thereby providing earlier access to Fair Start Scotland support for the long term unemployed.

We are also engaging with other Scottish Government teams including Health and Social Care, responsible for supporting those at highest risk from COVID-19 to better understand how Fair Start Scotland can best provide employment support to these citizens.

As part of our Continuous Improvement activity, service providers are implementing Action Plans and we are introducing “test and learn” pilots to improve engagement

with underrepresented groups, including people with convictions, vulnerable women, minority ethnic groups and those with health conditions and disabilities who would benefit from specialist support. Many of these pilots are already underway and we will report on our learning once complete

4. FSS Participants' Motivation to Return to Work and Reasons for Leaving Early

This chapter starts by reporting on the motivation of FSS participants to return to work, the impact joining FSS had on this motivation and the reasons for joining FSS. It then focuses on describing barriers to work experienced by FSS participants. The chapter concludes by describing reasons why some FSS participants left the service early (i.e. left the service before the end of pre-employment support period of 12-18 months and without having sustained employment for at least 3 months) and what they felt could have been done to prevent 'early leavers' from leaving the service.

The chapter draws on a number of data sources including the independently conducted telephone survey and case studies, as well as internally conducted analysis of Management Information data, interviews with participants and an online survey of early leavers.

4.1 Motivation of FSS participants to return to work

As part of the Year 3 telephone survey, respondents who were not in work or worked less than 16 hours per week were asked about their motivation to return to work. 80% of FSS participants reported that they wanted to return to work 'to a great extent' and further 11% reported that they wanted to return to work 'to some extent'. 2% of respondents indicated that they did not want to return to work at all.

Younger participants (aged 16-24) were more likely to want to return to work than participants overall (99% compared with 94% overall). Those aged 50 or more were more likely than participants overall to say that they did not want to return to work (5% compared with 2% overall). Further, those with no formal qualifications were also more likely not to want to return to work than participants overall (7% compared with 2% overall).

The telephone survey found that taking part in FSS generally had a positive impact on participants' motivation to return to work. 61% reported that their motivation to return to work (full-time) increased, either 'a lot' (35%) or 'a little' (26%) since starting on FSS. 26% reported that their motivation has not changed as a result of joining FSS and 10% reported that their motivation to return to work had decreased since joining FSS.

Those aged 25-34 reported the largest increase in motivation to return to work (44% reported that their motivation increased 'a lot' and 31% that their motivation increased 'a little' since joining FSS) compared with participants overall. Among those aged 50 years or older, only 44% said that their motivation increased (either 'a lot' or 'a little') due to FSS. Further, those with a limiting health condition were less likely to report an increase in motivation (42% reported no change or a decreased effect on motivation) compared to those with a non-limiting or no health

conditions (27% and 31% reported no change or a decreased effect on motivation respectively).

Interviews conducted with FSS participants as part of case studies identified a number of reasons for wanting to join FSS. One of the Year 3 FSS participant said that they hoped that FSS could “*point [them] in the right direction*” and help them to find vacancies that would be suitable with regards to their particular circumstances. Other FSS participants commented that they felt they could perform well in jobs they were applying for but needed support in relation to the job search and application process itself. For example one Year 3 FSS participant found it “*difficult to express myself at interviews*” and thought FSS could help with this.

4.2 What were FSS participants’ barriers to work?

The telephone survey found that FSS participants (who at the time of the survey did not work or worked fewer than 16 hours per week) reported a range of barriers to work, the most commonly mentioned barrier being that the COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult for them to find work (35%). The other most commonly mentioned barriers were not having the right skills or experience (14%) and there not being enough suitable jobs in the area (14%). Other relatively commonly mentioned barriers included family or caring responsibilities (8%), health condition making it difficult to carry out tasks at work (7% for a physical health condition and 6% for a mental health condition), difficulty traveling to work for reasons not related to health (7%) and lack of support in applying for jobs (6%).

The telephone survey also reported several variations in the barriers experienced by different groups of participants. For example, those with no qualifications were more likely to experience a physical health condition or disability that made it hard to carry out tasks at work (13% compared with 7% overall). Similarly, older participants (aged 50 years or older) were more likely to have a physical health condition or disability that made it difficult to carry out tasks at work (13% compared with 7% overall).

Qualitative interviews with FSS participants who belong to groups that have been identified as having particular barriers to getting into work¹⁰ also provided insights into how these barriers were experienced by those who took part in the service.

Lack of confidence, feeling '*not good enough*' and the associated feeling of anxiety was mentioned by several interviewees as a barrier to work. This was often linked to not having been in paid employment for a long period of time, and also to having applied for jobs but being rejected by employers prior to joining FSS.

One interviewee observed that, for some people, not having the right clothes for a job interview and having to go for an interview while being hungry is a significant

¹⁰ This included FSS participants who belonged to one or more of the following groups: lone parents, refugees, those with convictions, those who are limited a lot by a health condition, ethnic minority participants, those who are care experienced.

barrier to getting a job as it affect the person's confidence and also how they behave during the interview.

"If you're somebody who has not got the right clothes to go for an interview that could be a huge barrier...You're not going to be confident if you're wearing the same pair of jeans that you've had on all week...It could be just even if you've not had a breakfast or lunch and you've gone to an interview on an empty stomach...Because if you're sitting there thinking, I'm starving, I'm starving you're not really gonna give your interview are you?"

-FSS participant

One interviewee, who had recently moved to Scotland commented that not having a work experience within the Scottish labour market was a barrier for her to find a job:

"...I have almost 15 plus of experience but my 15 plus of experience was not much recognised here in Scotland because I don't have Scottish experience. So it was a little difficult for me to get a job initially...[at] interviews I went for also, it was like 'you don't have Scottish experience, you are good, but you don't have Scottish experience'."

-FSS participant

Similarly, another interviewee commented that not having professional qualifications that were recognised in Scotland (often despite having the relevant training and / or experience) was a barrier for those who recently started living in Scotland to find employment, especially skilled employment in their chosen profession.

Some interviewees also commented that having recently moved to Scotland meant that they did not know the local context well, in terms of how to approach looking for a job in the specific field they were interested in (e.g. which recruitment websites or specialist employment agencies to approach) or what the legal aspects of setting up one's own business were.

Some interviewees felt that their age was a barrier and that being an older candidate was a disadvantage in the job market.

"The age thing is always going to be an issue. I'm in my 50's so...that's going to be a barrier for some jobs, without a doubt."

- FSS participant

Several interviewees also mentioned caring responsibilities as a barrier to employment

"I've not got a lot of child care, I cannot work - I can only work when I can get child care."

- FSS participant

Finally, having a previous conviction was also mentioned as a barrier to employment by some interviewees.

"Like I said the criminal conviction thing can be a bit of a problem because obviously most employers don't want an ex-con at their workplace."

- FSS participant

In summary these findings suggest that the barriers which FSS participants face include a mixture of both structural and personal barriers, ranging from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the labour market, to the tangible impacts of poverty on individuals through to child care issues and a lack of confidence on the part of some participants.

4.3 Who left the service early and why?

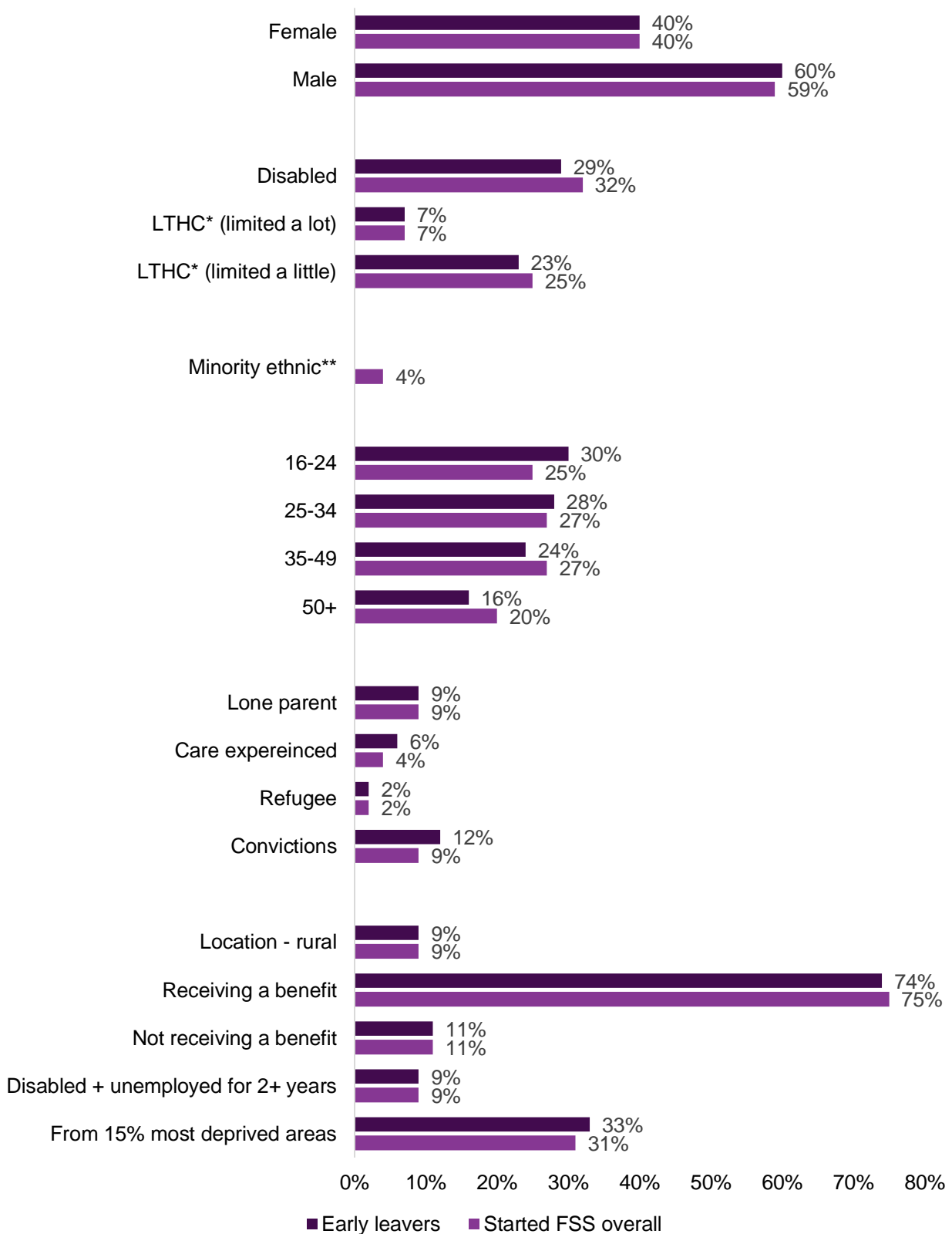
A person is defined as having left FSS early (i.e. an 'early leaver') if they left before the end of pre-employment support period (that lasts for up to 12 months but can be extended to up to 18 months in some cases) and without having sustained employment for at least 3 months.

Of the 10,357 who joined FSS in the third year, 3,704 (36%)¹¹ left the service early. Figure 6 compares the key characteristics of FSS participants who started on the service in the third year and left early with those who started on the service in the third year overall. This data suggests that young people (aged 16-24), those with conviction, those who were care experienced and those who lived in the 15% most deprived areas were more likely to leave the service than FSS participants in general.

Figure 7 presents key reasons for participants leaving the service early based on the findings from an online survey of FSS early leavers. The invitation to take part in the online survey was sent out to all first, second and third year FSS participants who left early and whom email address was available, of these 349 early leavers (4% response rate) completed the survey. From Figure 7, it can be seen that the most common reasons given were those related to the service not meeting the participant needs ('I didn't find the service useful / relevant to my needs' (36%) and 'the service wasn't being adapted to my needs' (15%) and getting a job (15%). Other commonly mentioned reasons were those related to issues with the key worker, including 'lack of contact' (9%), 'thinking that the service is not able to help the respondent' (8%), and 'not feeling well enough to return to or start work and reasons related to ill health' (8%).

¹¹ Please note that the number of early leavers among those who joined the FSS service in the third year of its delivery may change as the period where a person could leave early has not come to an end for some participants. The final figure will be available in the second half of 2022.

Figure 6: Comparison of key characteristics of early leavers and those who started on FSS in Year 3 overall

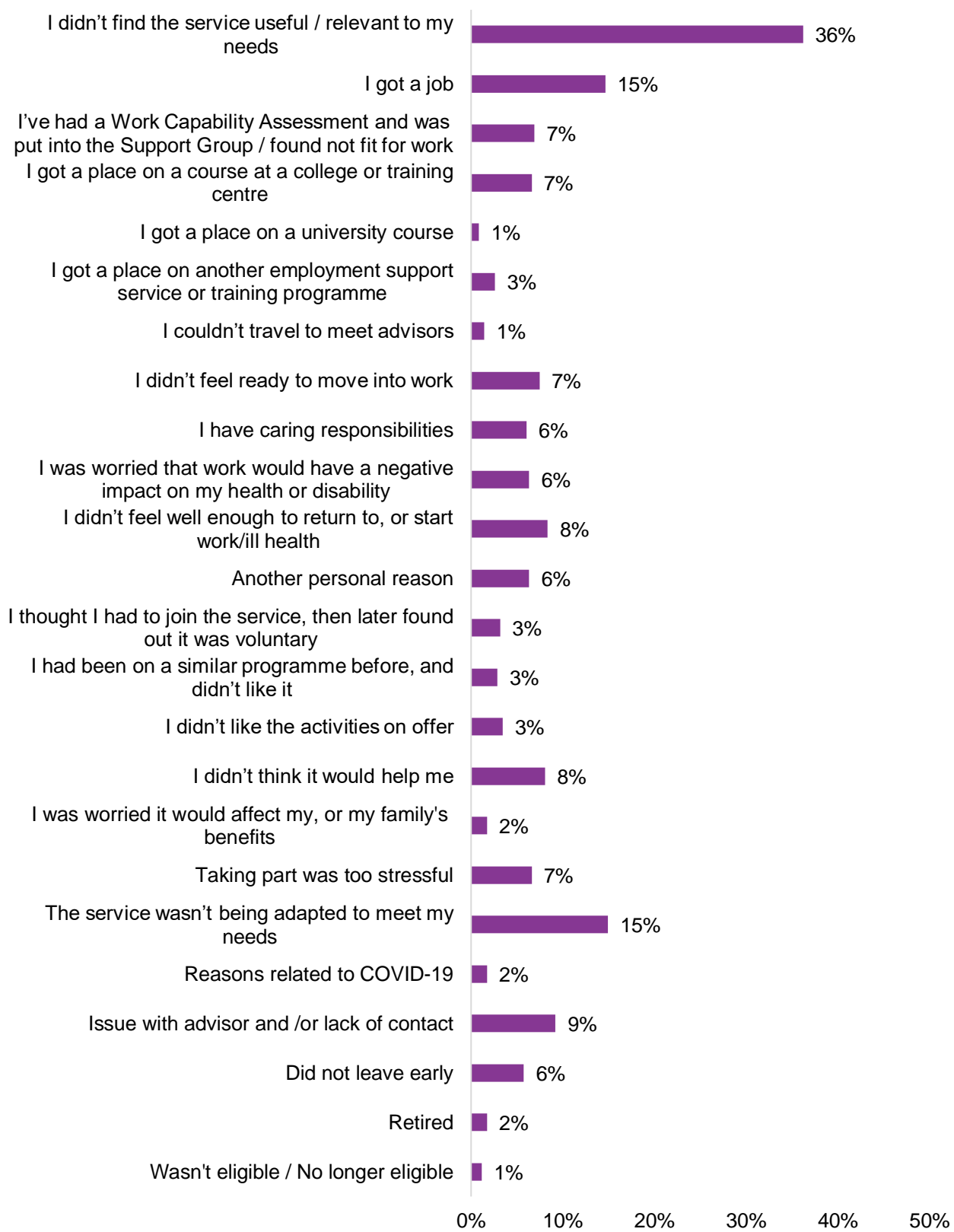


Source: FSS Management Information data

* LTHC - Long Term Health Condition

** The proportion of participants who were early leavers from a minority ethnic background has not been reported for the third year of FSS delivery to reduce the risk of individual participants being identified.

Figure 7: Reasons for leaving the service early provided by FSS participants who were early leavers*



Source: Online survey with those who left FSS service early, Q: Why did you leave FSS early?

* Please note that the online survey with those who left the service early included first, second and third year FSS participants. In total 349 FSS participants who left early completed the survey (4% response rate).

The Year 3 telephone survey found that the most common reasons for leaving FSS (for those who left early and those who completed the service combined) were that they found work (29%), they felt that the programme of support had come to an end (15%) and that the service was not relevant to their needs (14%).

Further, participants with no health condition were more likely to have left the service because they moved into work or training than those with a limiting health condition (41% compared with 22% respectively). Those with a limiting health condition were also more likely than participants on average to have left the service as it was not relevant for their needs (19% compared with 14% overall). Finally, those with a limiting health condition were also more likely to have left due to their health deteriorating (12% compared to 5% overall), and to have left because they found the staff / advisers unhelpful (5% compared with 2% overall).

4.4. What could have been done differently to stop those who left early leaving the service?

Respondents to the early leaver survey were asked what FSS could have done to keep them engaged with the service. The three most commonly mentioned recommendations given by respondents were:

- Improving communication between the FSS service providers, including key workers and the FSS participants (e.g. answering calls and / or emails)
- Suggesting more suitable jobs and opportunities, including not compelling FSS participants to apply for unstable jobs and / or basic level or zero hours contract jobs
- Listening to participants and taking their specific needs into account when providing the service

Box 1 further describes the key themes that emerged.

Box 1: Key themes that emerged from the analysis an online survey with FSS 'early leavers': (question: 'What could FSS have done to stop you leaving the service?')

Improve communication

"Kept an appointment. I felt quite useless showing up to appointments and being a nuisance as no one communicated a change to me."

- FSS participant

Suggest more suitable jobs and opportunities

"Offered different types of job placements/experience that weren't just retail. I would struggle in that type of job and was finding myself getting sort of pushed towards a placement in Tesco or Marks & Spencer."

- FSS participant

Listen to me and take my needs into account, be more supportive and treat me better

"Recognised my barriers preventing me from taking opportunities. Which was child care. Listened to me as a person, instead of telling me what I should do."
- FSS participant

Be more flexible to meet participant's needs, offer a specific service, opportunity or training

"Unfortunately they did not seem suited to someone with my health conditions. There was not sufficient flexibility to allow me to attend. The activities I was asked to do were unhelpful as they were not suited to my situation. A more flexible approach would have been required to stop me leaving the service."
- FSS participant

Have more specialised staff and have better training for staff

"Although the [key worker] I was allocated was well intentioned, this person was clearly not trained to work with people who are potentially quite vulnerable and experiencing a variety of issues (e.g. mental health difficulties) (...) Better training and education regarding such matters would perhaps be helpful."
- FSS participant

Have better provision for more skilled participants

"Adapted their provision to accommodate my skills, experience and qualifications, rather than telling me 'you're not our usual client'"
- FSS participant

Allow extended time on service

"Extended the time on it as due to Covid I wasn't able to make use of service due to lockdowns. Surely my time should have been extended"
- FSS participant

What worked well?

FSS continues to demonstrate a positive effect on people's motivations to return to work, with this being particularly strong in the case of young people.

Leaving FSS early was not affected by gender, lone parent status, or coming from a rural area. A smaller proportion of those who had a disability, and who were aged fifty or over left the service early compared to those who started on FSS in the third year overall.

What were the challenges? / How could we improve?

The COVID-19 pandemic was noted to be a significant barrier and was the most commonly cited barrier identified by telephone survey respondents.

A higher proportion of people who were younger (16-34), care experienced, had convictions and lived in the 15% most deprived areas left the service early.

As with previous years' findings, participants who are of an older age continues to remain this as a barrier to both feeling motivated and to being able to return to work.

Interviews and a survey of early leavers found that there was additional scope to enhance the person-centred element of FSS delivery, with a greater focus on tailoring the service to meet the needs of those with complex barriers being identified.

What is Scottish Government doing?

In keeping with our commitment to continuous improvement activity and to reflect on the significant impact COVID-19 had on the ability of individuals to participate fully in Fair Start Scotland, we took the decision to allow participants to join Fair Start Scotland more than once. This ensured that those who had left early due to personal circumstances, or who had completed the service but still needed support, were given the opportunity to re-join Fair Start Scotland.

We recognise that tailored and person-centred support is central to the effectiveness of the FSS service offer. During 2020-21 we commissioned specialist diversity and disability awareness training, delivered by specialist independent organisations, with the aim of raising awareness and understanding, sharing expertise and building service providers capability to support participants with more complex barriers.

We are continuing to work with service providers to embed this learning through a range of "test and learn" pilots and continuous personal development activity. These activities are focused on increasing engagement with, and participation in FSS services, so that our service is more representative of Scottish society. We will monitor progress through service provider action plans and our performance management framework.

We also commissioned an external independent review the delivery of Individual Placement and Support (IPS) within Fair Start Scotland and are currently reviewing the recommendations ahead of publishing the report and our response by the end of 2021.

Following our internal review of Supported Employment provision, we have also commissioned an external independent review of Supported Employment delivery across Scotland, results from which are due to be published in early 2022.

5. Process: referral and service delivery

As with previous year's evaluations, local area case studies were undertaken in three locations. The aims of the case studies were to:

- understand how FSS is being implemented across the different lots in Scotland
- understand the experience of FSS for lead providers, partner organisations, participants and employers
- identify what is working well and less well in the implementation of Fair Start Scotland
- identify lessons learned across the three years of the delivery period

As with last year it should be noted that planned fieldwork coincided with the national lockdown caused by the COVID-19 crisis and as such, it was not possible for researchers to engage with the breadth of participants that had been planned. In particular planned qualitative fieldwork with JCP staff and employers was not undertaken as initially intended. In response to the pandemic however, an additional focus on how providers have adapted to providing services within the current context has been included and features strongly across all three case study areas.

The following section sets out key findings from FSS delivery organisations, partners, stakeholders and participants in the three case study areas, which are Fife, Greenock, and Motherwell. In addition, a short survey of JCP frontline staff across Scotland was undertaken as well as interviews with senior stakeholders from both the DWP and the Scottish Government.

A complete report of findings from the case studies has been published separately as: [Fair Start Scotland – Evaluation Report 4: Local Area Case Studies – Year 3](#).

5.1 Fair Start Scotland in Fife

Fife is a large geographical area with a number of challenges related to rurality as well as high degrees of income inequality. Fife forms part of contract area five of Fair Start Scotland where Start Scotland are the lead provider, with Triage Central Ltd also providing services to those in the Leven and Glenrothes areas.

Strengths of the FSS delivery model in Fife

Prior to the onset of the pandemic, Start Scotland felt that they had a strong productive relationship with local Jobcentres. However this was significantly impacted in Spring 2020 by Jobcentres having to shift their focus to responding to the large increase in the number of Universal Credit registrations resulting from consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to this situation both Start Scotland and Triage Central reported significant success in shifting the focus of their source of referrals to online recruitment via social media. This was achieved via a combination of advertising on existing locally focussed job search sites,

community pages as well as paid advertising on social media sites such as Facebook.

One of the wider changes felt by providers as a result of the pandemic was a shift in the types of participants seeking support from FSS. Providers noted that since the onset of the pandemic they have been receiving many more referrals for individuals considered closer to the labour market, for instance individuals who have recently been made redundant. The type of support provided to such individuals therefore tends to focus less on removing barriers to employment and more on job search and application assistance. The providers felt that their capacity to adapt to a changing client group was significantly aided by the flexibility built into the service.

In addition to changes in sources of referrals and client types, providers also noted that changes in working conditions resulting from the pandemic have positively impacted on their capacity to deal with challenges presented by the geographical size of the Fife area. Specifically, a shift to remote working, telephone and online based engagement with participants reduced some of the inefficiencies generated by having to travel to meet with participants face-to-face. Staff also fed back that this shift to virtual appointments was positively received by participants, as it not only reduced travel times, but also allowed for more flexibility with regards to scheduling of appointments, which was particularly helpful for those receiving in-work support.

Another significant positive finding from the Fife area was related to the providers' capacity to access a large and varied amount of training and learning resources virtually via Start Scotland's parent company, FedCap. The breadth of opportunities presented by this resource, as well as the flexibility resulting from it being online were noted to be particularly helpful from the perspective of participants.

Challenges encountered delivering FSS in Fife

One of the significant challenges reported in Fife relates to the large number of pre-existing employability support services operating in the area, including a combination of public and third sector providers. FSS providers reported that this presents issues with regards to their capacity to attract participants due to the significant levels of competition between organisations. As has been the case for other areas with existing complex support landscapes, providers felt that the situation was additionally complicated by risks associated with the potential for double funding of support to individuals. An additional complicating factor relates to the capacity of providers to engage with local employers when there are already a number of other organisations attempting to do the same, particularly when others can offer grants as part of support packages.

"[The] landscape feels full and crowded and confusing for us as providers let alone for participants."

- Provider

Providers also noted a number of challenges they felt stemmed from some of the performance management parameters associated with delivery of FSS. For instance providers stated that they would like to see greater flexibility in relation to the three hour contact time that is expected to take place with participants on a weekly basis, increased flexibility around definitions pertaining to the 16 hour a week job outcome, as well as reducing the frequency of monthly meetings which take place between SG and the providers.

The providers also noted that while they felt there were some benefits to adopting a remote working approach as a result of the pandemic, they also faced a number of challenges related to the potential for digital exclusion of participants. Access to digital devices and broader connectivity issues were raised as significant challenges with providers feeling that funding to overcome such issues was outstripped by demand.

Jim is 60 years old and has a long term health condition. He lives in an area classified as within the most deprived 40% of neighbourhoods in Scotland.

He was previously self-employed in a trade but gave that up after twice coming close to sustaining serious injuries.

JCP referred him to FSS in October 2019. He was unsure what direction to take with his career and hoped FSS would help him to figure this out.

He had been unemployed for four years, although had taken part in a 16 week course with another provider in 2018 which he enjoyed.



FSS helped Jim with his CV and checked that he would be better off financially working than on benefits. Key workers also carried out mock interviews and gave him advice on his routine at home, including incorporating some light exercise to improve his health.

Jim lacked skills in using the internet, so FSS showed him how to look for jobs online and set him up on Zoom so he could do interviews online.

Jim felt isolated during lockdown. Due to his health condition, he became very cautious and stopped going out to the shops for over 14 months. He said that contact with FSS **“kept him going”** during lockdown but that the pandemic **“blew everything out of the water”** in terms of his job search.



Some progress was made in terms of enhanced confidence in using Zoom, which allows him to take part in interviews and workshops online. Key workers said this was the **“biggest achievement”** and they noted that Jim became more chatty over the course of the support.



However, he left FSS without a job and is now planning to return to FSS for more support.

One of the first people he met after lockdown developed Covid so Jim had to self-isolate. He is now wary of going out and mixing with people again, so he needs support to feel confident doing this again before he can start applying for jobs.

Area: Fife
Provider: Start Scotland

5.2 Fair Start Scotland in Greenock in Inverclyde

Greenock is an urban area noted for high levels of deprivation and low job density. Greenock sits within contract area nine of Fair Start Scotland with delivery being led by The Wise Group with support from Enable Scotland.

Strengths of the FSS delivery model in Greenock

As with other providers contacted during this year's evaluation, there was significant focus placed on the shift away from in person support to online support resulting from the pandemic. The providers in Greenock noted that this did present a number of benefits, including efficiencies gained from not having to travel to meet participants and successfully moving towards recruitment of participants directly using social media.

"If you asked me 18 months ago, 'Would you deliver it remotely?', I would have said, 'Absolutely not, it won't work', but it has and it is fantastic."

– Provider

The providers were also keen to stress what they saw as some of the key benefits of the FSS delivery model, including the duration of support offered to individuals, the voluntary nature of the programme, as well as the offer of in-work support. Combined, these elements of delivery were felt to work well for participants, increasing motivation and helping to facilitate achieving successful job outcomes.

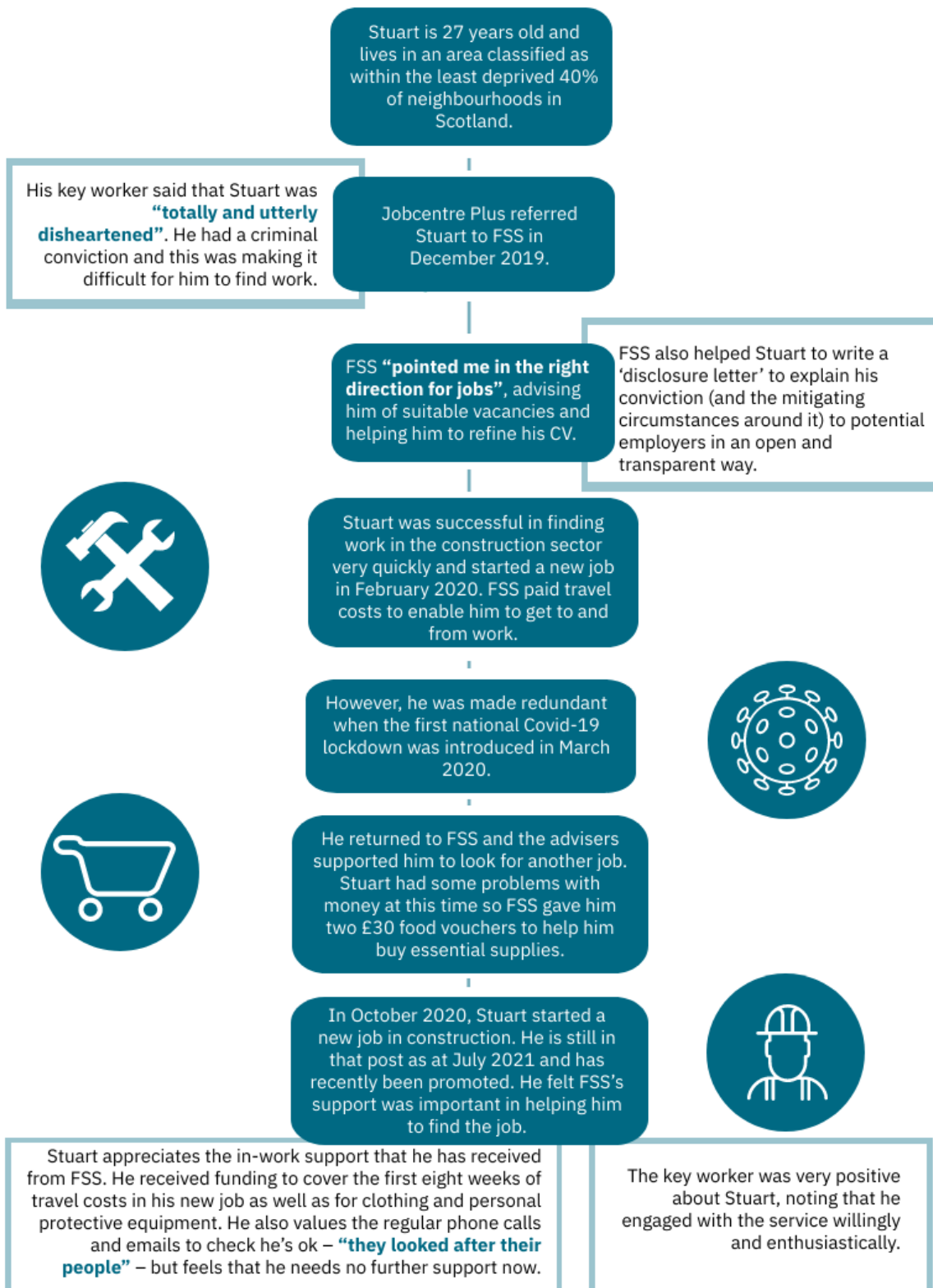
Another strength that was noted within Greenock stemmed from the availability of staff who have particular specialist knowledge and experience who can be matched to participants, for instance staff with a particular focus on helping participants who would like to pursue self-employment. Furthermore, participants within Greenock are able to access broader services operated by The Wise Group as well other support organisations, thereby providing participants with a broad range of activities to help support them on their journey toward work.

Challenges encountered delivering FSS in Greenock

As with a number of other areas, concerns were raised about the challenges of operating in an environment where there are a large number of employability services already in place. Providers felt that they were often in competition with other services with regards to recruiting participants. This is further complicated by the providers view that the relationship between the Jobcentre and FSS in Inverclyde does not appear to be as strong as in other case study areas. While this appears to have been particularly heightened during the pandemic staff felt that there were longer standing issues which impacted on the quality of referrals received, as well as a perceived preference amongst Jobcentre staff to refer eligible clients to other non-FSS services.

Similar to feedback received from other areas, providers also felt that while there were significant strengths associated with the FSS model, there was also room for improvement, particularly around granting greater flexibility in relation to the

definition of job outcomes and reducing requirements for providers to engage in what were perceived as administratively burdensome tasks.



Area: Inverclyde
 Provider: The Wise Group

5.3 Fair Start Scotland in Motherwell in North Lanarkshire

Motherwell is an urban area with a history of high unemployment and many existing support services in place. In terms of Fair Start Scotland delivery, Motherwell sits within contract area two and delivery is led by Remploy Limited, supported by Enable Scotland.

Strengths of the FSS delivery model in Motherwell

As with the other two local case study areas, providers in Motherwell discussed the substantial impact that the pandemic has had on their operating model. As with the other areas, staff reported that there were benefits gleaned from moving to a remote working approach. In response to the pandemic staff introduced a number of measures to help participants, including the use of 10 to 15 minute long 'micro appointments' to allow participants the opportunity to check in with staff in a less formal manner. In addition, Remploy developed online based group sessions focussed on topics such as confidence building and interviewing. Staff felt that these were particularly well received by younger participants who are more confident in using such technology.

More broadly, feedback from the provider highlighted a recognition that during the height of the pandemic many participants were vulnerable, struggling with their mental health and sometimes FSS staff were perhaps the only individual speaking to participants on a regular basis. While this was challenging Remploy noted that all of their staff are trained in mental health first aid and were able to adapt to the changing needs of participants.

"During Covid we made quite a switch to keeping in touch – for example, we were organising medication etc for those shielding. For some we were their only contact during a week and they trusted us. We were focusing on mental health and hardship support like food banks. All our staff were trained in mental health first aid."

- Provider

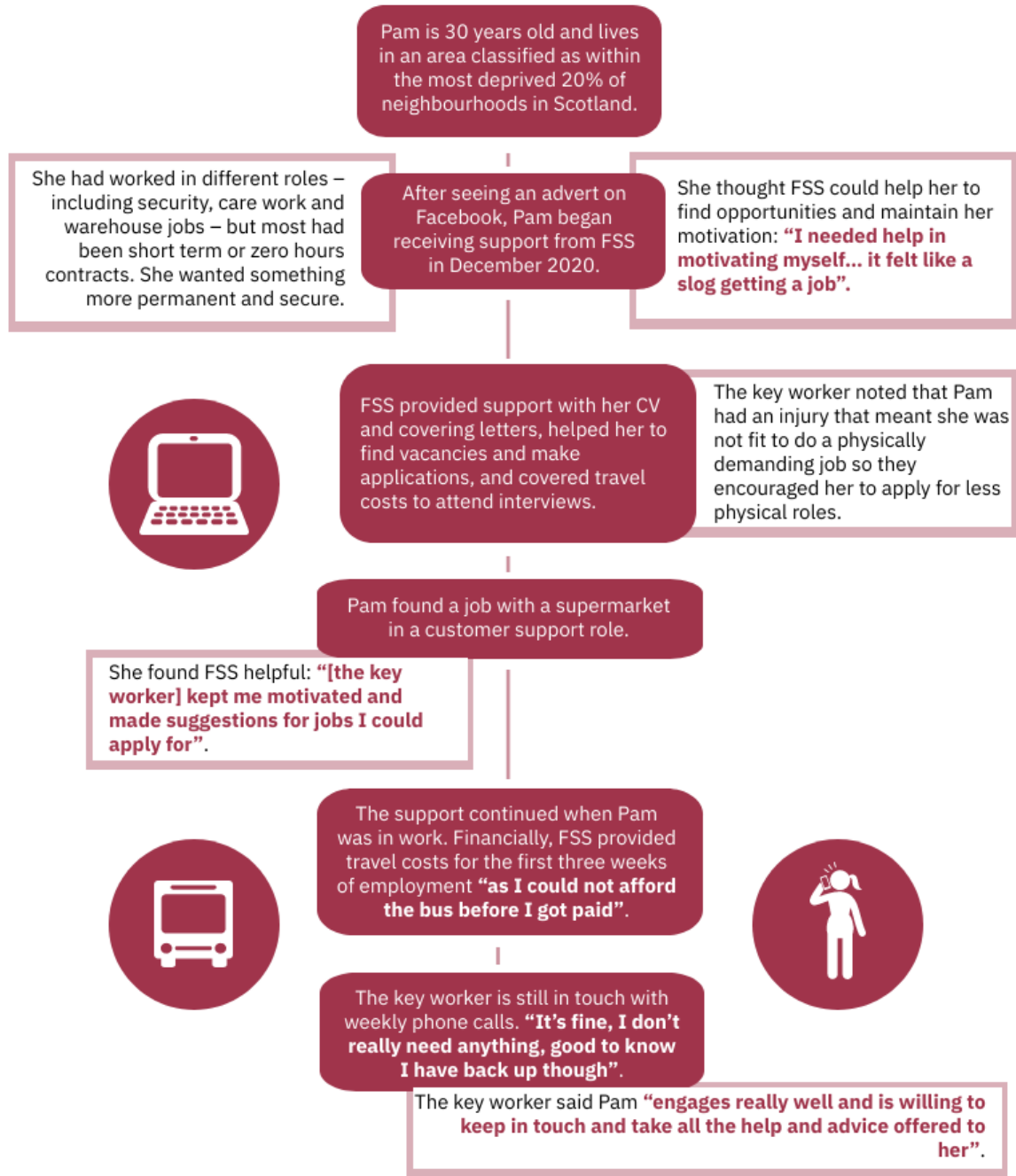
A significant strength noted within this case study was the successful use of a dedicated full time liaison officer employed by Remploy to work with Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches. The provider noted that the creation of this role has had a substantial positive impact on their relationship with local Jobcentres, and has increased not just referral volumes, but also the number of appropriate referrals into the service.

As with the other case study areas the provider in Motherwell drew attention to a number of components of the FSS delivery model which they felt worked particularly well and helped them support individuals. Particularly welcome was the decision to allow re-entry into FSS for participants who have left. Staff felt that this allowed for much greater flexibility and a stronger person-centred approach which was ultimately beneficial for participants.

Challenges encountered delivering FSS in Motherwell

Similar to the other areas studied, providers described Motherwell - and North Lanarkshire more broadly - as an area with a large number of existing employability support services with a particular focus on the longer term unemployed. In particular North Lanarkshire is noted for its longstanding Routes to Work (RTW) programme, established by the council in 1992. This programme uses European Social Fund (ESF) funding to provide specialist employability support to those with significant barriers to employment. Researchers undertook interviews with both FSS providers in the area, North Lanarkshire council staff as well as RTW staff who all noted the lack of joined up working between FSS and the existing employability landscape.

The introduction therefore of FSS into an area with a well-established existing landscape of support during a time of record employment presented challenges for the provider with regard to their capacity to distinguish themselves, generate referrals and build relationships with existing support providers.



Area: North Lanarkshire
 Provider: Remploy

5.4 Reflections on Delivery Across Three Years of FSS

Drawing on findings from across the three years that local area case studies were conducted, as well as additional fieldwork with stakeholders during the last year of the evaluation, a number of key findings were identified.

Context of Delivery

Both the design and delivery of Scotland's first devolved national employability service have been strongly shaped by the context within which it has been operating. The service was designed and launched in the context of a labour market with historically high employment rates, therefore a focus on those with persistent and complex barriers to employment was well suited to this context. However changes to labour market conditions brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic appear to have at least in part shifted the focus of delivery to those closer to the labour market.

Beyond labour market conditions, findings from across the three years of evaluation strongly suggest that FSS has been operating in what is often described as a cluttered employability landscape. Stakeholders reported feeling that the service had fallen short of ambitions to facilitate more joined up working at a local level, instead often acting as yet another provider within an environment where many services are already operating.

“Fair Start has not met our ambitions in terms of alignment with local activity. This includes relationships with local authorities, the lack of integration and alignment – and the lack of local ownership as part of local offer.”

- Scottish Government Stakeholder

These findings reinforce the fact that services such as FSS and their capacity to deliver against goals is subject to a range of conditions beyond factors accounted for by referring to performance metrics. Therefore future iterations of employability support need to be designed in such a way as to take a holistic approach, accounting for variable labour market conditions, as well as taking into consideration how delivery will operate within a pre-existing landscape of employability support.

It should be noted that the Scottish Government's ambitions around the development of the No One Left Behind (NOLB)¹² approach to employability services have been developed with these issues in consideration. Evaluation of this new approach will include a focus on demonstrating whether NOLB has been more successful with regards to tackling the aforementioned challenges.

¹² Please see [No One Left Behind: Delivery Plan](#) for more details on NOLB.

Participant Experience

Across the three years of local area case studies participant views on their experience of FSS have tended to be very positive. Participants often highlighted that they were treated in a way which felt respectful and considerate and were enthusiastic about the tailored support that they received. Participants also tended to be very positive about some of the key aspects of FSS service design, such as its voluntary nature as well as access to in-work support for those who found employment. These findings are broadly reflected in other elements of fieldwork from the evaluation, most notably from the participant telephone survey.

Many of the participants contacted as part of the local area case studies were of the opinion that the skills, support and confidence gained through their involvement with the service were pivotal to helping them find work, and that this would not have happened without support from the service.

“I wasn’t confident at all in applying for retail jobs but they supported me the entire way and I feel a lot more confident. That’s how I was able to get my current job.”
- FSS Participant

Notwithstanding the generally positive views of participants contacted as part of this fieldwork, it was recognised by stakeholders that there is still significant work to be done with regards to the service’s capacity to engage with those furthest from work, as well as with groups who tend to be underrepresented in employability services.

In particular Scottish Government staff acknowledged that the level of support required for individuals with complex health needs had been underestimated at the outset and that further work was also required to reach historically underrepresented groups.

“We are now looking at this. Have we got the promotion right? Are providers reaching out to these people – they are not necessarily in Jobcentres every month or week so they are not getting the referral pathways. There are people who could benefit from IPS and supported employment and Fair Start Scotland providers have enhanced their own third party referrals – but it needs much more embedded relationships.”
- Scottish Government Stakeholder

Delivery Model

Stakeholders from across the three years of the local case studies, including providers, participants and referral partners tended to agree that there were certain core strengths of the FSS delivery model. These included the voluntary nature of the service, the length of support offered, access to in-work support and the use of a person-centred approach amongst other factors.

However there was also consistent feedback, from providers in particular, about certain elements of the delivery model which were felt to be too inflexible, including

the strictly defined job outcomes as well as requirements around the frequency and content of engagement with participants. It should be noted that in relation to this the Scottish Government's position is that these requirements are integral to delivery of high quality services for participants.

Another key finding from the case study areas pertains to the pivotal nature of the relationship between providers and local Job Centres. Feedback received from front line JCP staff seemed to suggest a positive view of the relationship with 76% contacted via a survey agreeing that they worked well with local providers. However this was often at odds with findings from interviews with providers who noted that the number of referrals flowing from JCP's was lower than expected and that, particularly in the first year of delivery, that there were often misunderstandings around suitability of potential clients for the service. In general findings suggest that there may have been some degree of misalignment of expectations between SG, DWP/JCP's and providers.

However it should also be noted that in the Year 2 report there was evidence to suggest that the relationship between JCP and providers had significantly improved with many of the issues identified in year one being resolved. It is therefore likely that the improved relationships being developed in year two may have been affected to some extent by issues brought on by the pandemic. More broadly it should also be noted that where the relationship between providers and JCP's worked well tended to be in areas where significant investment of time and effort had been made in facilitating communication and understanding between the organisations, often through the use of approaches such as co-location or the use of dedicated liaison staff.

What worked well?

A number of positives were identified through this year's local area case studies including the capacity of providers to adapt to remote working with participants as a result of the pandemic and pivoting towards the use of social media to generate referrals in the absence of referrals from JCP's in the first months following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition providers highlighted that a key strength of the FSS delivery model was its flexibility and capacity to adapt to changing circumstances.

What were the challenges? / How could we improve?

It was noted that some of the improvements seen in last year's report with regards to improved relationships between providers and local stakeholders were not able to be evidenced in this year's findings, likely due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As has been the case with previous years reports a number of challenges were also identified regarding the local employability landscape in each case study area, with providers and stakeholders stating that the local employability landscape remains cluttered and confusing to navigate for participants. It should be

recognised that while there is a commitment on the part of SG to develop services which aid alignment and service integration that there is also scope for service providers to engage more effectively with existing local employability organisations.

What is Scottish Government doing?

We recognise that a national service such as Fair Start Scotland has limited scope to make a deeper impact on the local governance of public services. Simplification of the employability landscape from the service user's point of view is a key driver of No One Left Behind, Scottish and Local Government's shared vision for the future of employability support in Scotland. Through this approach, we have recognised that employability is part of a wider public service offer, and that attempting to support someone through employability provision without ensuring wrap around support from Health, Justice, Housing and other services is unlikely to result in optimal outcomes for those furthest from the labour market.

A key focus for development of phase 2 of No One Left Behind has been strengthening local partnerships to ensure they can support the move to local governance of services, and that services can be planned, designed and delivered collaboratively across local organisations and sectors.

Part of this will require providers to play an active role in the wider landscape, but fundamentally, this is about ensuring better outcomes for service user's through having better aligned support across the public sector, and viewing their journey towards work holistically, rather than seeing the role of employability in a specific silo.

For the remainder of FSS delivery we will continue to facilitate and encourage service providers to develop and enhance their partnerships with other local service delivery organisations to provide a more integrated offer of support for participants. This is a key element of our performance management approach and will we continue to monitor progress through provider action plans and stakeholder feedback.

6. Employability support

This chapter focuses on participant views and experiences of support received through FSS. It starts by describing participants' feedback on their experiences of pre-employment support and then moves onto describing feedback on in-work support. This chapter also describes the experiences of accessing support during the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, this chapter talks about long-term experiences of support for those participants who joined the FSS service in the first and second year of delivery to see how perception of the impacts of FSS changed over time.

The chapter draws on several data sources including the telephone survey, the qualitative interviews with FSS participants and the case studies.

6.1 Pre-employment support

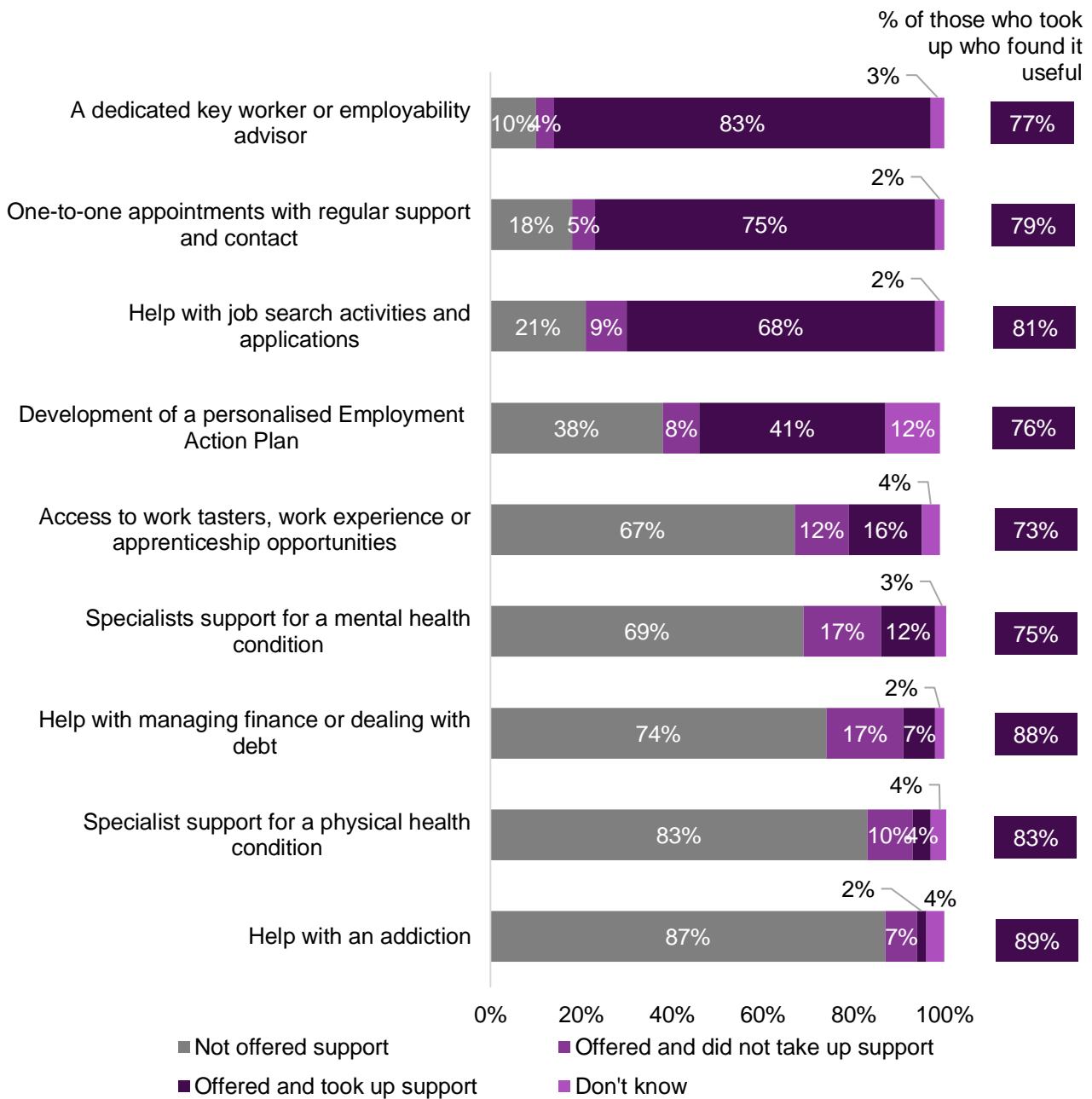
Telephone survey respondents were asked about which forms of pre-employment support they were offered as part of FSS. Figure 8 shows the different types of pre-employment support that Year 3 FSS participants reported they were offered, how many went on to take that support and of those who took up such support, how many found it useful.

As can be seen in Figure 8, the three types of pre-employment support that FSS participants took up most often were: a dedicated key worker or employability advisor (83% were offered and took up), one to one appointments with regular support and contact (75% were offered and took up) and help with job search activities and applications (68% were offered and took up).

Regarding the offer of specialist support for a health condition, 32% of Year 3 FSS participants reported that they had a mental health condition and nearly half of these participants (47%) said they were offered specialist support for their condition through the FSS service. 15% of Year 3 FSS participants had a physical health condition or a disability and of those, less than a quarter (24%) reported being offered specialist support for a physical health condition through the FSS service.

Participants' take up of the different types of pre-employment support remained broadly consistent across first, second and third year of service delivery. remained broadly consistent across first, second and third year of service delivery. The one exception was take up of a personalised Employment Action Plan, which reduced slightly in the third year of service delivery (82% of those who were offered this type of support took it up in the third year compared with 89% in the first and second year of FSS).

Figure 8: Offer, take-up and usefulness of pre-employment support



Source: Telephone survey, D5d: Were you offered the following support to help you remain move into work as part of the Fair Start Scotland service? D5e: Did you take up this support? Base: All 2020 cohort respondents (644). D6: On a scale of 1 extremely useful to 5 not at all useful, how useful would you say that each of the types of support your received were to you? Base: All who used the support type: one to one appointment (484), key worker (533), help with job search activities (441), Employment Action Plan (264), work tasters etc. (104), specialist support with mental health (74), specialist support with physical health (23), specialist support with an addiction (13), help managing finances (45)

Year 3 FSS participants were also asked how often they met with their key worker. Half of participants (50%) meet with their key worker about once a week and 27% meet about once every two weeks. Compared with the first and second year of service delivery the frequency with which participants met with their key worker has reduced slightly in the third year. For example, 50% of participants met with their key worker about once per week in Year 3 compared with 63% in Year 2 and 65% in year one. It is however highly likely that the frequency of meetings has reduced

in the third year as a result of the switch to remote delivery of the service due to COVID-19 pandemic and an increased use of phone calls, text-messaging, emails and online meetings to provide support to FSS participants.

Figure 8 also shows the proportion of Year 3 FSS participants who found each type of pre-employment support useful, out of those who were offered this type of support and took it up. This shows that at least around three quarters of participants found each type of support useful. Help with addiction, specialist support for a physical health condition and help with managing finances or dealing with debt were found useful by the highest proportion of participants who took them up (89%, 83% and 88% respectively). It is however important to note that this was also the type of support offered to and taken up by the smallest proportion of FSS participants.

There was significant variation between demographic groups regarding how useful they found different types of support offered. Minority ethnic participants were less likely to find several types of support useful, compared to those who were not from minority ethnic groups, including in reference to having a dedicated key worker/employability adviser (65% compared with 80%), one to one appointments with regular support and contact (71% compared with 81%) and access to work tasters, work experience or apprenticeship opportunities (55% compared with 81%).

Those with a limiting health condition were less likely to find help with job search activities and applications useful compared to participants on average (76% compared with 81% on average). Female participants were more likely than male participants to find access to work tasters, work experience or apprenticeship opportunities useful (87% compared with 65%).

Telephone survey respondents were also asked an open text question about what part of the FSS support made the most difference to them. The most commonly mentioned types of support were help with CVs and application forms (21%), receiving one to one support (18%) and having regular contact or a consistent adviser (17%). Around one in ten participants also mentioned help with interviewing techniques (10%), job searches (10%), suitable job suggestions (9%) and confidence building exercises (8%).

FSS participants who took part in the qualitative interviews were asked about their experiences of support received through FSS and about things they liked and disliked about the service. Overall, interviewees spoke very positively about the support received. In particular, many interviewees highlighted the greatly beneficial role of general support and encouragement they received from their key worker in terms of building up confidence to start and then to keep up job searching activities, as well as practical advice on preparing a CV and job applications as well going through the recruitment process itself.

“The interaction with my [key worker] was good. Because when I told her that I had this interview on such and such a date. So one day prior we would have an online

phone call and she would give me some tips or if I had any doubts she would try and help me. That was the major thing that I saw that was good [in the FSS support]. And she even after the interviews, she had a follow up and she wanted to know how did it go. ‘...did you feel comfortable?’ ‘What was the result?’”
- FSS Participant

Support regarding mental health provided by a key worker was also often mentioned by interviewees as a positive aspect of taking part in FSS.

“It was just very helpful that we had somebody to talk to because I felt really isolated because of my situation [of being unemployed] and because of lockdown.”
- FSS Participant

Other examples of pre-employment support positively rated by the interviews included financial support (e.g. to pay for a course to build skills in a chosen field, acquire appropriate clothes for a job interview, transportation costs), help with accessing food banks, help with housing and specialist help for those with convictions.

In one instance, issues around communication from the FSS provider and lack of contact from the key worker had an adverse effect on the experience of pre-employment support for the FSS participant.

“I actually had very little contact with my [key worker] for quite a while. No replies to email, and various other things. Recently it transpires that that particular [key worker] has left the company for some reason (...). And the new person (...), I’ve had very little contact from either. So I’ve been left particularly unimpressed for the last month or two.”
- FSS Participant

Interviews conducted with FSS participants as part of case studies also provided insights into the experiences of pre-employment support. Some FSS participants in the third year described help they received to improve their confidence and technical ability to conduct interviews on Zoom which has become necessary as a result of the pandemic. Another participant had taken part in a Steps to Work programme at his local college which was certified on completion.

“They were instrumental in helping me to take part in an Introduction to IT security course – I wouldn’t have done that before Fair Start.”
- FSS Participant

Participants highly valued the tailored support that FSS offered them with many feeding back that it felt like it was delivered in a way to suit their individual needs.

“It was a longer course – it gave me more time to get things right, not rushed, really had time to work on my confidence.”
- FSS Participant

6.2 In-work support

Respondents who were in work at the time of the telephone survey were asked about their views on the in-work support offered by FSS. Of those Year 3 FSS participants who were in work, 43% recall being offered any type of in-work support. The proportion of FSS participants who recall being offered any type of in-work support has decreased compared with second and first year of FSS where 57% (Year 2) and 67% (Year 1) of those in work recalled being offered any type of in-work support.

Of several types of in-work support offered, Year 3 FSS participants were most likely to take up support from a dedicated key worker (29% of all participants and 76% of those who were offered this type of support), one-to-one appointments with regular support and contact (25% of all participants and 73% of those who were offered this type of support) and monthly workplace reviews with their employer (10% of all participants and 69% of those who were offered this type of support).¹³

As shown in Figure 9, satisfaction with different types of in-work support offered among those who were offered and took up the support ranged from 77% for the development of an In Work Support Action Plan to 100% for financial guidance.¹⁴

Figure 9: Proportion of FSS participants who found different types of in-work support (that they took up) useful*



Source: D11j: On a scale of 1 extremely useful to 5 not at all useful, how useful would you say that each of the types of support your received were to you? Base: All 2019 cohort who used the support type: key worker (63), one to one appointment (54), workplace inductions (15), In Work Support Action Plan (22), financial guidance (13), monthly reviews (22)

* Please note that results on the usefulness of support types have low bases sizes

¹³ Due to small base sizes it is not possible to comment on differences between 2018, 2019 and 2020 cohorts

¹⁴ Please note that results on the usefulness of support types have low bases sizes

FSS participants who took part in the qualitative interviews and who found employment while taking part in the FSS were asked about their experiences of in-work support received through FSS. Of these, many interviewees acknowledged that FSS providers stayed in touch with them, usually through regular phone calls once they were in work. A number of interviewees found the in-work support beneficial while others were neutral. Positives which were identified mainly included being able to contact the key worker about a range of queries they might have about the new job that they did not feel confident to raise directly in their workplace, as well as general encouragement and being able to talk about new experiences.

“Looking back, getting the job’s probably the easiest part. Keeping the job is harder. Because you don’t know where you’re going and there is a...of like...of e-learning, I’ve never heard of e-learning before and I thought, what is this? So although you do get support through work as well for me it felt, I didn’t want to come across as being stupid and ask questions. So I would text the person who helped me through [FSS] and say, ‘What does this mean?’ and she would phone me straightaway and just say, ‘Don’t panic, that’s only what about A, B or C.’...I felt conf[ident] because I’d built up a relationship with her, I felt confident about not feeling stupid or her not making me feel stupid for asking questions.”

-FSS participant

Another aspect of in-work support spoken about positively by interviewees was help received with covering costs of getting to and from work, for example by covering the costs of bus tickets in the first couple of weeks after starting a new job.

With regards to negative experiences with in-work support, one interviewee commented that they received regular phone calls from FSS provider but these were from different phone numbers and from different people each time who seemed to ask the same questions which the FSS participant disliked.

6.3 Accessing support during the COVID-19 pandemic

Year 3 FSS participants who took part in the telephone survey were asked about their experiences of accessing support during the periods when government guidelines restricted the ability to meet in-person. The telephone survey indicated that during those times, 90% of participants accessed support over the phone and 55% accessed support online via email, messaging and video conferencing. 2% accessed support through outdoor meetings and 6% did not access support during those times.

Telephone survey respondents were also asked if they experienced difficulties accessing support when the ability to meet in-person was restricted. 66% reported no difficulties in accessing support, while 17% reported not feeling comfortable using technology / video conferencing. Lack of access to the internet and lack of access to device/technology was reported by 12% of participants.

There were some differences in the likelihood of experiencing difficulties in accessing support during the time when government restrictions were in place for

those who had a limiting health conditions. Specifically, participants with a limiting health condition were more likely to have difficulties accessing a device or technology to engage with support online compared to those with a non-limiting health condition or no health condition (17% compared to 8% and 9% respectively). Those with a health condition were also more likely to have felt uncomfortable using technology or video conferencing to access support than those with no health condition (24% compared to 10%).

6.4 Long term experiences of support

Some of the respondents who took part in the telephone survey carried out in the first and second year of FSS delivery were contacted again in the current telephone survey to identify any long term changes in barriers to work, impact of FSS on addressing those barriers and the effect of FSS on motivation to work.

Barriers to work reported by the first and second year FSS participants in the current telephone survey were similar to those reported in the earlier surveys. The three most commonly reported barriers in the current survey were:

- Not having the right qualifications, skills or experience (reported by 21% of the second year FSS participants and 15% of the first year FSS participants)
- Mental health condition making it difficult to carry out tasks at work' (reported by 14% of the second year FSS participants and 16% of the first year FSS participants)
- Physical health condition or a disability making it difficult to carry out tasks at work (reported by 13% of the second year FSS participants and 21% of the first year FSS participants)

In addition, 8% of second year FSS participants and 8% of first year FSS participants reported that the Covid-19 pandemic making it difficult to find work as a new barrier in the current survey.

Second and first year FSS participants were also asked to what extent they thought the support received from FSS had helped them to overcome each of their reported barriers as part of the current telephone survey. There was no significant difference in the proportion of participants who reported that FSS support helped them to overcome the reported barriers in the current survey compared to the past surveys.¹⁵ For example, 45% of second year FSS participants reported that FSS helped them to overcome the barrier of not having the right qualifications, skills or experience in the current survey (compared to 46% in the second year survey). 32% of first year FSS participants reported that FSS helped them to overcome a barrier of having a physical health conditions that made it difficult for the person to carry out tasks at work in the current survey (compared with 36% in the second year survey).

¹⁵ Please note that due to the low base size it was not possible to carry out comparisons for other reported barriers

Finally, second and first year FSS participants were asked about the effect of FSS on their motivation to work in the current survey. Overall, this showed that the perceived impact on participants' motivation had reduced over time. For the second year FSS participants 63% of participants indicating that taking part in FSS increased their motivations (a lot or a little) in the second year survey to 52% reporting an increase in motivation in the current survey. For the first year FSS participants the proportion of those who reported that their motivation to work have increased as a result of taking part in FSS fell from 65% in the first year survey to 52% in the second year survey and 48% in the current survey.

What worked well?

Despite the effects of the pandemic on service delivery participants remained generally very positive about the support they received through FSS with a clear majority agreeing that they found both pre-employment and in-work support useful.

In particular the forms of support rated highest in terms of usefulness were elements of specialist support such as help with an addiction, help managing finances or debt and a specialist support for a physical health condition.

What were the challenges? / How could we improve?

There were significant differences in ratings of usefulness between demographic groups with minority ethnic respondents and those with a limited health condition less likely to find certain elements of support as useful compared to other participants.

What is Scottish Government doing?

We recognise that we can do more to support participants with health conditions and who come from minority ethnic communities, and we are already taking steps to remedy this. In response to the findings from the Year 2 Evaluation report, we commissioned external training for service provider staff in both disability and diversity & ethnicity awareness. The aim of this was to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the range of challenges faced by participants within these groups, and to inform how the service providers could best respond.

Learning from this training is now being embedded by service providers and, along with the feedback from this year's test and learn pilots, we will monitor the impact on services through our performance management framework and future evaluation activity.

7. Values and principles

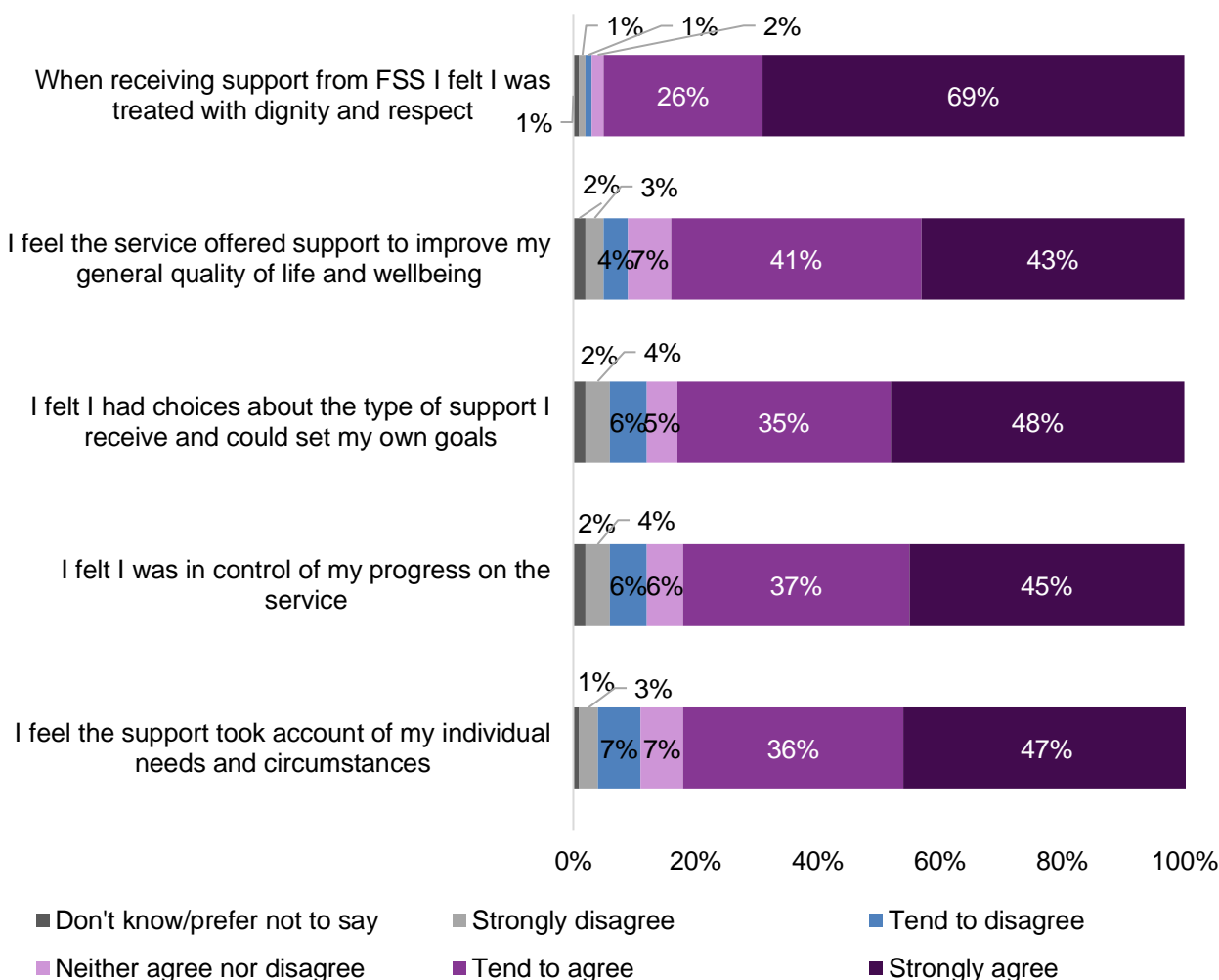
The Fair Start Scotland service is built upon the Scottish Government's key values for public services, namely:

- Dignity and respect
- Fairness and equality
- Continuous improvement

Year 3 FSS participants who joined the service after July 2020 and who took part in the telephone survey were asked whether they were aware that FSS was voluntary. Nine in ten (90%) of these participants knew the service was voluntary, 5% thought it was mandatory and another 5% did not know.

As shown in Figure 10, Year 3 FSS participants that took part in the telephone survey had positive views on how the FSS support they received aligned with the values of FSS, with 95% agreeing that they felt they were treated with dignity and respect. More than eight out of ten agreed that the support took account of their individual needs and circumstances (82%), that they felt they had choices about the support they received and could set their own goals (83%), that they felt the service offered support to improve their general quality of life and wellbeing (84%), and that they felt they were in control of their progress (83%).

Figure 10: Extent to which FSS participants agree with statements about their experience of support



Source: D13: To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the support you have received. Base: All 2020 cohort (644)

There were several differences in attitudes about the service related to ethnicity. Those from minority ethnic groups were less likely to feel positive compared to participants from non-ethnic minority groups about several aspects of the support:

- That the support took account of their individual needs and circumstances (74% for those from minority ethnic groups compared with 85% for white participants)
- That they were in control of their progress on the service (72% compared with 86%)
- That they had choices about the type of support they received and could set their own goals (74% compared with 86%)

Further, male participants were more likely than female participants to feel the service offered them support to improve their general quality of life and wellbeing (86% compared with 80%).

Satisfaction with FSS support (as represented by the five statements in Table 10) have consistently increased over the three years of FSS delivery for each of the five statements and increases have reached statistical significance for three of these statements:

- Being treated with dignity and respect (agreement increased from 92% in the first year to 95% in the third year of FSS delivery)
- Being offered support to improve general quality of life and wellbeing (agreement increased from 78% in the first year to 84% in the third year of FSS delivery)
- Feeling in control of progress on the service (agreement increased from 79% in the first year to 83% in the third year of FSS delivery)

Interviews conducted with FSS participants as part of the case studies indicated that FSS participants felt that their needs were listened to and that the support they received was adapted to their needs. One FSS participant reported that they could be honest with their Fair Start Scotland adviser about the types of work they wanted to do “*without feeling fussy*”, and the support they received was tailored to this goal – “*they actually listened to what I wanted*”.

FSS participants who took part in qualitative interviews discussed how they perceived the approach of FSS key workers as supportive and encouraging, professional, attentive, humane and focused on the individual needs of the person.

“It was like about me and what I wanted to do and things like that, so [my key worker] looked for jobs that could be right to me, that I might like. Just like looking for different jobs and obviously asked like what I was interested in.”

- FSS participant

“[The key worker] put me on a course that I was interested in, and I told her about it and she put me on the course...[The key worker] also gave me confidence when I was at my lowest point wanting to give up. She gave me confidence [that] I could do this...She was very supportive”

- FSS participant

“If [I] was anxious or nervous or anything like that I felt like I could... talk about [it]. If you're feeling anxious or if you're nervous or things like that...So it was professional but also you can talk about the natural human feelings...like, 'I do feel quite nervous about this'...or 'I'm not too sure how this is going to go'...It was comforting knowing that you know you're talking to a human.”

- FSS participant

What worked well?

A clear majority of participants rated the values and principles of FSS highly with the vast majority of respondents stated that they were treated with dignity and respect by FSS. Furthermore a significant majority felt that the service took account of their individual needs and circumstances and had improved their general quality

of life and wellbeing. It is also worth noting that there have been statistically significant improvements against these measures across the three years of delivery.

The vast majority of respondents were also clear that FSS was a voluntary service.

What were the challenges? / How could we improve?

Despite overall results being very positive there were however variations in participants views of the service depending on their demographic characteristics. In particular individuals from ethnic minorities somewhat less likely to rate the service as highly as males and white individuals. This is a recurring finding and suggests that further work regarding communication and tailoring of support to meet the particular needs of groups with specific barriers to employment may be required.

What is Scottish Government doing?

The commissioning of external specialist training on diversity and disability awareness has been specifically designed to help both service providers and the Scottish Government develop enhanced knowledge and understanding of the particular needs of some of our most vulnerable participants.

We will use the recommendations from the training to inform our continuing work with specialist support organisations, for example Values Into Action Scotland, CEMVO and Radiant & Brighter, as part of our test and learn approach to drive specific improvements in service delivery for ethnic minority and disabled participants.

In addition, it is anticipated that by giving participants the opportunity to join Fair Start Scotland more than once will also ensure that those who may have had to leave Fair Start Scotland previously due to personal circumstances now have access to further employability support.

8. Moving towards work

This chapter focuses on analysis of the number of FSS participants who started work as well as providing evidence on the characteristics of the jobs that participants have moved into.

The chapter starts by describing the MI data for job starts and for 3, 6 and 12 month outcomes, for FSS participants overall and for different demographic groups. It then moves on to describe the findings from the telephone survey on job starts and on various employment characteristics, such as type of contract or hours worked. It also describes findings from data collected by FSS providers regarding earnings in relation to the National Living Wage, as well as hours worked.

The chapter finishes by looking at the role of FSS supporting participants in overcoming barriers to work and at the Job Search Self Efficacy Index scores of surveyed participants to explore the impact of FSS on progression into and towards work.

8.1 Who started (and sustained) work? - MI data

Not enough time has passed to be able to reliably assess the employment outcomes for FSS participants who started on the service in the third year. This is because enough time must pass from when the person joined the service to be able to say if they started a job during the 12 months (and in some cases 18 months) pre-employment support period and then even more time must pass to be able to tell if sustained employment for 3, 6 and 12 months has been achieved.

For this reason, this section presents findings on employment outcomes only for those FSS participants for whom enough time has elapsed to be able to assess if they achieved a specific job outcome. This means the majority of people included in the analyses started on FSS in the first or in the second year of its delivery.

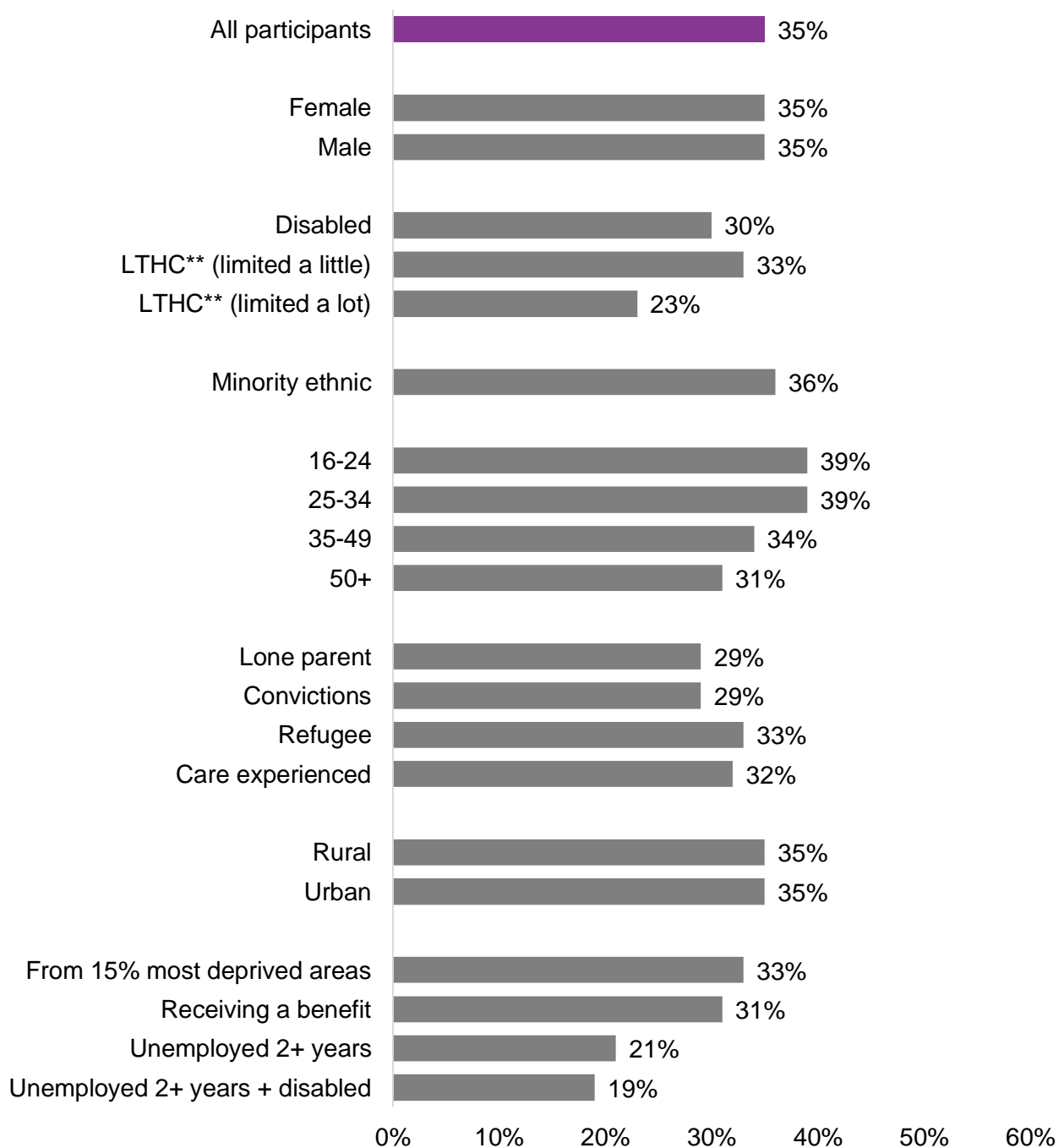
In total, 35% of those who started on FSS had started a job at the point of reporting. Further, 23% of those who started on FSS sustained employment for at least 3 months, 18% sustained employment for at least 6 months and 15% sustained employment for at least 12 months.¹⁶

Figure 11 -Figure 14 show employment outcomes for different demographic groups among FSS participants.

¹⁶ Please note here that the employment rates reported here refer to different time periods, e.g. near final figures for job starts were available up to the end of June 2020 (April - June 2020 quarter), near final figures for 3 month job outcomes were available up to the end of March 2020 (January - March 2020 quarter) at the time of writing this report.

Compared with FSS participants overall, a lower proportion of participants who had a long term health condition that limited them a lot, lone parents, those with convictions, those unemployed for 2+ years and those unemployed for 2+ years and disabled started a job after joining FSS. There was no difference for women and men for job starts.

Figure 11: Job starts for different demographic groups among FSS participants for those FSS cohorts where enough time has passed since joining FSS for outcomes to be achieved*



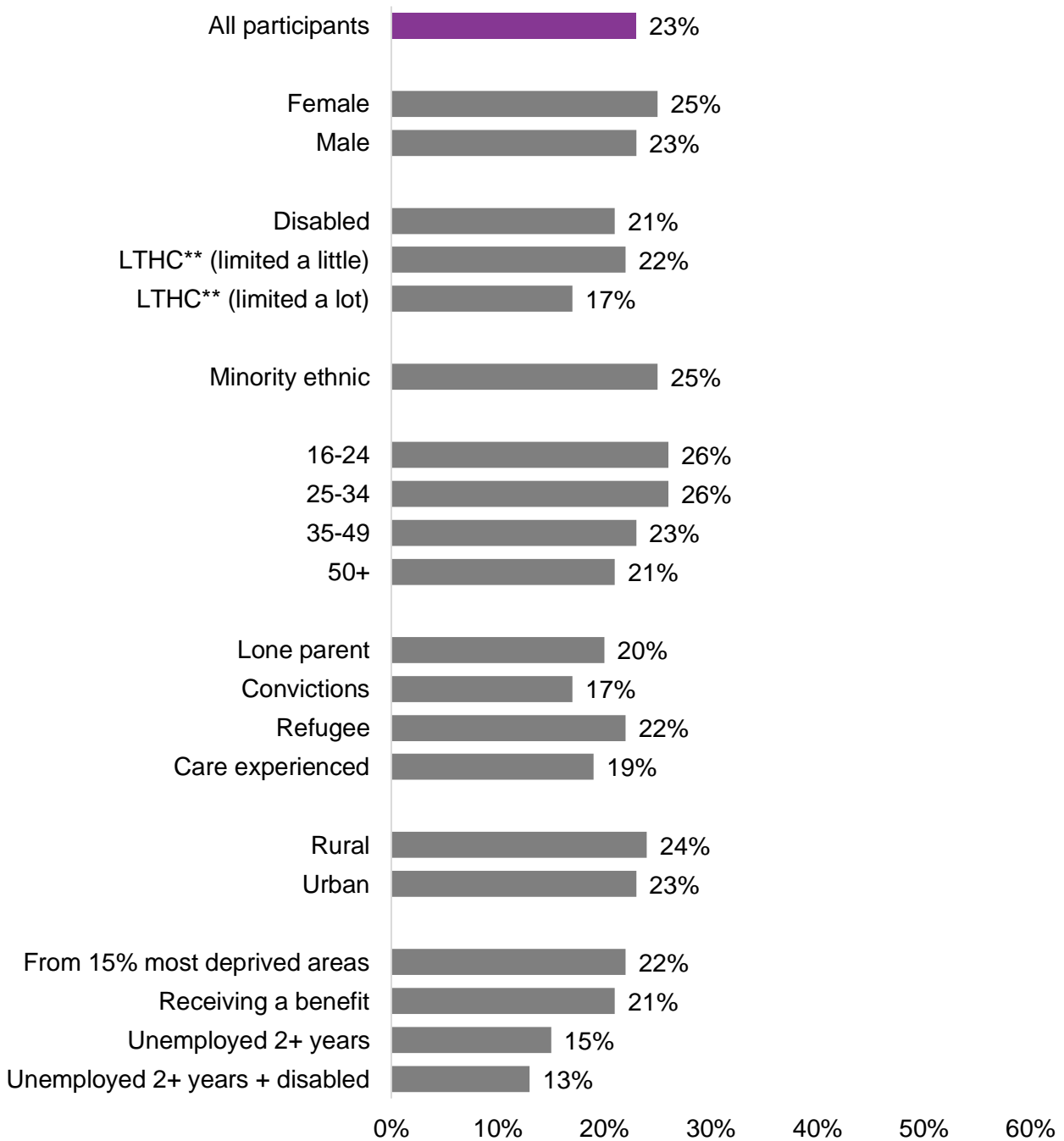
Source: Management Information (MI) data

* Please note that at the time of writing this report the near final figures for job starts were available up to the end of June 2020 (April - June 2020 quarter)

** LTHC - Long Term Health Condition

Compared to all FSS participants, a lower proportion of participants who had a long term health condition that limited them a lot, those with convictions, those unemployed for 2+ years and those unemployed for 2+ years and disabled sustained employment for 3 months.

Figure 12: Three month job outcomes for different demographic groups among FSS participants for those FSS cohorts where enough time has passed since joining FSS for outcomes to be achieved*



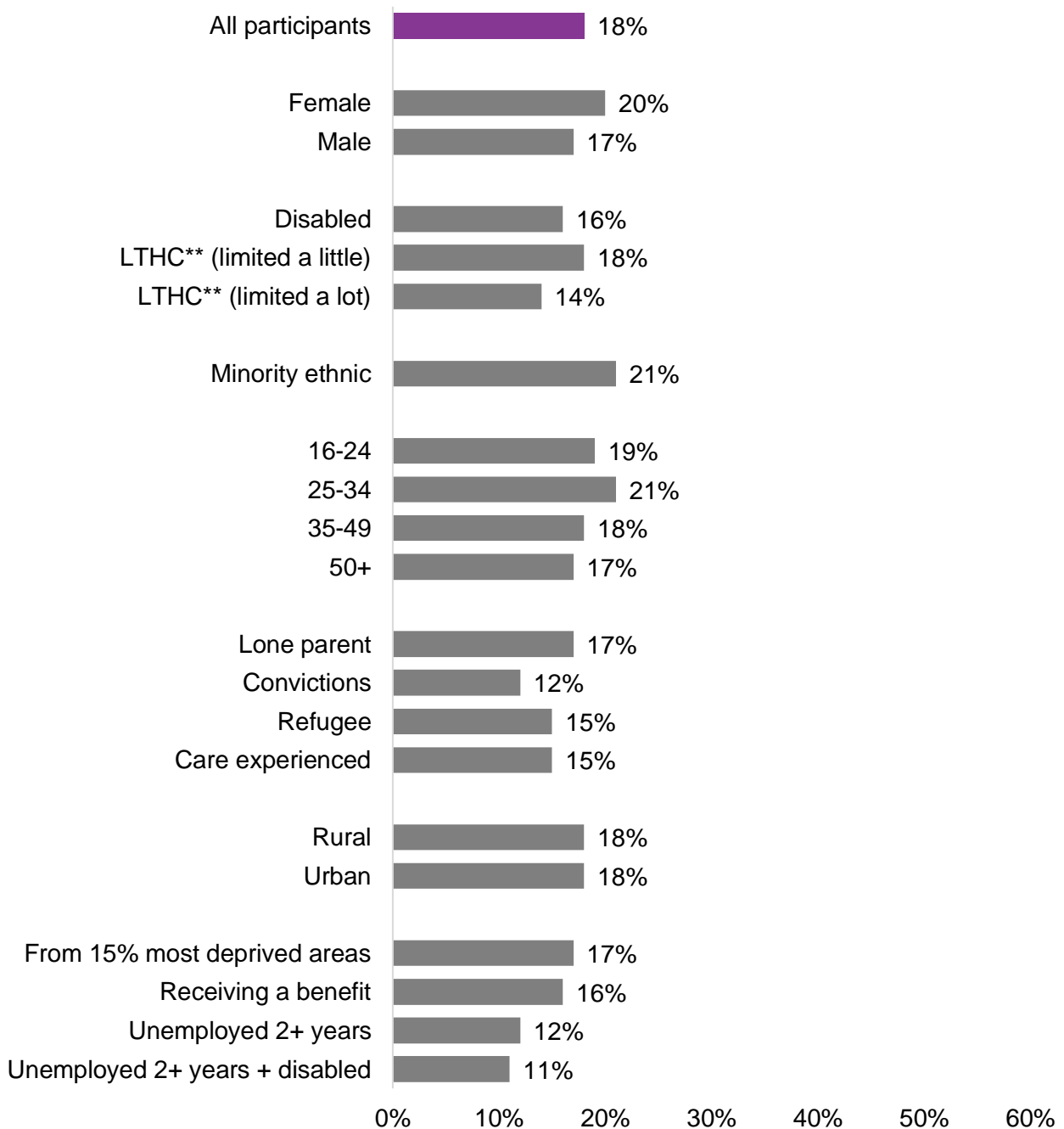
Source: Management Information (MI) data

* Please note that at the time of writing this report the near final figures for three month job outcomes were available up to the end of March 2020 (January - March 2020 quarter)

** LTHC - Long Term Health Condition

Similar to 3 month job outcomes a lower proportion of participants who had a long term health condition that limited them a lot, those with convictions, those unemployed for 2+ years and those unemployed for 2+ years and disabled sustained employment for 6 months compared to FSS participants overall.

Figure 13: Six month job outcomes for different demographic groups among FSS participants for those FSS cohorts where enough time has passed since joining FSS for outcomes to be achieved*



Source: Management Information (MI) data

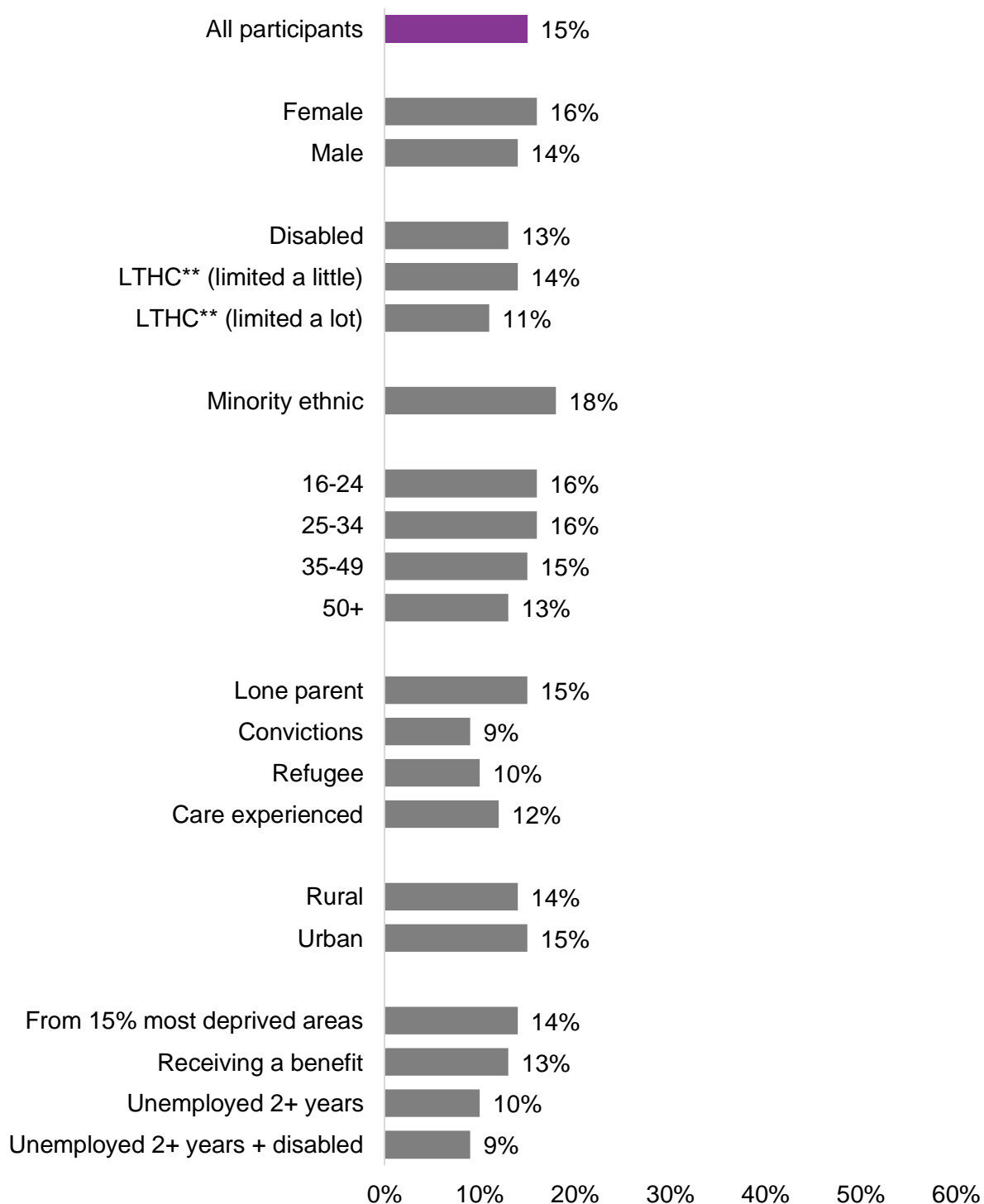
* Please note that at the time of writing this report the near final figures for six month job outcomes were available the end of December 2019 (October - December 2019 quarter)

** LTHC - Long Term Health Condition

For 12 month employment outcomes, a lower proportion of those who had a long term health condition that limited them a lot, those with convictions, refugees, those

unemployed for 2+ years and those unemployed for 2+ years and disabled than FSS participants overall.

Figure 14: Twelve month job outcomes for different demographic groups among FSS participants for those FSS cohorts where enough time has passed since joining FSS for outcomes to be achieved*



Source: Management Information (MI) data

* Please note that at the time of writing this report the near final figures for six month job outcomes were available to the end of June 2019 (April - June 2019 quarter)

** LTHC - Long Term Health Condition

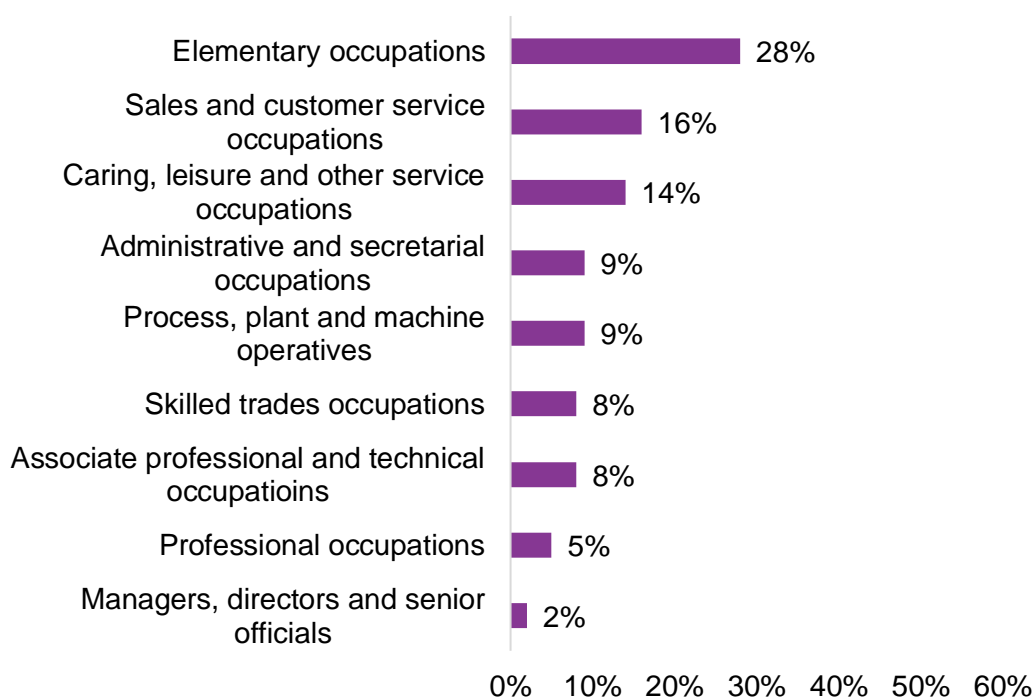
8.2 Who started (and sustained) work? - Telephone survey data

The telephone survey participants were asked about their work status, including whether they were in work as well as what were their hourly earnings, hours worked (full-time vs. part time), type of contract, profession, and whether the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their employment.

At the time of the survey, 38% of Year 3 participants reported that they were in work. It is worth noting that this fits well with findings on job outcome rates recorded in the management information data.

Figure 15 shows the types of occupation for those survey respondents who were in work. The types of occupation are organised drawing on the Office for National Statistic (ONS) classification starting from least skilled professions at the top and moving onto more skilled professions at the bottom. The most common profession was elementary occupations¹⁷ (28%), followed by sales and customer service occupation (16%) and caring, leisure and other service occupation (14%).

Figure 15: Occupation of third year FSS participants who were in work*



Source: IFF Research telephone survey of FSS customers. Taken from collating and coding answers from A5: What is/was your job title? And A6: What do/did you mainly do in your job? Base: 2020 cohort that were employed, self-employed or had worked in the last week (247).

* Please note that the categories and the associated values presented in this table are slightly different to the outline of occupations groups for those FSS who were in work presented in the Economic Evaluations, this is due to a slightly different approach to the categorisations of occupations adopted in the telephone survey and the economic evaluation

¹⁷ Examples of elementary occupations include roles such as farm workers, construction labourers and cleaners. More details can be found here: [ONS Standard Occupational Classification \(SOC\) Hierarchy \(onsdigital.github.io\)](https://onsdigital.github.io)

Those survey respondents who were in work were asked about their earnings. One in seven participants (14%) was earning below the National Living Wage.¹⁸ The majority (76%) was earning above the National Living Wage, with 42% of participants earning between £9.31 - £15.00 per hour. Those aged 16-24 were more likely than average to earn less than £8.21 than participants overall (24% compared with 11% overall). Compared with the second year of FSS delivery there has been an increase in participants earning above the National Living Wage (from 61% in the second year to 76% in the third year).

As part of the telephone survey, respondents were asked about the number of hours they worked in the past week. This showed that of the Year 3 FSS participants 61% worked 30 or more hours, 23% worked between 16 and 29 hours and the remaining 10% worked fewer than 16 hours per week.

The telephone survey respondents were also asked about the type of employment contract they held. More than four in ten (43%) had a permanent employment contract and a third (33%) had a temporary contract. One in ten (10%) were employed on zero hours contracts and a further 8% were self-employed. Those who were white were more likely to be employed on a permanent contract than minority ethnic participants (47% compared with 30%) and men were more likely than women to be self-employed (12% compared with 4%).

Finally, the telephone survey respondents were asked about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their employment situation. One third (34%) indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted their employment situation in some way with the remaining 66% reporting not being affected by the pandemic. Sixteen percent reported losing their job because of the pandemic and a further 5% reported losing their job due to the pandemic but then being employed again by the time the survey took place. Four percent reported that they were still employed but they worked fewer hours or were on furlough.

Those aged 16-24 years were more likely to have lost their job due to the pandemic (22% compared with 16% overall) and those aged 25-34 were less likely to have lost their job due to the pandemic than third year participants overall (11% compared with 16% overall).

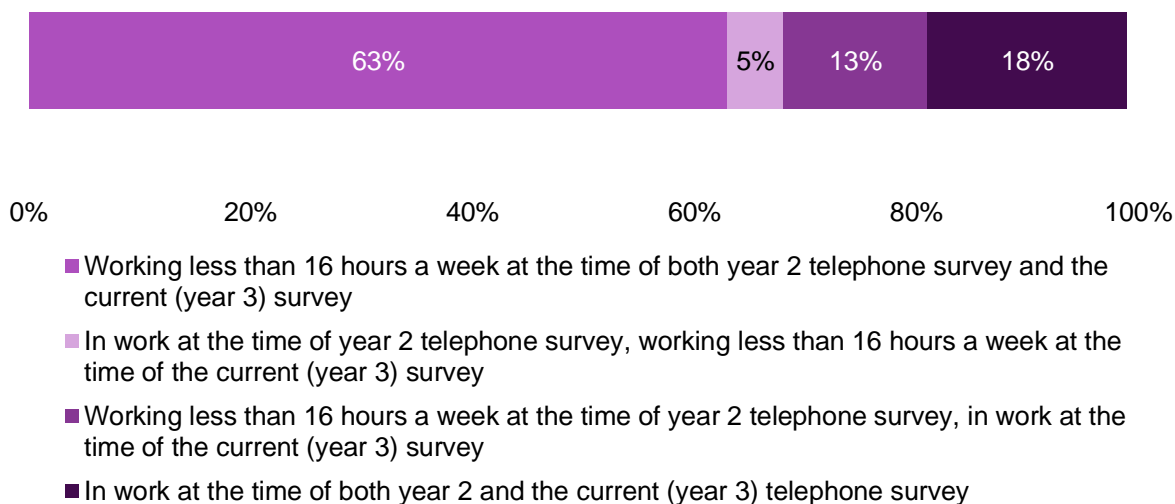
8.3 Long-term employment outcomes (Telephone survey data)

As part of this year's telephone survey participants from earlier waves of the survey were re-contacted regarding their work status, thereby allowing for some degree of longitudinal tracking of job related outcomes for FSS participants. Full details regarding this analysis are available in the standalone telephone survey report which has been published alongside this report. It should be noted that this section

¹⁸ The National Living Wage for those aged 25 and above was £8.72 at the time of the survey, it has since risen to £8.91 and now applies to all those aged 23 and over (the change took place in April 2021)

of analysis utilises relatively low sample sizes and therefore results should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 16: Change in working status for second year FSS participants between Year 2 and Year 3 telephone surveys



Source: Telephone survey, combination of A1_W2/W3. Which of the following best describes what you are doing at the moment? And A3_W2/W3. How many hours per week do you usually work, or spend in education? Base: 2019 cohort (205)

Overall, this data suggests that for some participants job outcomes are achieved at a later stage than is currently recorded as part of routine data collection for FSS. The data also suggests an increased level of long term improvements in employment outcomes between first and second year FSS participants. This is illustrated by Figure 16 which sets out the change in work status for second year FSS participants between the Year 2 telephone survey and the current (Year 3) telephone survey. Of those FSS participants interviewed in both surveys 63% were either not in employment or working less than 16 hours per week at either time points and 18% were employed at both times. 5% were employed at the time of Year 2 survey but not at the time of the current survey and 11% were not employed at the time of Year 2 survey but were in work at the time of the current (Year 3 survey). For first year FSS participants 66% were not in employment both at the Year 1 and the current survey and 16% were in work at both times. 9% were in work at the time of Year 1 survey but not at the time of the current survey and 10% were not in work at the time of Year 1 survey but were in work at the time of the current survey.

8.4 What Types of Jobs did FSS participants Move Into? - FSS provider data

This section reports on findings from data gathered from FSS providers on characteristics of jobs that FSS participants started while taking part in the service including type of contract, working hours and earnings. The findings presented below refer to those who started on FSS during a period between April 2018 and

March 2021 and as such cover the first, second and third year of FSS delivery. These findings may therefore differ slightly from those reported via the telephone survey. Further, these findings refer to the first job FSS participants started after joining the service although a proportion of FSS participants who started a job subsequently moved employment (once or several times) while receiving support from FSS.

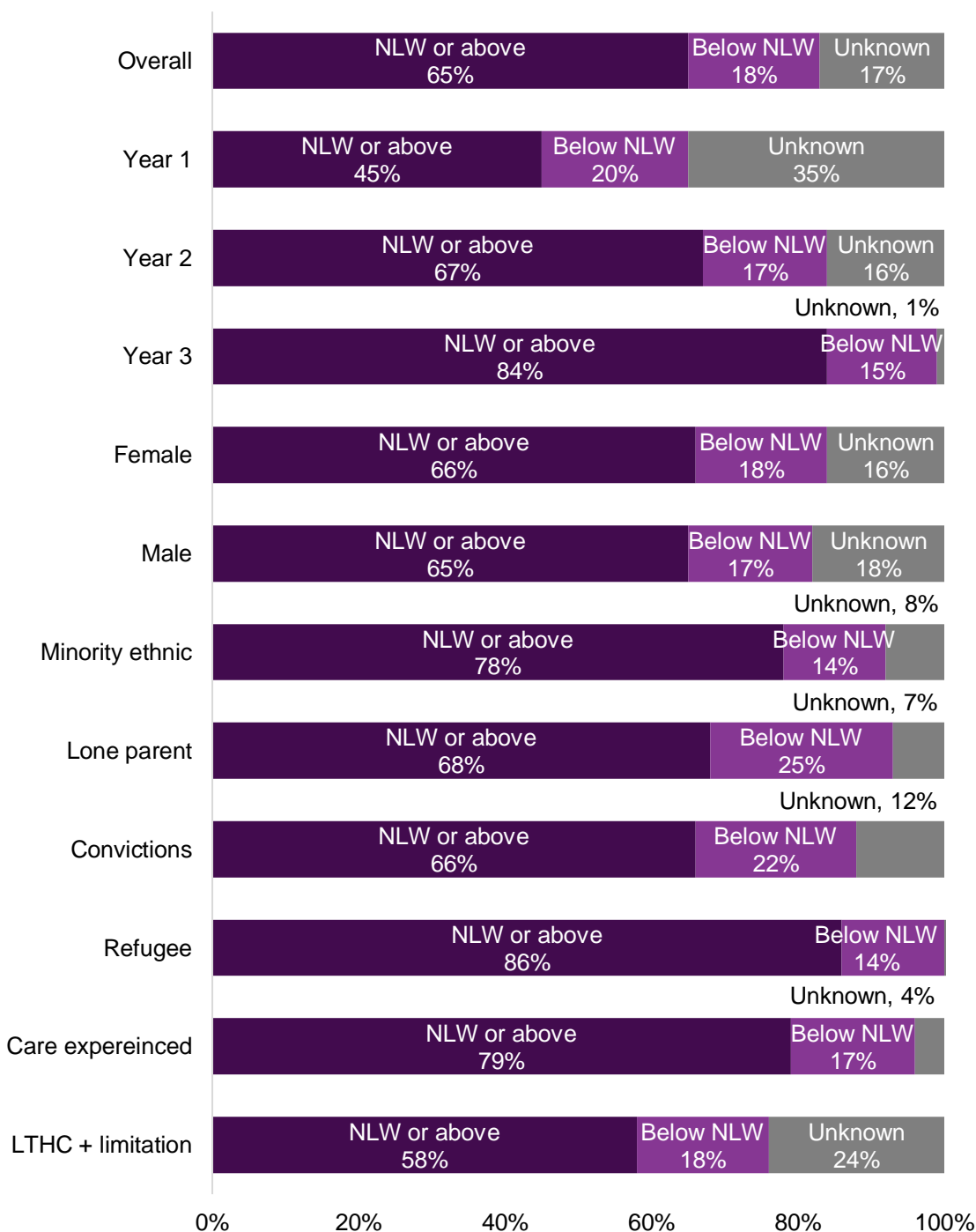
It is important to note that the dataset used to conduct the analysis was characterised by a significant amount of missing data. Therefore, the findings presented below should be interpreted with caution.

Figure 17 illustrates that those with a limiting health condition earned National Living Wage or above less often compared with FSS participants overall. Those from minority ethnic, refugee and care experienced groups earned the National Living Wage more often than the FSS participants overall. We can also observe that over the three years of FSS delivery the proportion of participants earning National Living Wage or above has increased, reaching 84% in Year 3.

As can be seen in Figure 18, compared with FSS participants overall, women and lone parents worked full-time less often in their first job. Men, minority ethnic individuals, those with convictions and those who were care experienced worked full-time more often in their first jobs after joining FSS. We can also see that the proportion of FSS participants working full-time in their first job after joining FSS increased over the three years of FSS service delivery.

The data on jobs collected by FSS providers also asked for the type of contract, occupation and industry. However, the proportion of missing data for these categories was too significant to be able to conduct meaningful analyses.

Figure 17: Proportion of FSS participants who earned National Living Wage (NLW)* or above and those who earned below NLW in their first job after joining FSS for different demographic groups and across first, second and third year of FSS delivery

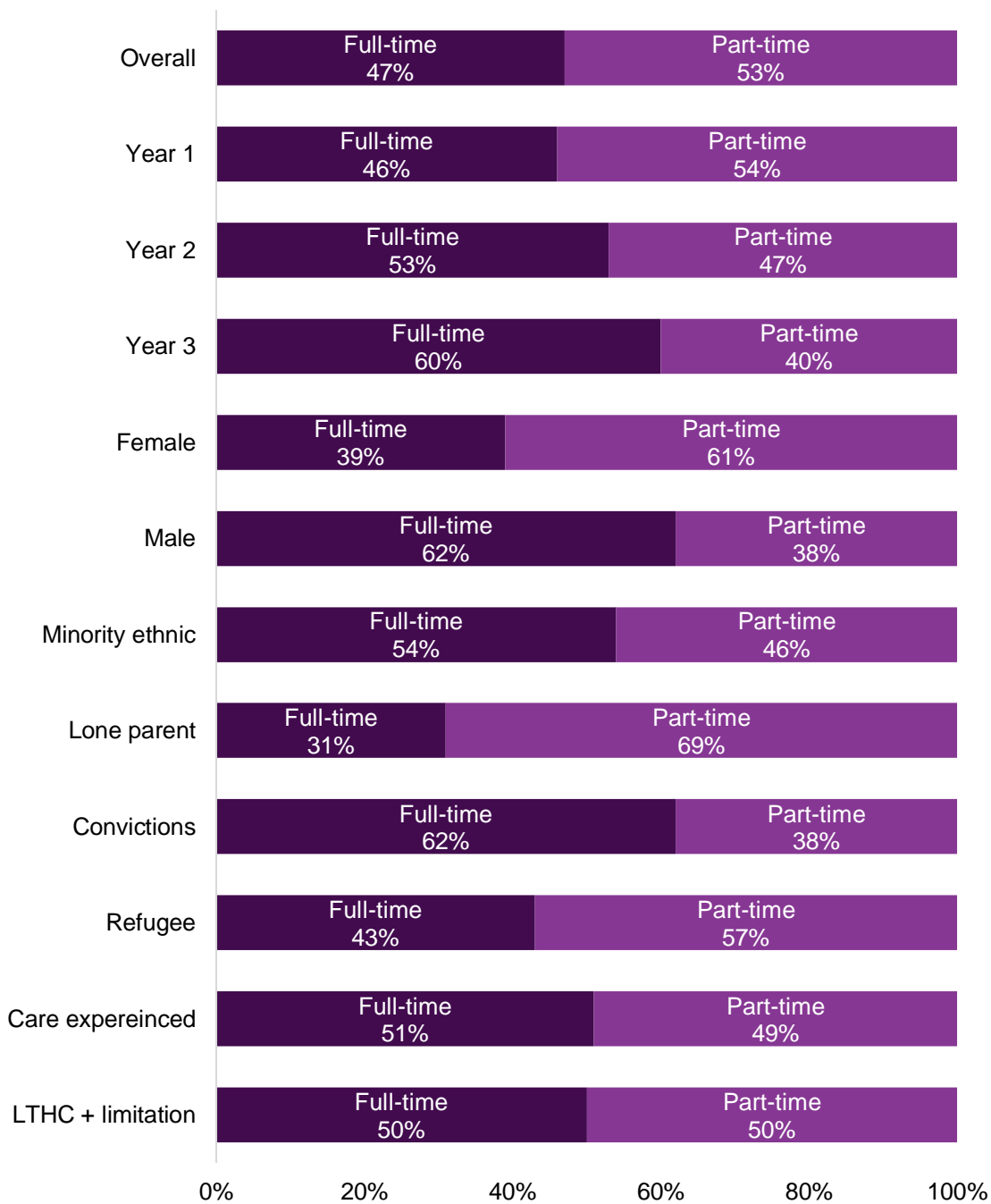


Source: Survey of FSS providers on job outcomes characteristics for FSS participants

*Please note that this category also include the National Minimum Wage for those aged under 23. For more details see: [National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/national-minimum-wage-rates).

LTHC – Long Term Health Condition

Figure 18: Proportion of FSS participants who worked full-time* and who worked part-time* in their first job from different demographic groups and across first, second and third year of the delivery of FSS



Source: Survey of FSS providers on job outcomes characteristics for FSS participants.

* For the purpose of this analyses the full time employment pattern has been defined as working 35 hours per week or more, while working part time has been defined as working less than 35 hours per week

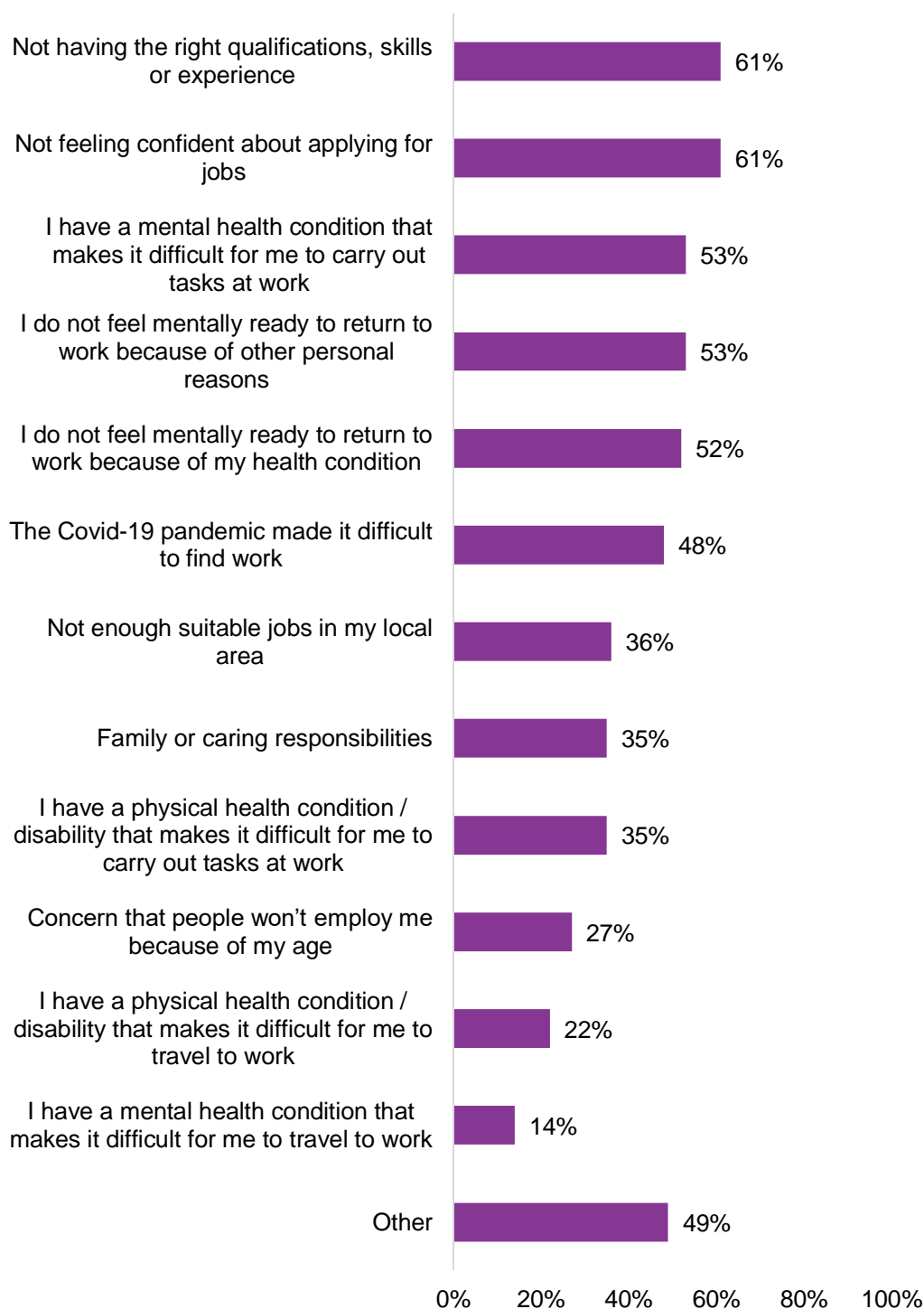
LTHC - Long Term Health Condition

8.5 Overcoming barriers to work

Telephone survey respondents were asked to what extent they thought the support received from FSS helped them to overcome each of the personal barriers to work they reported having. Figure 19 shows the proportion of respondents who said that the support offered by FSS helped them to overcome their personal barriers. The support from FSS was most helpful for those participants who reported not having the right qualifications, skills or experience and not feeling confident to apply for jobs as barriers to work. The FSS support helped six in ten (61%) of these participants to overcome these barriers. The support also helped over half of participants who reported having a mental health condition that made it difficult for them to carry out tasks at work (53%), those who reported not feeling mentally ready to return to work for other personal reasons (53%) and those not feeling mentally ready to return to work because of their health condition (52%).

The support from FSS was also felt to be helpful in overcoming the issue of COVID-19 epidemic making it difficult to find work. Nearly half (48%) of participants who reported this as a barrier said that the service helped them to overcome it.

Figure 19: Proportion of FSS participants for whom FSS support helped them to overcome individual barriers to work



Source: F1B. To what extent do you think the support you received from Fair Start Scotland helped you to overcome these barriers? Base: All 2020 Cohort who selected barrier: Not having the right qualifications, skills or experience (67) Not feeling confident about applying for jobs (20) I have a mental health condition that makes it difficult for me to carry out tasks at work (32) I do not feel mentally ready to return to work for other personal reasons (28) I do not feel mentally ready to return to work because of my health condition (19) The COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult to find work (224) Not enough suitable jobs in my local area (74) Family or caring responsibilities (48) I have a physical health condition/disability that makes it difficult for me to carry out (43) Concern that people won't employ me because of my age (17) I have a physical health condition/disability that makes it difficult for me to travel to work (14) I have a mental health condition that makes it difficult for me to travel to work (10) Other (180)

8.6 Job search skills and self-efficacy

FSS is rooted in the principles of dignity and respect, and the service model is designed to treat individuals in a way that reflects these values. This will manifest in a number of ways, one of which may be by nurturing a sense of self-efficacy in those who participate.

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their own ability to organise and carry out actions in order to successfully achieve a task. It is based on a person's perceptions and beliefs about themselves. The level of self-efficacy experienced by a person can have an impact on many areas of life, particularly those that are relevant to finding and maintaining employment.

In order to explore the effects of FSS support on participants' self-efficacy, and to establish any links to being treated with dignity and respect, the participants telephone survey included a section on standardised job search self-efficacy measures.

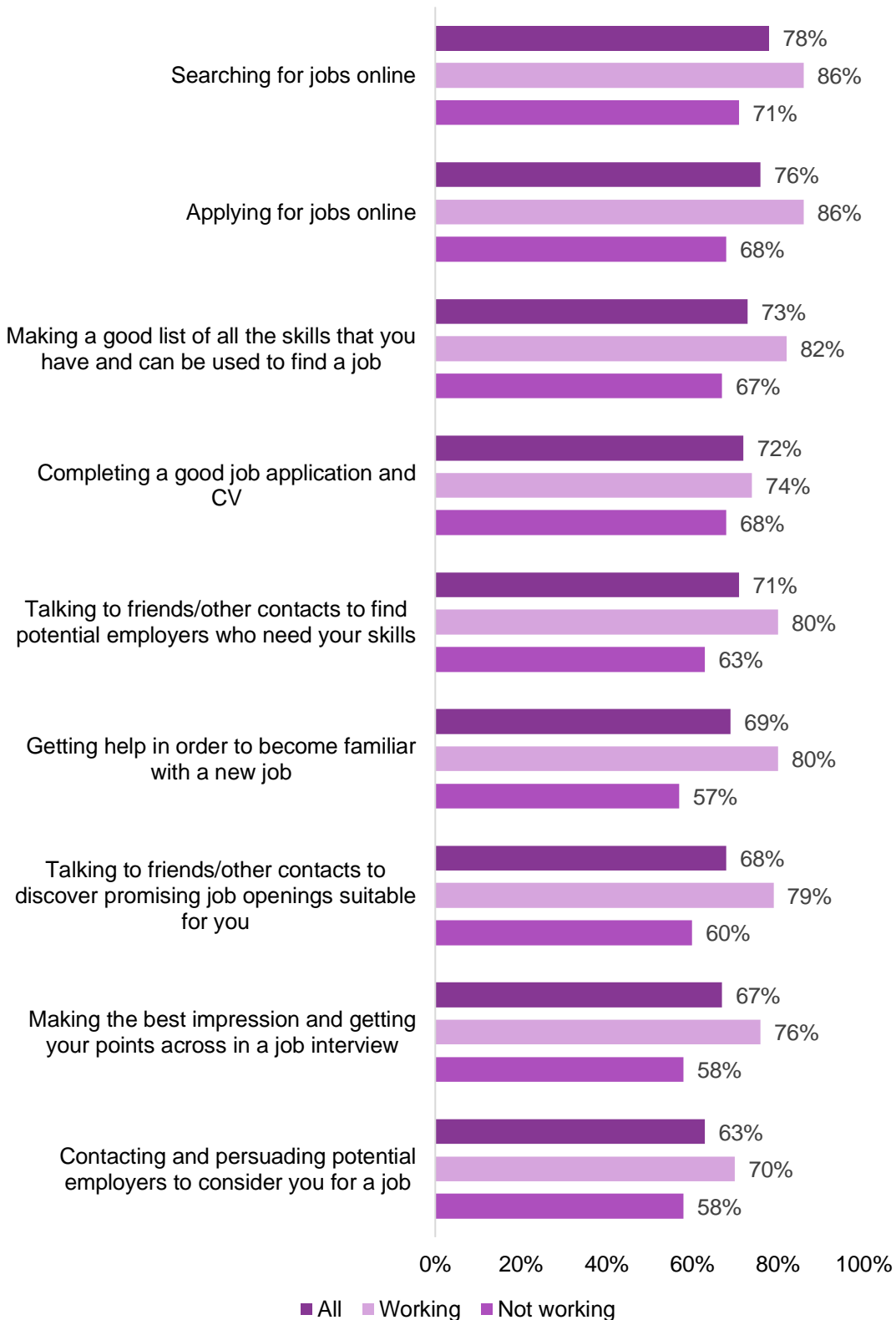
Respondents completed a nine-item measure of the strength of an individual's belief that they have the skills to undertake a range of job search tasks, known as the Job Search Self Efficacy (JSSE) Index.

Figure 20 shows the proportion of FSS participants who felt confident in carrying out each of the nine tasks comprising the Job Search Self Efficacy scale for participants overall, those in work and those not working at the time of the survey.

Overall, participants were confident in job search activities. However, there was some variation in the level of confidence in carrying out specific job search tasks. Nearly eight in ten participants (78%) felt confident about searching for jobs online, whereas a little over six in ten participants (63%) said they were confident to contact and persuade potential employers to consider them for a job. We can also see that those participants who were in work at the time of the survey were more confident in carrying out all of the job search tasks featured in the Job Search Self Efficacy Index than those who were not in work.

Comparing results across the three years of evaluation suggests that findings related to self-efficacy demonstrate some improvements over time. Notably, when comparing the first and third year of service delivery, Year 3 participants reported feeling more confident against each element of the JSSE index as compared to Year 1 participants. This finding may reflect other findings throughout this report that Year 3 participants may on average be closer to the labour market than previous cohorts of FSS participants.

Figure 20: Job Search Self Efficacy (JSSE) Index scores for third year FSS participants overall, those in-work and those not in-work*



Source: How confident do you feel about doing the following things successfully? Base: All 2020 Cohort (646)

* The Figure reports on the proportion of participants who were confident (scores 4 and 5 on a 1-5 scale) they can complete the job search related activities

What worked well?

Over a third of participants had moved into work after receiving support from FSS, with younger individuals (aged 16-34) doing particularly well compared to the overall participant population.

The majority of Year 3 participants who had moved into work were noted to be receiving the National Living Wage or above and to be working full-time and this has improved year on year. This is in keeping with SG's commitments around Fair Work.

What were the challenges? / How could we improve?

There are some groups for whom starting or sustaining work seems to be more difficult, this includes those who are disabled, lone parents, those with convictions and those who had previously been unemployed for more than two years.

What is Scottish Government doing?

We recognise that there are challenges in supporting some participants into sustained work, particularly those with convictions, who have been out of work for more than two years and/ or who have limiting long term health conditions. In addition to the specialist disability and diversity awareness training already commissioned and detailed earlier, we are undertaking a number of measures to improve our offer for these participants. For example, we are currently working with the Scottish Prison Service, Disclosure Scotland and DWP to enhance our offer for people with convictions.

We will also implement opportunities for further test and learn pilots to explore the impacts of the blended delivery approach (combining in-person and virtual means of support) on participants with differing needs, and to better understand how to mitigate the barriers to entering employment experienced by refugees, lone parents and the long term unemployed.

We will draw on and share relevant local and national labour market analysis, focusing on opportunities for the long term unemployed, improving access to permanent employment for minority ethnic participants and reviewing our in-work support offer to ensure that it is responsive to changes in labour market conditions.

9. Economic Evaluation: Impact, Performance and Value for Money

For this year's report the Scottish Government commissioned an independent economic evaluation which was undertaken by Alma Economics. This component of the evaluation had three broad objectives:

- To understand the value for money of the service by comparing costs and benefits.
- To understand the value for money of the service through wider measures such as unit costs to allow comparisons with other similar employability programmes.
- To understand the wider social impact of the service, including wellbeing and inclusive growth.

A summary of the key findings as well as their relationship to findings from the broader evaluation are detailed below. A complete report of findings from the economic evaluation has been published separately as: [Economic Evaluation of Fair Start Scotland](#).

9.1 Methodology

The economic evaluation utilised the DWP Social Cost Benefit Analysis (SCBA) model as the primary mechanism for analysis. This model is based on work undertaken by Fujiwara (2010)¹⁹ and has been utilised by the DWP for evaluation of a number of programmes including the Work Programme evaluation, Work Experience evaluation and the evaluation of the Future Job Fund.

In order to use the model, several parameters have to be set, details regarding which can be found in the aforementioned standalone report. It is worth noting that these parameters were established using a number of sources including findings from other components of the evaluation (most notably the participant telephone survey), Management Information data and by consulting parameters used by other similar evaluations. Assumptions built into the model were tested for robustness by the contractor via undertaking a variety of sensitivity checks as part of the analysis. As inputs the model uses programme costs per year, employment outcomes (hours worked, wage received, and number of days at work), as well as participant characteristics (age, marital status, disability status, and number of children).

Outputs from the model detail costs and benefits from the perspective of participants, society, public finance and employers. For the purposes of this

¹⁹ Fujiwara, D., 2010. The Department for Work and Pensions Social Cost-Benefit Analysis framework. Working Paper no. 86.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214384/WP86.pdf

evaluation, findings have been focussed on the first three of these groups,²⁰ with analysis primarily directed at the societal perspective as this provides the most nuanced picture of impacts. The outputs are in turn available for analysis at a range of levels, including breakdowns by participant group and by geographical Lot. It should be noted that benefit-cost ratios are shown both with and without the inclusion of Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALYs)²¹ and wider distributional effects²² (results labelled ‘financial’ are those without and ‘total’ those with QALYs and distributional impacts included). Outputs are presented this way to allow comparison with both the business case for Fair Start Scotland as well as to other similar programmes where possible.

9.2 Results

Cost-Benefit Analysis – Results

A summary of the results of the cost-benefit analysis (CBA) are presented in Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4 below from society, participant, and public finance perspectives respectively. The tables also include comparisons against the FSS business case.

Table 2: Results of the cost-benefit analysis from the perspective of society

Society’s perspective	Business Case	Current CBA
Total benefits	£177.8m	£167.5m
Total costs	£117.3m	£82.8m
Programme Costs	£109.2m	£69.9m
Financial BCR	1.5	2.0
Total BCR	-	3.6

²⁰ Public finance perspective includes increase in tax revenue and reduction in healthcare costs as benefits and programme expenditure as cost. Participants’ perspective includes increase in wage as a benefit and reduction in UC, increased tax, and increased travel and childcare costs as costs. Society’s perspective includes increase in output and reduction in healthcare and operational costs as benefits and programme expenditure and societal impacts from increased travel as costs.

²¹ QALYs act as a measure of disease burden quantifying both the quantity and quality of life lived, they are used in economic evaluations to determine the impacts of an intervention on health and wellbeing. Further information can be found here: [Glossary | NICE](#)

²² Distributional effects cover the higher welfare achieved via distribution of public finances, further details of which can be found in the FSS Economic Evaluation report.

Table 3: Results of the cost-benefit analysis from the perspective of participants

Participant's perspective	Current CBA
Total benefits	£199.3m
Total costs	£140.4m
Financial BCR	1.4
Total BCR	2.6

Table 4: Results of the cost-benefit analysis from the perspective of public finance

Exchequer's perspective	Business Case	Current CBA
Total benefits	£128.7m	£110.7m
Programme Costs	£109.2m	£69.9m
Total BCR	1.2	1.6

Source: Analysis of Management Information (MI) data, Wave 3 survey data, cost data and post-2021 forecasts.

The results show that FSS is a net positive to society, public finance and from the participants' perspective. For every £1 spent the estimated benefit is:

- £2 in 'financial' terms for society and £3.60 in terms of overall benefits.
- £1.40 in 'financial' terms for participants and £2.60 when QALYs and distributional impacts are incorporated.
- £1.60 in benefits to public finance.

As shown in the above tables, the current BCR's of FSS exceed the business case expectations. From the perspective of society, the business case BCR was 1.5 and the current BCR 2.0 and from the perspective of public finances the business case BCR was 1.2 and the current BCR 1.6. Reasons for this are discussed in the following sections.

Unit Costs

While benefit-cost ratios provide a relatively comprehensive assessment of value for money it is recognised that it is not always possible to compare BCR's with other programmes due to complexities associated with analysis. Therefore in addition to BCR's, the cost per job start was also calculated and can be found disaggregated in the tables below by participant group and Lot.

Table 5: Cost per job start for Year 1 across participant group and Lot

Participant group	Cost per job start
Core	£4,849
Advanced	£8,516
Intense	£10,261
Lot	Cost per job start
Glasgow	£6,586
Lanarkshire	£5,469
Tayside	£5,461
Forth Valley	£8,897
East	£6,005
South West	£7,189
North East	£9,129
Highlands and Islands	£11,442
West	£8,886
Total	£6,754

While average costs per job equalled £6,754 it is recognised that there is significant variation across characteristics. For example, costs are lower for individuals within the Core group compared to those in Advanced or Intense, due to the fact that providers are paid at a lower rate for Core group participants as detailed in the introduction section of this report.²³

Comparison with Similar Programmes

Due to variation in programme design, aims, reach, scale and in the definition of outcomes, caution has to be applied when making comparisons between FSS and other employability programmes.

²³ FSS Providers are paid for each sustained job outcome – where employment is sustained for 13 out of 16 weeks, 26 out of 30 weeks and 52 out of 60 weeks.

The most suitable comparator which has been identified in relation to cost-benefit analysis is DWP’s Work Programme²⁴ which also aimed to move participants into employment, used a similar payment-by-results model and was also evaluated using DWP’s SCBA model. It should however be noted that there are significant differences between the two programmes. Most notably the Work Programme was a UK-wide programme, which ran over six years and had close to two million participants - a large difference in scale compared to FSS. Furthermore, The Work Programme was also not voluntary and did not target people with particular characteristics. These differences should be kept in mind as they are likely to have had some impact on the variation seen in results.

Table 6: Comparison between Fair Start Scotland and the Work Programme evaluation results

Comparison measures	Society ‘financial’ BCR	Public Finance BCR	Participant BCR
Work Programme	2.7	2.4	1.3
Fair Start Scotland	2.0	1.6	1.4

As can be seen in the table above are broadly similar, FSS performs slightly less well than the Work Programme with regards to BCR’s. It is likely that some of this variation can be explained by differences in scope and design as mentioned above. Additional non-BCR value for money comparisons with other employability programmes are available in the previously linked standalone economic evaluation report.

Inclusive Growth Considerations

The Scottish Government defines inclusive growth as economic growth which “combines increased prosperity with greater equality, creates opportunities for all, and distributes the benefits of increased prosperity fairly”.²⁵ It is recognised that the aims and design of FSS inherently led to some aspects of inclusive growth given it seeks to increase economic activity of low-income groups. In order to determine how well FSS has contributed to inclusive growth, the economic evaluation disaggregated the cost-benefit analysis by three variables, namely by geographic Lot, participant group (Core, Advanced, Intense) and gender.

²⁴ DWP 2020. The Work Programme: A quantitative impact assessment: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/937682/work-programme-quantitative-impact-assessment.pdf

²⁵ [Growing the economy: Inclusive growth - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Table 7: Results of the cost-benefit analysis disaggregated across gender

Gender	Women	Men
Total benefits	£54.7m	£112.5m
Total costs	£29.6m	£53.2m
Total benefits (QALYs, redistributive effect)	£102.0m	£197.3m
Financial BCR	1.9	2.1
Total BCR	3.4	3.7

The table above shows the outputs of the cost-benefit analysis by gender. While the BCR for both is very similar, men achieved both higher costs and higher benefits. This is due to the fact that more men achieved job outcomes than women, reflecting the higher level of men who joined FSS and the higher number of men in the unemployed population of Scotland. While this suggests that the higher levels of outcomes for men is partly explainable by the characteristics of the unemployed population, it suggests that there may be additional work to do to increase participation levels and outcomes for female participants as substantiated by findings from the rest of the evaluation.

Table 8: Results of the cost-benefit analysis disaggregated by Lot

Lot	Financial BCR	Total BCR	Public Finance BCR
East	2.2	3.9	1.7
Forth Valley	1.3	2.4	0.9
Glasgow	2.1	3.7	1.7
Highlands and Islands	1.5	2.6	1.1
Lanarkshire	2.0	3.6	1.5
North East	1.7	3.0	1.3
South West	2.1	3.9	1.7
Tayside	2.2	3.9	1.7
West	1.7	3.1	1.3

The above table shows the breakdown of the cost-benefit analysis by geographic Lot. It demonstrates that there is significant variation in BCR by geography, with the lowest financial BCR being 1.3 in Forth Valley and the highest being 2.2 in both the Tayside and East Lots. This is explainable by the fact that the areas with the lowest BCR's had the lowest percentage of job starts achieved, as well as the highest percentage of participants within the Intense group, both of which contribute to higher costs and lower benefits. This is discussed further below.

Table 9: Results of the cost-benefit analysis disaggregated by participant group

Group	Financial BCR	Total BCR	Public Finance BCR
Core	2.5	4.4	2.0
Advanced	1.7	3.1	1.3
Intense	1.3	2.5	1.0

The table above provides a breakdown of the BCR by participant group and shows that Core participants have a significantly higher financial BCR at 2.5 than either Advanced or Intense participants, who achieve BCR's of 1.7 and 1.3 respectively. This is due to the fact that payments to providers for achieving outcomes for Core participants are lower than for the other two groups.

This wide variation in BCR by participant group is a significant explanatory factor for variations seen at Lot level as areas with higher levels of Core participants achieved higher value for money than those with higher levels of Advanced and Intense participants. Potential reasons for variation in participant type at Lot level include:

- Variation in service delivery model at the Lot level. Notably the area with the lowest BCR, Forth Valley, is Local Authority led and is focussed on providing support to those in the Intense group.
- Variations in referral source, with referrals generated via marketing and social media campaigns tending to fall into the Core group versus those gained from JCP's. Urban Lots have been more successful at generating these Third Party Referrals thereby outperforming rural areas with regards to BCR's.
- There is some degree of interpretation that can be applied by providers when assigning individuals to a group, given that there is some overlap in criteria. Providers may therefore make different decisions on which group a given participant best fits.

It should be noted that while areas which saw more Core participants achieved a higher BCR, that this is not entirely in keeping with the overall ethos of Fair Start Scotland which was designed with the express purpose of targeting those further away from the labour market. More broadly the combination of significant variation in BCR by participant group coupled with the much higher than expected number of

participants joining as part of the Core group for the service as a whole, and thereby signalling a greater proximity to the labour market, is the key contributing factor to the overall BCR achieved by FSS and explains why the service outperformed expectations with regards to the original BCR's set within the business case. This is explored in more depth in the following chapter.

More detailed findings regarding the Inclusive Growth related impacts of FSS, including analysis of job quality and stability can be found detailed in the standalone economic evaluation report.

What worked well?

The economic evaluation clearly demonstrates that FSS provides a net-positive return on investment from the perspectives of society, participants and public finances. Furthermore FSS exceeded expectations with regards to value for money as articulated in the original business case.

What were the challenges? / How could we improve?

While FSS performed well in relation to value for money this was found to be due to a larger than anticipated proportion of individuals with fewer barriers to employment joining and benefiting from the service.

As per findings within the more detailed economic evaluation publication additional consideration could be given towards reviewing the manner in which providers are paid for job outcomes with an appraisal around the potential for increased flexibility regarding this.

What is Scottish Government doing?

As detailed elsewhere in the report, SG is already delivering continuous improvement activity with service providers aimed at addressing the under-representation of key participant groups. We are also developing a number of "test and learn" pilots, through which we will gather and share learning on what works to better engage and support participants with multiple / complex barriers to employment.

With only 18 months remaining on the extension of current FSS contracts, we are limited in the extent to which the FSS financial model can be amended. However, the recommendations from the economic evaluation will be used, along with the wider evaluation evidence to inform the development of more locally-determined and flexible service standards for future delivery of No One Left Behind.

10. Reflection on 3 years of Evaluation

The following chapter offers an appraisal of the performance of FSS against its stated aims²⁶ which are reiterated below:

- A high quality service that maximises delivery of real and sustained job outcomes for individuals
- A service which treats participants with fairness, dignity and respect and where participation is voluntary
- A programme of service integration and alignment that will seek to join up public employability services
- Providing support for those further removed from the labour market
- Providing person-centred support

Evidence for this chapter is drawn from across this year's evaluation, as well as previous evaluation reports and is assessed against the original business case for the service where relevant (see the standalone economic evaluation for a more detailed assessment of performance against the business case).

Maximising Delivery of Real & Sustained Job Outcomes

In the first three years of delivery, FSS had the stated ambition of supporting 38,000 participants as outlined in the business case with the expectation that:

- 36% of individuals would reach the 13 week job outcome
- 30% of individuals would reach the 26 week job outcome
- 25% of individuals would reach the 52 week job outcome

In comparison to this the service has had 32,664 successfully individuals start on the service by March 2021, which represents a shortfall of 5,336 participants from the original target enrolment figure. As per findings from the Year 2 evaluation report, it is thought that the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic at the end of Year 2 and throughout Year 3 is likely to explain at least part of this shortfall.

With regards to achieved job outcomes, data is not yet available for the entire cohort across the three years of delivery as sufficient time has yet to elapse to allow for recording of longer term outcomes. For those for whom such data is available, we can see in the table below that with regards to actual performance that 23%, 18% and 15% achieved the 13 week, 26 week and 52 week outcomes respectively. In practice therefore actual job outcome rates are lower across all three time periods than those which were originally anticipated. It should however be noted that the unprecedented impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and it's consequent

²⁶ Derived from [Fair Start Scotland - annual report: year one - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-start-scotland-annual-report-year-one/pages/100-101.aspx)

impacts on the labour market, including closure of a number of businesses during lockdown is likely to have had an impact on performance with regards to achieved job outcomes.

Table 10: Percentage of individuals achieving job outcomes comparing the business case to actual performance-to-date*

Job Outcome	Business Case Expectation	Actual Achieved Performance-to-Date
13 week job outcome	36%	23%
26 week job outcome	30%	18%
52 week job outcome	25%	15%

* It should be noted that achieved job outcomes figures are affected by a time delay and therefore the figures above do not represent a finalised outcome, as discussed in chapter 8.

As per the findings from the telephone survey when followed up as a longitudinal sample that it appears that certain individuals achieve job outcomes beyond the reporting period. This may suggest that FSS has a more positive longer term effect than is currently accounted for and would require a more in-depth longitudinal follow up to assess.

With regards to types of work there is some evidence that the types of jobs that participants move into after receiving support from FSS have improved with regards to job quality over the three years of delivery. This is evidenced via increased percentages of individuals in full-time work and receiving pay at or above the national living wage between Year 1 and Year 3.

Fairness, Dignity, Respect & Voluntary Participation

The concepts of a service which embodies fairness, dignity and respect as well as an entirely voluntary approach to participation is a key ethos behind the service design of FSS and sets it apart from many previous employability services.

Evidence gathered from across the three years of evaluation strongly supports that participants view the service as having successfully embodied these principles. Notably on average across the three years, approximately 93% of participants contacted by the telephone survey agreed that they were treated with dignity and respect by FSS providers and 93% on average also stated that they were aware that their participation was entirely voluntary. It should be noted that in relation to this latter point that there is some degree of variation depending on participants' demographics with certain groups such as those from minority ethnic groups less likely to recognize the voluntary nature of the programme. This suggests that while FSS has been successful overall in relation to this aim, that there is scope to improve the way that this ethos is communicated equally to all participants.

Service Integration & Alignment

As noted throughout the three years of evaluation, particularly via the local area case studies, providers and stakeholders have consistently fed back that FSS continues to operate in a cluttered employability landscape with providers in particular reporting that they feel that they are competing with other services for participants. This issue has also been exacerbated by existing funding arrangements which have resulted in consistent reports of difficulty working with other employability providers due to the risk of double funding. It should also be noted that these findings have been reported across all case study areas and are not isolated to particular areas.

Whilst there have been challenges noted in relation to service integration and alignment, there have also been positive lessons learned which can be taken forward, primarily to do with the positive impact that practices such as co-location and the use of dedicated liaison staff can have on fostering productive relationships between local organisations involved in the delivery of employability services.

It should also be noted however that that under the FSS approach there are limitations to what can be achieved at a local level given that there are a number of existing services in place which are not directly funded by the Scottish Government. However, in summary it is difficult to determine whether FSS has achieved the stated goal of promoting integration and alignment across the employability sector.

Furthermore it should also be recognised that since the launch of FSS the Scottish Government has undertaken additional work in this area, notably through the development of the No One Left Behind (NOLB) approach which aims to deliver employability services in partnership with Local Government and which is explicitly designed to support integration and alignment across the sector.

Support for those Further from the Labour Market

Numerous measures could be deployed to assess how well FSS has done in relation to its goal of supporting those further from the labour market. In particular use can be made of the groupings that participants are placed in as a proxy for barriers to employment, where Core represents those closer to the labour market and Advance and Intense represent those further away.

Compared to the original business case FSS had a much higher number of participants deemed Core than anticipated at 41% compared to 14% in the business case. As a consequence the number of participants in the Advance and Intense groups was significantly lower than planned at 33% realised compared to 50% in the business case and 24% realised compared to 36% in the business case respectively. This would therefore suggest that FSS has supported a higher proportion of participants who were deemed closer to the labour market, and a lower proportion of those further from the labour market than was originally intended.

Whilst acknowledging issues around missing data which have worsened during Year 3, looking at demographics of participants over the three years also allows us to begin to identify the emergence of potential trends over time. As per the earlier reach chapter of this report we can see that there is some indication of trends emerging which suggest that those with significant barriers to employment are joining the service at a lower volume over time. In particular:

- The percentage of individuals joining the service with disabilities dropped from 55% to 32% between Year 1 and Year 3.
- The percentage of individuals joining the service who have disabilities and have been unemployed for two or more years dropped from 21% to 9% between Year 1 and Year 3.
- The percentage of individuals joining the service who are from the 15% most deprived areas has dropped from 38% to 31% between Year 1 and Year 3.

Whilst recognising that these groups of individuals continue to be well represented in the service against the unemployed population of Scotland the results suggest that there is an ongoing trend in decreasing proportions joining the service. There are many potential explanations for this including that this shift may have been exacerbated by the onset of the pandemic. We know for instance that one of the primary barriers that participants report in relation to moving into work is a lack of confidence, which is something that could have been made worse by the onset of the pandemic and its broad detrimental effect on the economy. This in turn may have had a discouraging effect on individuals with significant barriers joining the service during Year 3. Furthermore those with serious health conditions may have been shielding and generally less willing to engage with services such as FSS during periods of lockdown.

These findings can be cross-referenced with a number of other findings from this year's evaluation, including those from the most recent local area case studies where providers noted a shift in clients towards those closer to work. It should be noted that while these findings are not comprehensive they are however indicative of a potential ongoing shift in the demographic of participants away from those the service was originally focussed on.

The shift seen away from jobcentres as a major source of referrals during the pandemic period may also have a role to play. Providers have been relying more on generating referrals through online marketing such as via social media. This approach may favour individuals with a higher degree of self-efficacy given the requirement to engage with FSS without formal support from JCP staff.

More broadly, given the tight nature of the labour market over the three years of delivery, with at times record levels of employment, it is possible that the pool of potential FSS participants has remained relatively stable. This may in turn partly explain year on year reductions in those with significant barriers as they may have either been offered an opportunity to join the service or actually taken part in earlier

years. However further analysis would be required to quantify the degree to which this effect is taking place.

It should also be acknowledged that analysis of trends in participant demographics is complicated for Year 3 due to increased levels of missing data in Management Information reports as previously mentioned. As such findings should be interpreted with a degree of caution.

Person-Centred Support

Two of the key factors within the service design of FSS which contribute towards its aspiration of being person-centred are the use of dedicated key workers and the development of Personalised Employment Action Plans for participants.

In order to assess how effective FSS has been with regards to deploying a person-centred approach we can therefore utilise evidence gained from participants via the telephone survey. As part of the survey respondents were asked whether they recall being offered each of these elements of support and to what extent they found them useful. It should be noted that the findings in this section are to be treated as indicative as the survey findings used in this section were not specifically designed as a measure of performance in terms of whether FSS providers offered these specific elements of support to participants.

Ahead of discussing the findings it should also be noted however that the offer of a Key Worker and an Action Plan are mandatory elements of the pre-employment service offer that providers must make to participants.

Table 11: Percentage of individuals receiving pre-employment support who were offered a key worker and who found this useful

Year	% Receiving Pre-Employment Support Who Were Offered a Key Worker	% Receiving Pre-Employment Support from a Key Worker Who Found this Useful
Year 1	88%	79%
Year 2	88%	78%
Year 3	87%	77%

As can be seen in table 11 above, with regards to the use of a Key Worker 88% of respondents in the pre-employment stage of support stated they were offered this form of support on average across the three years, with numbers remaining consistent across this time period. Of those who took up the offer of a Key Worker, 78% on average stated that they found it useful.

Table 12: Percentage of individuals receiving in-work support who were offered a key worker and who found this useful

Year	% Receiving In-Work Support Who Were Offered a Key Worker	% Receiving In-Work Support from a Key Worker Who Found this Useful
Year 1	58%	91%
Year 2	49%	85%
Year 3	38%	79%

For those receiving in-work support, we can see from table 12 that 48% on average across the three years stated that they were offered Key Worker support with numbers declining from 58% in Year 1 to 38% in Year 3. Of those who took up this offer 85% on average stated that they found it useful, with numbers again declining from 91% in Year 1 to 79% in Year 3.

While it is clear that the majority of individuals who took up the offer of support from Key Workers found it useful, the evidence suggests that this offer has not been made consistently and moreover that the offer of this form of support may itself be declining for those in work in particular. While there is evidence from the survey that individuals closer to the labour market may feel less in need of certain forms of support compared to those further away and therefore may decline, it is less clear why individuals report year on year reductions in the actual offer of such support from providers.

Table 13: Percentage of individuals receiving pre-employment support who were offered a personalised employment Action Plan and who found this useful

Year	% Receiving Pre-Employment Support Who Were Offered an Action Plan	% Receiving Pre-Employment Support in the form of an Action Plan Who Found this Useful
Year 1	71%	77%
Year 2	61%	77%
Year 3	49%	76%

With regards to the development of employment Action Plans we can see from table 13 that 60% of respondents in the pre-employment stage of support stated they were offered an Action Plan on average across the three years, with numbers declining from 71% in Year 1 to 49% in Year 3. Of those who took up this support, 77% on average stated that they found it useful, with numbers remaining consistent across this time period.

Table 14: Percentage of individuals receiving in-work support who were offered a personalised employment Action Plan and who found this useful

Year	% Receiving In-Work Support Who Were Offered an Action Plan	% Receiving In-Work Support in the form of an Action Plan Who Found this Useful
Year 1	30%	89%
Year 2	24%	92%
Year 3	19%	77%

For those receiving in-work support, 24% on average across the three years stated that they were offered support in the form of an Action Plan with numbers declining from 30% in Year 1 to 19% in Year 3. Of those who took up this offer 86% stated that they found it useful, with numbers again declining from 89% in Year 1 to 77% in Year 3.

These findings suggest that while the use of a personalised Action Plan remain relatively highly rated by respondents, both in-work and in pre-employment support, that the offer of such support may not have been consistently applied and moreover appears to be declining across the three years of delivery.

These findings may reflect changes in the service delivery approach caused by COVID-19 with participants being less clear on the type of engagement they have received as the result of providers necessarily adopting a virtual support approach. The findings may also reflect changes in the demographic of participants over time with providers feeling that it is less necessary to offer such support to certain individuals based on their proximity to the labour market. However if FSS is to meet its stated aims of delivering a person-centred service then the offer of such support should be consistently applied across the range of participants accessing the service. Further work may be required on this issue to better understand the indicative changes that are reflected in the survey findings.

What worked well?

There is robust evidence from across the three years of evaluation to demonstrate that FSS has successfully implemented a service based on principles such as fairness, dignity, respect and voluntary participation.

What were the challenges? / How could we improve?

While there is some evidence that FSS provides a person-centred service there remain scope for improvement in relation to this. In addition, there remains room for improvement with regards to FSS's goals around delivering sustainable job

outcomes, decluttering the employability landscape and supporting those furthest from the labour market.

What is Scottish Government doing?

The key principles and values that underpin Fair Start Scotland are shared by No One Left Behind by virtue of both being grounded in the Scottish Approach to Employability that was developed in preparation for devolution of employability powers in 2017. As a result, the findings from the past three years of evaluation are a valuable source of learning, not just for improving FSS services, but also for the future development and delivery of No One Left Behind.

We are disappointed not to have made better progress on improving our service, particularly with respect to participants facing more complex and / or multiple barriers. However, our focus for the past year has, by necessity been on ensuring a basic continuity of support for existing and new participants in the face of the significant practical, financial and health challenges pose by the COVID-19 pandemic.

With regard to the remaining 18 months of FSS delivery in its current guise, we restate our commitment to continuous improvement of our national service. We are working closely with service providers, JCP, local government and other partners to drive better engagement with those who are currently underrepresented and to enhance our support offer for participants who are further from the labour market.

We are already incorporating learning from this and previous evaluations across a range of activities, including:

- Service Provider Action Plans and Tasks & Finish Groups to identify and overcome delivery challenges;
- ongoing reviews of operational guidance, job outcome definitions, performance indicators and elements of the delivery model in light of COVID-19 and labour market changes; and
- test and learn pilots to explore and overcome the challenges of service delivery for specific groups of participants, or in specific circumstances.

We openly acknowledge that the FSS model has both strengths and weaknesses, and we will use all participant, provider and partner feedback to improve both the current service and future delivery of devolved employability support.

Moving forward, user experience in planning and improving employability services will remain of crucial importance for future services. Our commitment to embedding the [Scottish Approach to Service Design](#), which sees empowering users to participate actively in design as a critical component of planning delivering and improving services, will help us strengthen the voice of those accessing and participating in services.

This ongoing commitment to the involvement of users has been embedded in the early stages of No One Left Behind Phase 2, as people with experience of accessing employability support have been working with us to shape the expectations of services and the products that will accompany live delivery.

In addition to this, we are working to develop a Shared Measurement Framework which places user experience as a key measure of success for services, alongside indicators that are more commonly used, such as job outcomes, to allow us to build a more holistic picture of service impacts.

11. Conclusion

As anticipated the third year of delivery has been strongly shaped by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Nonetheless findings suggest that FSS has adapted well to these conditions and has continued to offer a service which is highly rated by participants.

In particular the majority of participants reported that they did not face difficulties in accessing support and a clear majority continued to highly rate the elements of support they received. In addition, more than 90% of participants who took part in the telephone surveys continued to agree that FSS treated them with dignity and respect.

Similarly, feedback from providers suggested that the design of the service provided them with the flexibility required to adapt to the circumstances brought on by the pandemic.

While some progress has been made in relation to ongoing improvement of the service, this has been limited. It is perhaps unsurprising given the pandemic that FSS may have lacked some of its previous capacity to engage in continuous improvement, and to address issues highlighted in last year's evaluation report.

In particular findings from this year report suggest that certain groups such as individuals from minority ethnic groups, older individuals aged 50+ and those from rural locations continue to be underrepresented in the service despite some improvements being made. Related to this is the ongoing variance in job outcome rates seen for those with more significant labour market barriers including those with disabilities, older workers and individuals who meet early entry criteria.

While some of the issues around underrepresentation have recurred throughout the delivery of FSS, there is emerging evidence to suggest that the overall demographic profile of FSS participants may be shifting away from those further from the labour market. Findings from the survey, Management Information data analysis and local area case studies taken together suggest that there may be an increase in the proportion of participants with fewer barriers to employment as illustrated by the decreased of the proportion of disabled people, those from 15% most deprived areas and those who are disabled and unemployed for more than 2 years over the years of delivery. While it is possible that this may have been accelerated by the onset of the pandemic, with an increase in individuals recently made unemployed, it is not possible to quantify the impact of COVID-19 as opposed to existing changes in participant demographics.

A related set of key findings from this year's evaluation centred on evidence generated by the economic evaluation of FSS. This analysis demonstrated that FSS offers a net positive return from the perspective of individual participants, public finances and society as a whole with the service outperforming expectations in the business case. While this presents a key positive finding for FSS it should also be recognized that this 'better than expected' assessment of value for money

arises from the fact that the service ended up supporting more participants with fewer barriers to employment than was originally anticipated.

One of the core recommendations from last year's report centred on the ongoing need to build upon relationships between providers and local stakeholders in order to facilitate better local alignment and integration of services. While it is likely that the pandemic affected the capacity of FSS to engage in this work, it is clear from this year's findings that this remains an ongoing issue.

This year's report also allowed for reflection across the entire three years of delivery. Findings from this section suggest that while FSS has successfully achieved elements of its stated aims, most notably around delivering a service centred on fairness, dignity, respect and a voluntary approach to participation, that there is still room for improvement with regards to the reach of services, alignment and integration, offering a person-centred approach and providing support to those further from the labour market.

Recommendations & Next Steps

While recognising that work is already underway to address some of the areas for improvement as noted throughout this report, we have highlighted four key recommendations some of which are more focussed on the remainder of the contract delivery period of FSS whilst others are more appropriate in relation to the broader aspirations of SG and partners regarding the future of employability policy development and service delivery:

- Establish comprehensive measures to address the ongoing issue of underrepresentation of certain groups in FSS as well as variance in how different groups experience support provided by the service.
- Whilst recognising the need to balance flexibility with providing robust governance and quality assurance, we recommend taking learning from both the economic evaluation and other components of the evaluation to consider changes to reporting requirements and associated payment mechanisms for future delivery of employability services within Scotland, for example via No One Left Behind.
- Incorporate learning from the three years of evaluation into the implementation of the NOLB approach in partnership with Local Government, ensuring that effective decluttering of the employability landscape takes place, as part of the implementation of No One Left Behind.
- Continue to take steps to improve the effectiveness of support received by individuals with complex and multiple barriers to employment in order to ensure more equitable job outcomes are achieved.

With regards to next steps for the evaluation, the final FSS evaluation report is intended to be published by the end of 2022. This will be an impact evaluation of the service.

More detailed reports on this year's evaluation are also published alongside this overview report. These can also be found on the Scottish Government website:

[Local Area Case Studies](#)

[Participant Phone Survey](#)

[Economic Evaluation](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1: Evaluation methodology

Telephone survey

The FSS Wave 3 telephone survey was carried out between 22 March 2021 and 16 April 2021 by IFF Research Ltd. A total of 1, 027 telephone surveys were completed at Wave 3.

The sample was made up of two groups:

- New sample of 663 participants who joined the FSS service in 2020 (between January and December 2020).
- Longitudinal sample that was made up of two groups, those who joined FSS in 2018 (between April and December 2018) and took part in Wave 1 and Wave 2 surveys and those who joined FSS in 2019 (between January and December 2019) and took part in Wave 2 survey. In total, 364 FSS participants were interviewed as part of longitudinal sample.

For the new sample, IFF was provided with the data for all the FSS participants who started on FSS in 2020. From this IFF drew a sample of 2,364 FSS participants to be invited to take part in the survey in such a way that it reflected the distribution of FSS participants by Lot, with Lots 4, 7, 8 and 9 slightly oversampled to ensure a minimum base for subgroup analysis for these Lots.

FSS participants selected to take part in the telephone survey were sent an advance invitation letter two weeks prior to the fieldwork to notify them of the research and allow them an opportunity to decline the invitation.

The average survey length was 21 minutes 30 seconds for the new sample (the 2020 cohort) and 11 minutes 32 seconds for the longitudinal sample. The data was checked, tabulated and verbatim responses were fully coded for analysis purposes.

A rim weight based on age, gender and lot was applied to the 2020 cohort data to bring the oversampled Lots 4,7,8 and 9 back in line with population proportions of 2020 FSS starters, and to correct for any non-response bias. A rim weight based on age, gender, lot and employment status was also applied to the 2018 and 2019 cohort data to correct for any non-response bias.

Further methodological details can be found in the [Participant Telephone Survey](#) that has been published as a separate report.

Local Area Case Studies

The local area case study research focused on developing case studies in nine local areas across Scotland, one in each contract Lot area over the three years period and have been undertaken by Rocket Science UK Ltd and Blake Stevenson.

The key objectives of the local area case study research were:

- Understand how FSS is being implemented across the different Lot areas in Scotland
- Understand the experience of FSS for lead providers, partner organisations, participants and employers
- Identify what is working well and less well in the implementation of FSS
- Identify the lessons learnt and recommend changes to consider for the remainder of the FSS contract period as well as shaping what the next iteration of employment support in Scotland might look like

In Year 3 of the local area case study research the case studies were undertaken in: Fife, in Greenock in Inverclyde and in Motherwell in North Lanarkshire.

The following tasks were undertaken in each of the case study areas:

- Conducting desk-based area analysis of the socio-economic and employment trends in each of the case study localities to understand the local labour market context that FSS is operating in. (This analysis was streamlined in Year 3 to enable a fuller analysis of the messages across Fair Start Scotland bringing together the three years of case studies)
- Analysing the Management Information data and performance data from FSS in each of the case study localities to understand the profile and numbers of participants and outcomes achieved in the area
- Conducting interviews with FSS participants in each locality to understand their experience of and views on FSS.
- Conducting interviews with employers in to understand their experience of and views on FSS.
- Conducting interviews with service staff including managers and frontline staff delivering FSS locally to understand their experience of and views on the service
- Conducting interviews with staff in partners of FSS providers in the locality to understand their experience of and views on FSS
- Conducted interviews with relevant other stakeholders in the area to understand their experience of and views on Fair Start Scotland.

In Year 3 of this research the desk-based area analysis was streamlined to enable a fuller analysis of the messages across Fair Start Scotland bringing together the three years of case studies. In addition, the number of employer interviews in Year 3 (as well as Year 2) was limited as a result of the impact of COVID-19 and resulting difficulty to arrange interviews as employers had staff on furlough or it was difficult to get hold of very busy staff in HR roles.

Finally, the local area case study research had an additional, Scotland wide element that took place primarily in Year 3 and comprised of interviews with senior stakeholders from across the Scottish Government, Jobcentre Plus and providers, survey of the FSS providers' frontline staff (across the nine areas where case studies were undertaken) and a survey of Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches across Scotland.

Early Leavers Survey

The early leavers survey aimed to seek views of those FSS participants who left the service early (i.e. those who left the service before the end of pre-employment support period of 12-18 months and without having sustained employment for at least 3 months). The survey was undertaken by social researchers from the Scottish Government.

This was an online survey that comprised of five questions:

1. Why did you stop taking part in Fair Start Scotland? (please select all that apply)? The following answering options were available:

'I didn't find the service useful / relevant to my needs'	'I didn't feel ready to move into work'	'I didn't like the activities on offer'
'I got a job'	'I have caring responsibilities'	'I didn't think it would help me'
'I've had a Work Capability Assessment and was put into the Support Group / found not fit for work'	'I was worried that work would have a negative impact on my health or disability'	'I was worried it would affect my, or my family's benefits'
'I got a place on a course at a college or training centre'	'I didn't feel well enough to return to, or start work'	'Taking part was too stressful'
'I got a place on a university course'	'Another personal reason'	'The service wasn't being adapted to meet my needs'
'I got a place on another employment support service or training programme'	'I thought I had to join the service, then later found out it was voluntary'	'Another reason, please tell us why...'
'I couldn't travel to meet advisors'	'I had been on a similar programme before, and didn't like it'	

2. Which of the following options best describes what you are doing now? The following answering options were available:

'I am self-employed'	'I am in education or training (such as college or university)'	'I am not working, and claiming an out of work or disability benefit'
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'I am working full time (at least 35 hours a week)'

'I am not working, but due to start work in the next 30 days'

'I am a full time parent or carer'

'I am working part time'

'I am not working, and not claiming a benefit'

'I am doing something else, please tell us what...'

3. Is there anything Fair Start Scotland could have done that would have stopped you leaving the service? With the answering options:

'Yes'

'No'

4. What could Fair Start Scotland have done to have stopped you leaving the service?

5. Do you have any other comments about Fair Start Scotland?

An invitation email to take part in the survey was sent out to all FSS participants in Year 1, 2 and 3 who left the service early and for whom an email address was available. In total, the invitation email was sent out to 8,347 FSS participants who left early, 451 invitation emails bounced back, 105 FSS participants opted out and 349 completed the survey. The survey was open for 3 weeks and closed on 30 May 2021. All the survey responses were anonymous.

Responses to questions 1 and 4 were analysed for the purpose of this FSS evaluation report.

- For question 1, the free-text responses were first either recoded back into the answering categories provided or new categories to reflect participant's free-text responses were created. The five new answering categories included: 'COVID-19', 'Issues with advisor/lack of contact', 'Did not leave early', 'Retired' and 'Wasn't eligible/No longer eligible'. In the next step the frequencies for each of the answering categories was calculated.
- For question 4, the thematic analysis was used to explore the key themes for the recommendations of what could have been done differently to stop FSS participants from leaving early.

Participant Interviews

The qualitative semi-structured interviews aimed to explore FSS participants views and experiences of taking part in FSS to find out what worked and what didn't work (and why) in terms of providing employability support and what might be the possible recommendations for future delivery of FSS and other employability services. The qualitative interviews were undertaken by social researchers from the Scottish Government.

The participant interviews focused on reaching five groups of individuals taking part in FSS that have been identified as having particular barriers to getting into work and/or were underrepresented in FSS:

- Lone parents
- Refugees
- Those with convictions
- Those who are limited a lot by a health condition
- Ethnic minority participants
- Those who are care experienced

The three key research questions the interviews aimed to address were:

Research Question 1:

What are participant's experiences of taking part in the FSS and of receiving support addressing particular barriers to employment they might have (in relation to belonging to one or more of the five groups summarised above)?

Research Question 2:

What are participants views / opinions on what worked well and what didn't work well (and why) in providing support including specialist support for the specific barriers through FSS to get closer to or into work (and to stay in work for those who got into job)?

Research Question 3:

What are participant's recommendations regarding provision of FSS service (and other employability services) in the future, especially in relations for providing support for specific barriers and, attracting more people from groups experiencing specific barriers , helping to prevent dropping out from FSS and get and keep more people like you in jobs.

Box 1.1 describes the interview guide that was used to conduct the interviews:

Box 1.1 Interview guide for the interviews with FSS participants

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCES

I'd like to ask you about your views on what was good and not so good about FSS, and what you think could have been improved on. But to start off I'd like to ask you about your experiences of taking part in FSS.

1. How did you first hear about Fair Start Scotland?
2. At the time, why did you take part in the service?
3. Can you tell me what happened initially when you joined and what were your first impressions?
 - a. PROMPTS:
 - i. What type of information did you initially receive?
 - ii. Do you feel your needs were listened to?

- iii. How did you find working with your personal advisor / key worker?
 - iv. experience of joining the service?
4. What kind of support were you provided through the service?
5. Can you tell me what is your current support situation in terms of involvement with the FSS?
- a. PROMPTS:
 - i. What sort of support are you currently receiving?
 - ii. How long have you been taking part?
 - iii. Did you drop out / stop participating in the service? If yes, was there a particular reason to it?
6. If that is okay with you, can I ask here if there are any specific barriers / difficulties (other than you've just mentioned) that you experience in relation to getting into and staying in work?
7. Have you received any kind of specialist support to address the particular barriers/difficulties you might have experienced getting into or staying in work?
- a. PROMPT:
 - i. What kind of support was that?

QUESTIONS ABOUT VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I'd like to now ask some questions about your views on what support worked well and what worked less well, and also your thoughts on how the FSS service could be improved.

8. What did you like about taking part in FSS and what worked well?
- PROMPTS:
 - i. How do you think you benefited from taking part in FSS?
 - ii. Any other things you particularly liked about FSS
 - iii. How about receiving support for the particular barriers you received?
9. How about things that have not worked well when working with FSS?
- a. PROMPTS:
 - i. Where there things that have not helped you get into job?
10. Do you have any thoughts or advice in relation to providing FSS services in the future?
- PROMPTS:
 - i. What do you think could be changed / improved to better help people like to get into jobs and to support them while in work?
 - ii. What else do you think FSS could do to support people before they start looking for a job?
 - iii. What do you think would encourage other people to take part in FSS?
 - iv. What do you think can be done to better so that people don't drop out / stop taking part in FSS?
 - v. We know that about half of people who start taking part in FSS drop out early from the service, why do you think that might be?
11. Is there anything else we haven't talked about today that you think we should know or that you would like to cover?

Potential participants were selected from the list of FSS participants who belonged to the groups of interest (see above) for whom contact details were available. Prior to contacting potential participants we checked with FSS providers to ensure that these individuals were appropriate to be contacted. The potential participants were

then invited to take part in the interviews either by email or through a phone call. If a person agreed to take part, the interview was conducted by the researcher right away or a convenient date for an interview was arranged.

Interviews took place over the phone between June-August 2021. In total, 19 interviews were conducted and of these 18 were recorded (using an audio recorder placed next to the phone). For the remaining one the researcher that was conducting the interview took detailed notes during the interview.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim by an external transcription services company and the transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis to draw out key themes in relation to: barriers to employment experienced by FSS participants, experiences of pre-employment and in-work support views on strengths and weakness of the services and recommendations for improvement.

Survey of FSS providers - FSS Employment Outcomes

The aim of this research was to gain insight into the characteristics of employment outcomes for FSS participants across the first three years of FSS.

For this purpose the FSS providers were asked to provide details on each employment outcome for FSS participants (i.e. each job FSS participant started while taking part in the service) including:

- Job start date
- Job end date (if applicable)
- Reason for job end (if applicable)
- Job title
- Job number (i.e. whether it was a first, second or any subsequent job a FSS participant started after joining the service)
- Type of contract
- Contract hours
- Earnings
- Was the person self-employed
- Was this job paying a National Living Wage
- Employer's name
- Employer's sector

The dataset that contained on the employment outcomes characteristics was prepared in July 2021.

For the purpose of the third year FSS evaluation report, we focused on analysing the characteristics of the first jobs FSS participants started after joining the service, although we note that some FSS participants started more than one job while taking part in the service. It is important to note that the dataset was characterised by a high proportion of missing data which limited the scope of the analyses that were undertaken.

We analysed three characteristics of first jobs FSS participants started after joining the service:

- type of contract,
- working full-time vs. part time (based on the 'Contract hours' variable in the dataset, working full-time was defined as working 35 hours per week or more)
- earning below the National Living Wage vs. earning The National Living Wage or above (based on the 'Earnings' variable)

In total, the dataset that formed the basis for the analyses consisted on 32,506 unique entries for employment outcomes. Of these, 10,229 entries described characteristics of the first jobs FSS started after joining FSS. Where appropriate the data was recoded to allow the calculation of the values of interest.

Economic Evaluation

The independent economic evaluation was carried out by Alma Economics and it related to the first three years of the FSS delivery between April 2018 and March 2021.

The three key objectives of the economic evaluation were:

- To understand the value for money of the service by comparing costs and benefits including from the perspective of the tax payer and the society and comparing the realised costs and benefits against the business case and assessing the values for money
- To understand the value for money of the service by employing wider measures including the average cost per job outcome and comparing the FSS service with other employability programmes and the business case (e.g. by comparing the performance, cost-effectiveness, and efficiency indicators)
- To understand the wider social impact of the FSS service including through social cost-benefit analysis, assessing whether the service has contributed to inclusive growth and wellbeing ambitions and considering the distributional impacts of the service including the impacts on particular groups supported by the service

The economic evaluation used the latest Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Social Cost Benefit Analysis (SCBA) model that has been developed to assess cost effectiveness of labour market policies taking into account wider impacts on the economy and society.

Further details on the economic evaluation methodology can be found in the section 9.1 (Economic Evaluation: Impact, Performance and Value for Money - Methodology) of this report and in the separate report on the [Economic Evaluation](#).

Appendix 2: FSS 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 nine Contract Areas (Lots) across Scotland, as set out in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: FSS Service Providers and supply chain by contract area and local authority area (current at time of research fieldwork - Spring 2021)

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"> 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)	<i>No delivery partners</i>	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"> Start Scotland/Fedcap (Third Sector) Triage (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"> • The Lennox Partnership (Third Sector) • Start Scotland/Fedcap (Third Sector) 	10.1
7 - Northeast	Aberdeen City Aberdeenshire	Start Scotland Limited (Private and Third Sector Partnership)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENABLE Scotland (Third Sector) • Aberdeen Foyer (Third Sector) • Enterprise Mentoring Ltd (Private) • Start Scotland/Fedcap (Third Sector) 	5.6
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) • Lochaber Hope (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) • ENABLE Scotland (Third Sector) • Enterprise Mentoring (Private) • The Wise Group (Third Sector) 	8.8

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.

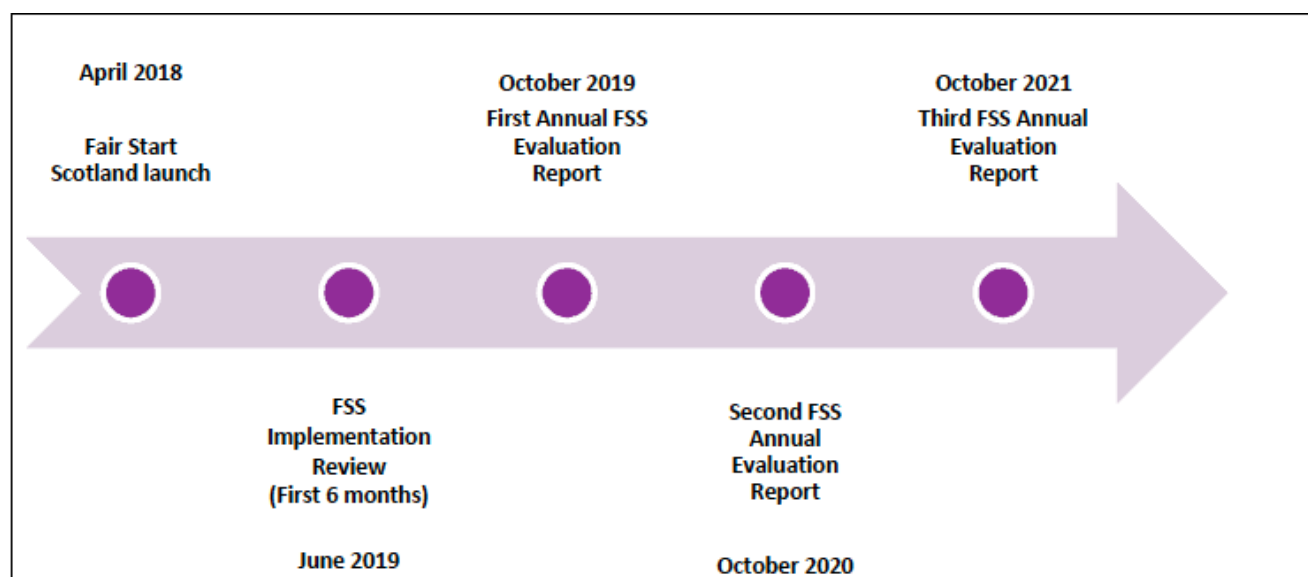
The evaluation will be undertaken by independent research contractors, following a mixed methods approach delivered over three phases (Table 3.1):

Table 3.1: 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 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1: Fair Start Scotland evaluation timeline



Appendix 4: Further information on data

Levels and proportions are all based those aged 16-64 who fall within the definition of unemployment. These will therefore differ from headline estimates which are based on those aged 16+.

Gender is self-reported by respondents participating in the Annual Population Survey. No documentation is asked for by the interviewer or provided by the respondent. Hence, analysis is based on 'gender' rather than 'sex'.

Disability is based on the 2010 Equality Act definition. This harmonised definition is based on self-reported health conditions which have lasted 12 months or more which limit ability to carry out day-to day activities a little or a lot. The 2010 Equality Act superseded the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995.

'Minority ethnic' includes all categories outside of the white population. 'White' includes 'White-Polish' and 'White Gypsy' who also suffer disadvantage.

Urban and Rural refers to the Scottish Government 2016 Urban Rural 2-fold classification.

SIMD 2020 used for 15% most deprived areas analysis.

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 Arfan.Iqbal@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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