

JobsPlus Pilot Implementation and Process Evaluation

Interim Report

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Executive summary

Introduction

One in four working-age adults who are economically inactive live in social housing, and many of these residents are not engaged with any employment support, highlighting the need for targeted action to improve access to decent work and progression opportunities (Alexander, Evans and Wilson, 2022). The Get Britain Working White Paper (2024) called for locally led, integrated services to address economic inactivity, poor health, and skills gaps.

JobsPlus is a place-based, community-led employment programme, which is designed to tackle these problems. It aims to help people into work through on-site employment services, community support, and financial incentives. JobsPlus was evaluated in the United States, showing partnership between landlords, tenants and key local services can lead to better, long-term employment outcomes for residents.

In April 2024, the JobsPlus pilot programme secured funding for 2024-26 from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in conjunction with the HM Treasury Labour Markets Evaluation and Pilots Fund. The Youth Futures Foundation (YFF) also committed funds from November 2024 to March 2026 for delivery and evaluation focused on participants aged 16-24. Subsequently, in June 2025 additional funding was confirmed by DWP for April 2025 to March 2026.

The pilot was delivered by housing associations (HAs) in 10 sites. Sites were selected to include: a mix of urban and rural areas; between 300 and 1000 households; most of the accommodation owned by housing associations; and a relatively high proportion of households likely to have no-one in work.

Methodology

The evaluation used a mixed-methods approach, combining Management Information (MI) collected by pilot sites from July 2024 to March 2025, baseline participant surveys completed at registration over the same period, and secondary data regarding key economic and local labour market trends. Some sites began implementation later than others in August and September, and so their data covers a shorter period.

Qualitative interview data were collected from HA staff and delivery partners during two waves: the setup phase (September-October 2024) and five to six months after the programme commenced (February-March 2025), and participants (December-January 2025). In total, there were 72 interviews with HA staff and delivery partners across the two waves, and 47 interviews with participants. Additionally, a two-day visit was conducted at each pilot site in January 2025 for on-site observations of programme delivery.

Key findings

Setting up the pilot

By March 2025, the programme had been established across all pilot sites and was fully mobilised. There had been extensive work to establish partnerships, recruit and train staff and to set up governance arrangements.

- There were generally strong partnership working arrangements in place with a wide range of organisations from across the public, voluntary and community sectors. This had been enabled by HAs' existing partner networks. Working with well-known and trusted community organisations was helping to build awareness of JobsPlus.
- There were examples of effective partnership working with Jobcentre Plus (JCP). These were typically characterised by co-location, cross-referral, strong communication, and a commitment to the JobsPlus pilot from senior staff. In other locations, it had been challenging to raise awareness of JobsPlus among JCP Work Coaches, and partnership working was more limited.
- A key challenge to establishing partnership working was changing mindsets about perceived competition between providers. Some HAs were using partner forums and working groups to try to address these issues and strengthen collaboration.
- HAs were able to second staff from other roles within their organisation and backfill those positions to staff JobPlus teams within a relatively short implementation window. In a few sites, however, new staff had to be recruited, which meant some sites were operating without a full team of staff in place in the first few months of the pilot. Further, a few sites had difficulties attracting applicants, which they perceived to be due to the short-term contract offered.

Implementing JobsPlus

There were positive early indications that the JobsPlus model could be implemented effectively in the UK:

- HAs and participants considered the initial registration and needs assessment process to be effective, and only 9% of participants disengaged from the programme during the first four weeks.
- There was evidence of high-quality, tailored employment support being delivered. The flexible, holistic nature of the support was key to engaging residents and achieving outcomes.
- Pilots provided or linked to wide-ranging support to address complex barriers to work. This included: Jobcentre Plus; health and wellbeing services; food banks; housing; money management and debt advice; benefits advice; drug and alcohol issues; childcare; domestic abuse services; support for neurodivergent children; specialist immigration and asylum solicitors; social prescribers; and registering with a GP or dentist.

- A key feature of the JobsPlus model is its support for local residents to become Community Champions, who play a vital role in community outreach and support. By March 2025, all sites had at least one Community Champion in place. As this was a new way of working for HAs, they were developing the role.
- Recruitment to JobsPlus was relatively slow in the early months but increased over the following months. This was in line with the experiences of the US pilot programme and other voluntary employment support programmes in the UK, which demonstrate that engaging people with multiple and complex barriers to employment is a gradual process that typically happens over many months.
- The general election in early July delayed pilot delivery, in-line with Cabinet Office guidance restricting government-funded activity in the pre-election period. As a result, the programme launched during the summer when many partners were on leave and parents were managing childcare responsibilities. This contributed to slower progress in the early months.
- Participants were positive about the support received, often attributing this to their relationship with their caseworker. Many compared their experience with JobsPlus favourably to other employment support services.
- The Into Work Bonus of £400 was being administered but, overall, early perceptions were that, although important, this level of incentive was not a key driver of engagement and outcomes. The Into Work Bonus will be explored further in the next phase of the evaluation as it may be perceived differently by those who join the programme later on.

JobsPlus participants

There was emerging evidence that JobsPlus was reaching Housing Association residents who faced complex barriers to employment and who would benefit from the intensive support available. Based on data collected between July 2024 and March 2025:

- Over a quarter (28%) of JobsPlus participants had no or low qualifications (i.e. a highest qualification of Level 1 or below) compared to 31% of residents across all pilot sites.
- Most participants (81%) were out of work at registration. Their employment backgrounds varied: 13% had never worked, 37% had been mostly employed, and 28% had experienced alternating periods of employment and unemployment.
- Nearly half (48%) of participants had below average wellbeing (with 21% of these people experiencing very low wellbeing).

There were positive signs that the model was reaching people who would not typically be well-engaged with employment services, including those who were economically inactive. This included:

- Those with parental and caring responsibilities (36% of participants); and
- Those who had a long-term health condition lasting or expecting to last more than 12 months, and which reduced their ability to carry out day-to-day activities (28% of

participants, compared to 20% of residents in the JobsPlus pilot sites and 17% of people in England as a whole).

JobsPlus had been particularly effective at reaching young people and people from a black ethnic minority background:

- 25% of participants were aged 16–24-year-olds and 27% of participants were from a black ethnic minority background, compared to 12% of residents in the pilot sites overall within these groups.

Emerging outcomes

Despite the early stages of the pilot, there was positive emerging evidence of employment outcomes:

- 18% (n=83) of JobsPlus participants secured employment. Of these, 15% (n = 69) were out of work at the time of registration and subsequently secured employment and 3% (n=14) were already in work and transitioned into a new role.
- Over a quarter (27%, n=47) of participants who were out of work at registration and who registered in the first three or four months moved into work.
- More than half (n = 47) of employment outcomes (defined as entering employment or changing job) achieved after registering for JobsPlus resulted in permanent contracts.
- Around three-fifths of participants who were not in employment at the time of registration and gained employment following participation in JobsPlus (n = 26) reached the two-month in-work bonus milestone.
- Participants also reported improvements in mental health and wellbeing, confidence, social inclusion, and job readiness.

Success factors

Key success factors in the early implementation of JobsPlus were:

- Strong, pre-existing local partnerships with public, voluntary and community sector organisations were key drivers of success. These relationships facilitated timely mobilisation and coordination within the shortened planning and setup periods.
- Community hubs were contributing significantly to service delivery, with participants reporting that they were accessible and welcoming environments, which encouraged participation and local engagement.
- The personalised, flexible support model built on trust-based relationships was associated with increased participant motivation and progress toward employment and wellbeing outcomes.

Recommendations for sites

Extending reach

- Continue to expand partnerships, strengthen outreach to underrepresented groups and promote success stories to increase visibility and trust.
- Continue to prioritise building close working relationships with JCP.

On-site employment services and wider support

- Consider developing stronger guidance on case management to maintain the high quality of support as the number of JobsPlus participants increases.
- Continue to invest in training and resources to ensure staff knowledge on available provision is kept-up-to-date to facilitate ongoing effective personalised support.
- Expand employer-facing work to ensure that the JobsPlus model is demand-led and able to provide employment opportunities for an increasing number of residents.
- Develop strategies to mitigate and manage the risks of key staff leaving.
- Consider a focus on building stronger links with community-based health services given the high prevalence of mental and physical ill health among JobsPlus residents.

Community support for work

- Receive ongoing technical assistance to help to develop the Community Champions role,
- Consider how to facilitate greater involvement of residents in co-development, planning and monitoring pilot activities through Community Champions and other mechanisms.

Local governance of the pilots

- Further develop strategic steering groups, which ideally monitor how JobsPlus contributes to local economic priorities.
- Strengthen resident and community representation on governance boards to build community ownership of the model.
- Ensure effective information sharing with Combined Authorities and other partners to inform the development and implementation of Get Britain Working local plans.

Overall, greater certainty and longer-term funding could help sites with planning, building trust and momentum, and recruiting and retaining key staff members.

Next steps for the evaluation

The final evaluation report (due 2026) will build on the early findings to consider JobsPlus delivery from April 2025 onwards. It will provide evidence on how the programme operates across different local, outcomes for diverse groups, and enablers and barriers to effective delivery. The report will include cross-site comparisons, explore the evolution of delivery models and partnerships, and assess long-term support, in-work support, and employment journeys. Importantly, it will consider scalability and potential for the wider implementation of the programme. An impact evaluation is also being conducted, with results published in Spring 2026.

Glossary

Term	Definition
Case worker or employment advisor	An advisor who works with JobsPlus participants to help them transition into work and may refer the participant to other wider support services as part of the person-centred support.
Community Champion	An advocate (normally a resident or former participant) who promotes the JobsPlus programme by building trust and improving communication between residents and the programme staff. They are involved in community outreach and engagement, sharing information about JobsPlus and employment opportunities, and providing community support.
Community Hub	A location where JobsPlus support is situated, such as a community centre or a designated office space on or close to the housing estate. It includes representatives from various services, such as Jobcentre Plus representatives, mental health providers and local voluntary and community sector providers. These services may be co-located to provide joined-up support for participants seeking work.
Financial incentive	A financial bonus for those finding and sustaining work.
Financial support	Discretionary funding provided by sites to participants including wider support for clothing, travel, childcare etc.
Into Work Bonus	A payment of £400 is received when a participant has sustained new employment or self-employment for at least two months and earns at least £677 monthly.
Jobcentre Plus	A government-funded employment organisation, part of the Department for Work and Pensions. Its aim is to help people of working age find employment in the UK,
JobsPlus	A pilot employment programme adapted from a United States (US) initiative. It aims to support social housing residents in gaining employment or improved job opportunities through a place-based and community-driven approach.
Saturation approach	The JobsPlus programme is available to all housing association residents in a specific geographical area, where it is open to all residents within a defined geographic area and there is no formal qualifying or targeting criteria other than residency on the defined area.
Site	A place where JobsPlus programme is taking place. The programme is being piloted by housing associations or a contracted partner and their residents in ten sites across England.

Abbreviations

Term	Definition
DWP	The Department for Work and Pensions
HA	Housing Association
IES	Institute for Employment Studies
JCP	Jobcentre Plus
LSOA	Lower-level Super Output Area
L&W	Learning and Work Institute
MI	Management Information
ToC	Theory of Change

1 Introduction

1.1 Policy background and rationale for the JobsPlus pilot

One in seven working-age people in England lives in social housing, where residents are more likely to face higher rates of relative poverty and disadvantage than the general population. Social housing residents are:

- twice as likely to be unemployed or disabled;
- over three times as likely to be lone parents or lack qualifications; and
- when employed—more likely to hold lower-skilled jobs and earn about a third less than those in other tenures (Alexander, Evans and Wilson, 2022).

In part these findings reflect how the limited supply of social housing is allocated. But these poor outcomes are compounded by the fact that people in social housing experiencing this disadvantage have typically had limited access to employment support. They sometimes do not meet eligibility requirements for major programmes and may not receive support through JobcentrePlus (JCP), either because they are on benefits that do not systematically offer proactive support or are not claiming benefits.

Such significant labour market challenges suggest the need for a targeted approach that is highly tailored to local contexts. Previous place-based models of employment support have operated on the premise that a deeper understanding of local circumstances and residents' barriers to work enables the provision of targeted support to achieve positive outcomes (Bramley et al., 2022). This can help to overcome geographic disparities in labour market outcomes. Some place-based models have adopted a saturation approach to supporting residents (Bramley et al., 2022; What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, 2018). This entails providing intensive employment support that is accessible to all residents in a specific neighbourhood. The aim is to create a critical mass of positive employment outcomes that can generate spillover effects, where the success of some individuals inspires, influences, and supports others within the same community. This is expected to have a greater impact than programmes with narrower eligibility criteria.

There is clear potential for social housing providers to be key providers of this type of place-based employment support. Social housing providers have a strong presence in local communities, maintain close relationships with residents, and understand their needs. They are also a key funder of employment support in the UK (Young, 2024). This makes them well-placed to help people towards work.

There is recognition of the need for effective partnership working in current policy. Instead of placing full responsibility on a single housing provider, a consortium of local organisations, including anchor institutions, key service providers, and local authorities,

can offer a more cohesive approach. By working together, these organisations can create a cohesive network that addresses various aspects of community wellbeing, including employment support, skills development, health and wellbeing, and social services (Young, 2022).

The JobsPlus model of employment support, originating in the United States, allows for providers of social housing to offer employment support to residents via a community-led programme through joined-up working with local agencies. The JobsPlus model reflects many of the priorities and themes in the Get Britain Working White Paper (Department for Work and Pensions, 2024), published in 2024. The White Paper called for a less centralised approach to employment support and increased leadership and coordination from local areas, particularly mayoral authorities. The JobsPlus pilot therefore provided an opportunity to generate learning about what works well and the key challenges in relation to locally-led solutions to economic inactivity, ill health and unemployment.

1.2 JobsPlus US model

The JobsPlus model was first introduced in the mid-1990s in public housing developments in the United States. These communities faced high rates of poverty and unemployment, with up to half of the residents unemployed and a third having significant health conditions (Bloom et al., 2005). The model was tested in six cities and resulted in a sustained positive impact on resident earnings (MDRC, n.d.).

Due to its substantial positive impacts, the model was subsequently expanded to 13 states. Evaluations showed that, when fully implemented, residents' average earnings increased by 16% compared to a control group, with these improvements persisting over a 7-year follow-up period (Bloom et al., 2005). Furthermore, a preliminary analysis indicated that JobsPlus contributed to improved employment and earnings in adulthood for children who lived in these locations 20 years after their parents' initial participation.

The core elements of the US model are:

- Employment services at on-site job centres in the participating housing developments.
- Changes in rent rules that provide a greater financial incentive to work.
- Community support for work, through which information about work-related opportunities is spread through neighbour-to-neighbour outreach and other social networking efforts.

A key part of the model is that it targets all working-age residents, attempting to saturate the housing developments with information, services, and incentives to support work.

1.3 JobsPlus UK model

Building on its success in the US, Learning and Work Institute (L&W), in partnership with Communities that Work, the representative body for social landlords engaged in employment support, developed a UK-specific version of the model for testing in the UK context (Wilson and McCallum, 2018). This community-led employment support model

aims to provide employment and wrap-around support for residents in social housing, delivered in partnership with key local agencies. It consists of several key components:

On-site employment services

Employment support is located within community hubs situated within or near social housing estates, where specialist employment advisors deliver one-to-one employment support. Alongside employment support, the hub offers a range of co-located employment-related services, including housing assistance, mental health support, JCP services, and financial aid, ensuring comprehensive and coordinated support for residents. The hub aims to be accessible to residents, located within walking distance. It allows employment advisors to easily drop in and visit residents in their homes or informal settings, promoting the support and building trust.

Community support for work

External networks, local services, and community groups act as 'trusted intermediaries' for engaging residents with JobsPlus. Residents play a key role in shaping support and promoting JobsPlus in collaboration with housing association (HA) staff. Some residents receive training to become Community Champions, facilitating outreach through community events, informal face-to-face meetings, providing peer support, and serving as communication channels between residents and staff. Others participate in local steering groups to oversee the programme, ensuring they have a voice and can help shape the support. This involvement builds credibility and trust, reduces the stigma associated with seeking support, and leverages the existing social capital within the community.

Financial incentives

Financial incentives are tied to job outcomes, offering a £400 Into Work Bonus for those who secure and maintain employment or self-employment for two consecutive months earning at least £677 per month gross. This bonus is excluded from benefit assessments, ensuring it is not offset by lower benefit payments and exempt from income tax.

Saturation

JobsPlus is available to all residents who live within a defined geographical area and wish to access employment support. This approach eliminates the avoidance of eligibility criteria associated with other employment schemes and reduces the stigma of being singled out for needing support. The aim is for residents to benefit directly by enrolling in the support or indirectly from peers, fostering a culture of work within the community.

The main differences between the US and UK JobsPlus programmes are described in Table 1.1 in the Technical Annex. The key points of difference relate to:

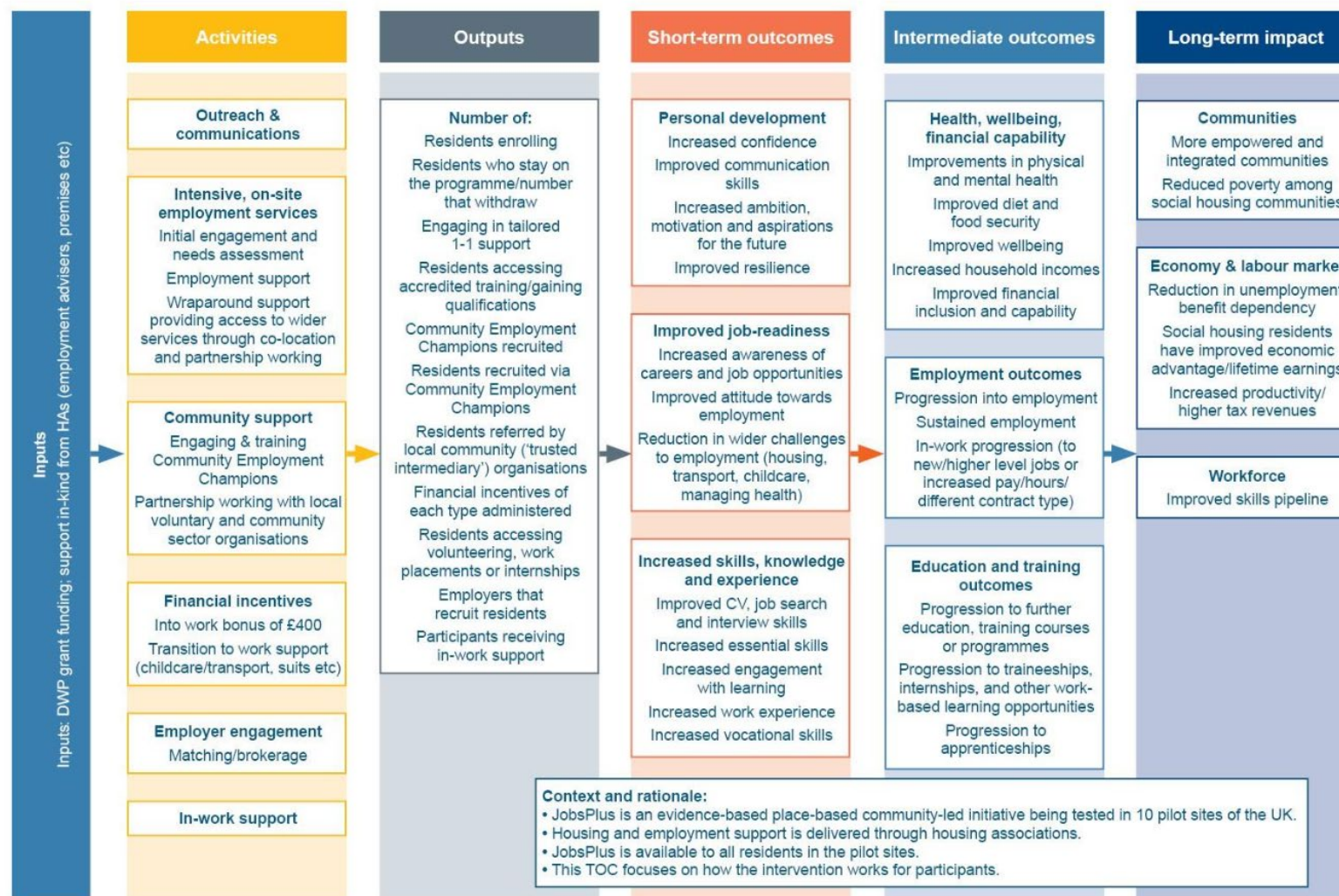
- **The differences in social housing in the US and UK.** The US approach to social housing is more centralised and managed by local Public Housing Authorities, with oversight from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development; in the UK, the

central government provides funding but local councils and housing associations are the main providers. Additionally, in the UK, there has been significant privatisation of social housing since the 1980s, resulting in more mixed types of tenure. For example, housing can be rented from housing associations or councils at reduced rents, or it can be part-sold, part-rented as shared ownership.

- In the US model, the JobsPlus **financial incentive** is rent-based: tenants' rent is frozen as income increases to remove disincentives to work. In the UK, there is a one-off 'into to work bonus' of £400, once Jobs Plus participants have sustained new employment or self-employment, earning at least £677 per month, for at least two months.
- **The duration of the pilot phase** in the US was five years (from 1998 to 2003) and tested the model in six public housing developments whereas in the UK, the pilot phase is under two years (most sites operated between July 2024 and March 2026).

The Theory of Change (ToC) for the JobsPlus UK model is set out below in Figure 1.1, with a fuller description of the ToC and the intended mechanisms of change in section 1.1 of the Technical Annex.

Figure 1.1: JobsPlus Theory of Change diagram



1.4 Setting up JobsPlus pilots

Based on the success of the US programme, L&W worked proactively with 19 social housing providers between 2016 and 2018, supported by Communities that Work, to develop a proposal for testing the JobsPlus model in the UK (Wilson & McCallum, 2018). The Work and Pensions Select Committee recommended that the UK Government trial the US-style JobsPlus programme in 2023. Using social housing providers to pilot JobsPlus linked with DWP's recommendation to target employment support in local areas, allowing support to be tailored to the needs and opportunities of the local area and its residents (Work and Pensions Committee, 2023). It also presented an opportunity to highlight the role these providers can play in the broader lives of their residents.

In April 2024, the JobsPlus pilot programme secured funding for 2024-26 from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in conjunction with the HM Treasury Labour Markets Evaluation and Pilots Fund. The Youth Futures Foundation (YFF) also committed funds from November 2024 to March 2026 for delivery and evaluation focused on participants aged 16-24. Subsequently, in June 2025 additional funding was confirmed by DWP for April 2025 to March 2026.

A final set of 10 pilot sites was confirmed in Spring 2024. Sites were selected to include:

- a mix of urban and rural areas;
- between 350 and 1000 households (see Table 1.1 below)– this was based on the US experience and also consultations with landlords and partners, which indicated this scale would be enough to support an on-site saturation model and a place-based focus;
- high proportions of accommodation owned by HAs to reflect the particular disadvantages that residents of social housing face; and
- relatively high numbers of households likely to have no-one in work to ensure the pilot targeted those most in need of support.

Table 1.1: Number of households by pilot site

Pilot site	Number of households
Barnet	1000
Borehamwood	1037
Leyton	886
Penge, Bromley	820
Rotherham	738
Sheffield	1000
Sittingbourne	840
Stockton-on-Tees	605

Toxteth, Liverpool	1000
Wirral	370

All selected sites completed delivery plans, which included details of their approach to engaging eligible residents, the format of individual needs assessments, and the format of on-site employment services and support. All sites also outlined existing partnership working arrangements, governance arrangements and how the pilot would be staffed.

By May 2024, delivery plans for all 10 pilot sites were finalised, with all sites scheduled to go live in early July 2024. It was originally anticipated that sites would be operational from May 2024. However, the announcement of a general election in the UK in May 2024 for 4 July 2024, meant that delivery was delayed until after the election date in-line with Cabinet Office guidance relating to government-funded activity in the pre-election period¹.

1.5 Evaluation of the pilots and technical assistance

The evaluation of the JobsPlus pilot in the UK was designed to ensure both rigour and relevance, drawing on the experience and expertise of L&W and the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) as independent research organisations. The evaluation approach was also informed by lessons from previous large-scale employment interventions. L&W and IES formed a strategic partnership to lead the evaluation, supported by MDRC, the original developers of the JobsPlus model in the United States. This collaboration was intentionally structured to separate programme delivery from evaluation, ensuring objectivity and credibility in assessing the model's effectiveness.

L&W, as the overall programme lead, was responsible for grant management, coordination of pilot activities, and facilitation of technical assistance to delivery partners. IES led the design and implementation of the evaluation strategy, working closely with L&W to ensure that the evaluation was embedded into the pilot from the outset.

This partnership model also enabled insights from the evaluation to be used to support delivery partners in real time, through the technical assistance workstream. Technical assistance and programme support was provided to sites to ensure fidelity to the model and ensure continuous improvement to support implementation at sites, and to inform the next phase of JobsPlus in the UK.

¹ This pre-election period of sensitivity means that government departments will normally observe discretion about making new policy announcements or decisions that could influence voters.

1.5.1 Evaluation questions

The JobsPlus evaluation seeks to understand whether the model can be adapted to the UK context and implemented successfully to improve employment outcomes. It will provide evidence to inform decision-making around the potential expansion of the programme in the future. An impact evaluation is also being conducted, with results to be published in Spring 2026.

The implementation and process evaluation aimed to answer five research questions:

- Was it possible to implement the JobsPlus programme effectively in the UK?
- How did the programme work overall, in different contexts and for various groups?
- What outcomes were achieved and for whom?
- What factors contributed to the success of implementing JobsPlus and achieving outcomes?
- Would this or similar programmes be scalable in the future?

This interim report presents preliminary findings on these research questions and will be updated with additional evidence, culminating in a final report in 2026.

1.5.2 Overview of methodology for the implementation and process evaluation

The evaluation is underpinned by a Theory of Change (ToC) (see Figure 1.1 above), which maps out the links across the programme's activities, target outputs, and planned outcomes and impact. To test and evidence the ToC, the evaluation used the following data sources:

- **An analysis of Management Information (MI)** collected by pilot sites, which recorded key information about participants' characteristics and employment outcomes. This interim report uses data collected between July 2024 and March 2025. Some fields in the MI data were thoroughly completed, while others contained gaps. However, when data were missing, it was unclear whether the caseworker had not collected the information or if a participant had declined to respond. In some instances, this limits the evaluation's ability to interpret the analysis of MI data accurately.
- **A descriptive analysis of secondary data** on each site's economic, labour market, and social conditions.
- **Baseline survey data**, completed by JobsPlus participants at registration, which included questions about work history, current employment, barriers to finding work, goals, financial inclusion, and demographics. It also featured two validated measures for assessing changes in wellbeing and confidence to search for a job. A 67% response rate was achieved. As the survey was optional to complete, the participants who completed the baseline survey may not represent the views of all participants taking part in the programme. Compared to the MI, the sample was broadly similar in terms of demographics. However, a lower proportion of respondents with long-term disabilities completed the survey compared to non-respondents (40% vs. 53%).

- **Depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders** at two time points: during the setup and early implementation phase (September-October 2024), and five to six months after the programme started (February-March 2025). For each pilot site, the interview sample consisted of up to three HA staff members (project managers, employment advisors and Community Champions), two to three delivery partners, and strategic stakeholders such as local authority representatives. These interviews were semi-structured and focused on stakeholders' experiences of programme engagement, partnership working, and implementation. In total, 72 interviews were conducted across the two waves (28 in wave 1 and 44 in wave 2) at the 10 pilot sites.
- **Depth interviews with JobsPlus participants** were carried out between December 2024 and January 2025, to gain insights into participant experiences of the programme. These took place predominantly face-to-face. A total of 47 participant interviews were completed, out of an estimated 472 participants who registered on JobsPlus between July and January. The sample included a diverse mix of age groups, ethnicities, genders and personal circumstances but did not include people who disengaged from the programme.
- **Site visits to observe service delivery and engagement** with support took place between November 2024 and January 2025.

An online follow-up survey was also distributed to participants on a rolling basis, six months after registration, specifically to those registered between July and September 2024. The survey's response rate was 22% (34 out of 152 registrations in the programme's first three months of delivery). Given the small sample size, the follow-up survey will be analysed in the final report in March 2026 alongside outcome data for those registered between October 2024 and March 2026.

Further details of the methodology are available in the Technical Annex.

In this report, where base sizes for the MI and survey analysis are less than 100, percentages have not been reported.

1.6 About this report

The remainder of this report outlines progress in implementing the JobsPlus model. It provides emerging evaluation evidence to determine whether the JobsPlus model can be successfully implemented in the UK context, with a different population, context, stakeholders, and referral pathways compared with the US pilot. It is structured as follows:

- Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5 present the findings of the pilot so far, focusing on establishing and implementing the JobsPlus model, profiles of JobsPlus participants, and short-term and intermediate programme outcomes.
- Chapter 6 concludes with a summary of key findings and lessons learned and provides recommendations and insights for future delivery.

2 Establishing the JobsPlus Model

This chapter draws on qualitative data from two waves of interviews with housing association (HA) staff, delivery partners, and wider stakeholders. It focuses on the initial setup of the JobsPlus programme, including HAs' aims and visions for their JobsPlus pilots, the development of governance and partnership working, and establishing staffing to deliver the pilot.

Key findings: Establishing the JobsPlus model

By March 2025, the programme had been established across all pilot sites and was fully mobilised. There had been extensive work to establish partnerships, recruit and train staff and to set up governance arrangements.

Establishing partnership working

- There were generally strong partnership working arrangements in place with a wide range of organisations from across the public, voluntary and community sectors. This had been enabled by HAs' existing partner networks. Working with well-known and trusted community organisations was helping to build awareness of JobsPlus.
- There were examples of effective partnership working with Jobcentre Plus (JCP). These were typically characterised by co-location, cross-referral, strong communication, and a commitment to the JobsPlus pilot from senior staff. In other locations, it had been challenging to raise awareness of JobsPlus among JCP Work Coaches, and partnership working was more limited.
- A key challenge to establishing partnership working was changing mindsets about perceived competition between providers. Some HAs were using partner forums and working groups to try to address these issues and strengthen collaboration.
- Employer engagement was not a primary focus during the initial phase of pilot site activity. Nonetheless, some caseworkers proactively built employer connections.

Staffing

- HAs were able to second staff from other roles within their organisation and backfill those positions to staff JobsPlus teams within a relatively short implementation window. In a few sites, however, new staff had to be recruited, which meant some sites were operating without a full team of staff in place in the first few months of the pilot. Further, a few sites had difficulties attracting applicants, which they perceived to be due to the short-term contract offered.

Governance

- In March 2025, formal governance arrangements were in relatively early stages in many sites. In some areas, steering groups appeared to be working effectively to support day-to-day delivery, although they tended to be more operationally than strategically focused. Resident and community representation on governance boards was limited.

2.1 Aims and vision

HAs aimed to tackle complex and deep-rooted social problems in their local areas including:

- intergenerational worklessness;
- poverty;
- physical and mental health problems;
- social isolation; and
- poor community cohesion.

In some areas, there was aspiration that over time JobsPlus would contribute to reductions in anti-social behaviour and crime rates.

HAs envisioned that JobsPlus would tackle negative perceptions of public services and previous poor experiences of employment support programmes. In particular, HAs hoped that JobsPlus would highlight the key role that social housing, as a trusted organisation, can play in providing employment support.

HAs emphasised that the JobsPlus model was well-aligned to their ethos of community engagement and social value. There was a desire to establish true community ownership of the pilot to deliver maximum benefits to local residents.

HAs designed their pilots to complement other funding sources such as Restart, UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and local authority schemes by supporting residents who were ineligible, underserved, or disengaged from these programmes. They aimed to avoid duplication by coordinating with partners, including JCP and local voluntary and community sector organisations, and offering flexible, holistic support that filled gaps rather than replicated existing provision.

For some larger HAs, the pilot offered the opportunity to build on their existing expertise in employment support. They looked forward to extending their knowledge about what works in supporting sustained employment outcomes and hoped this would build their capacity for future.

2.2 Governance and partnership working

2.2.1 Governance

Formal governance arrangements were still being developed in many sites or had only recently been established at the time that fieldwork was completed. The main reason for this was an initial prioritisation of outreach and recruitment.

In some sites, existing steering groups for other employment, skills or careers interventions, had been used to provide governance functions. In a few cases, HA project leads, with support from senior staff, had taken on responsibility for managing and delivering the pilot and there were no wider steering arrangements in place. Some of

these HAs indicated they might establish mechanisms to bring partners together in a more structured and formal way to improve coordination, as the pilot progressed.

Where steering groups were in place, they brought together key stakeholder organisations. These typically included representatives from economic development and regeneration departments of the local authority, JCP regional managers, local councillors, local voluntary and community sector organisations and the JobsPlus manager. There were limited examples of employers actively participating in steering groups.

Generally, steering groups appeared to be operational working groups rather than strategic groups. They were used to monitor and support delivery. Meetings tended to take place every 6-8 weeks and were used to update stakeholders on progress with implementing JobsPlus and discuss how to improve resident engagement and partnership working. There were no examples of the progress of JobsPlus being reported to boards that monitor local strategic objectives. In some areas, the involvement of local authority stakeholders and politicians showed that strategic partnerships were forming and that JobsPlus was becoming recognised as part of the local employment and skills system.

Levels of resident involvement in steering arrangements varied. One site had made the decision for governance to be participant-led, in line with the community-based ethos of the programme, and most steering group members were local residents and/or JobsPlus participants. Some sites had chosen to develop participant voice in governance gradually. They recognised that residents may not want to join formal boards and were instead exploring alternative and more inclusive ways to involve them in decision-making.

Views on governance

HAs with more established steering groups were keen to increase membership and representation of relevant services to reflect the challenges they were grappling with in pilot implementation. For example, following confirmation of funding from YFF, some HAs had included more youth organisations on their steering group.

A few HAs acknowledged the lack of strategic governance and that this could affect the long-term sustainability of the programme once the pilot funding ended. There was a view that the short-term funding made it hard to embed the programme in broader regional strategic frameworks.

Areas that had prioritised participant-led governance felt this approach would support stronger community integration and local ownership in the longer-term.

What was working well and key challenges

In sites where steering groups were perceived to work well, they performed a 'critical friend' function, and they also helped to improve coordination around referrals and support.

Some sites had faced challenges with attendance, with partners unable to attend meetings due to leave or other commitments. One site also faced initial challenges around resourcing the administration work required for governance arrangements. In

some cases, sites have tried to overcome these challenges by using AI tools to minute meetings or drawing on support from HA central services.

2.2.2 Partnership working

When developing their delivery plans, all sites were asked to identify potential partners to support the implementation of JobsPlus. They carried out a mapping exercise that considered which services would most effectively meet the needs of residents.

Residents in JobsPlus sites had varying and wide-ranging skills, barriers and expectations, meaning delivery teams had to be able to connect them to a diverse array of services. Many HAs had built on strong existing partner networks to implement JobsPlus. Key partners commonly included the local authority, further education and training providers, voluntary and community sector organisations and JCP. Partners supported outreach activities and publicised the JobsPlus pilot, as well as delivering employment support and providing more specialist support.

While some HAs had well-established, extensive networks they could mobilise quickly, others had to build relationships when the grant was awarded so it took longer for partners to play a meaningful role in outreach and support. In a few sites, HAs were primarily drawing on their own internal specialist teams to provide holistic support and had less extensive partnerships with external organisations.

The roles of each type of key partner are discussed below:

- **Outreach and referral partners:** HAs worked with a wide range of organisations from across the public and voluntary sector to help promote the JobsPlus pilot and engage participants, including: Citizens Advice, GPs, primary schools, food banks, children's centres, mental health charities, faith organisations and sports clubs. These organisations had put posters up about the pilot, signposted to JobsPlus and referred residents to the programme. Some of these partners had also held community events at the hubs to help attract residents. Most sites had also worked with JCP to generate referrals and in some cases JCP has been the main partner for the programme.
- **Delivery partners:** HAs had also worked with partner organisations to deliver services and support to participants. There were examples of more formal partnership arrangements underpinned by contracts and service level agreements and informal collaborations more reliant on sharing knowledge and resources. Delivery partners were wide-ranging and included training providers and local colleges, health and wellbeing charities, family support providers, debt advice and money management services. Key delivery partners were co-located in community hubs where space allowed and in other instances referrals were made.
- **Employers and partners supporting job brokerage:** generally, by end of March 2025, employer engagement activity had been relatively limited. Nonetheless, there were examples of HAs collaborating with employers to offer trials to JobsPlus participants, to prioritise applications from JobsPlus candidates or being informed about upcoming vacancies.

Some partners played multiple roles in JobsPlus, for example, providing referrals and also delivering support to JobsPlus participants.

Views on partnership working

HAs felt that the partnership approach that is central to JobsPlus was innovative and effective. They considered it to be key for outreach and enabling underserved communities to be engaged. HA staff and partners also reported that it was enabling a wider range of resident needs to be met.

JCP staff perceived that the pilot added value because of the intensive and holistic support it could provide through the partnership approach. They also felt the local approach was beneficial as in some cases Jobcentres were far from HAs. Having services closer to participants removed transportation barriers and improved access.

What was working well

Where HAs had strong pre-existing partnerships, there tended to be strong processes for referrals and information sharing and often a good rapport between key staff in partner organisations. This meant less of a lead in time was required to plan and develop partnerships, and work to recruit and support residents was able to start quickly.

Pre-existing relationships had also enabled more flexible referral processes. For example, trusted local organisations had been able to accompany potential participants to initial “handover” meetings, easing the introduction and building trust gradually. This approach had been particularly beneficial for supporting anxious participants to engage with the programme.

Many HAs had targeted their partnership activity on well-known and trusted community organisations. This was perceived to have helped the programme have a greater presence and trust in the community and to reach a wider audience than unemployed people claiming benefits.

Co-locating services had supported improved communication between partners, enabling staff to have quick, informal conversations to share information or resolve issues. HA staff and partners perceived that co-location has made the participant experience smoother and less daunting, because participants did not have to move between services.

Where there was strong partnership working with JCP, co-location had supported joint working. There were examples of JobsPlus caseworkers basing themselves at a Jobcentre once a week and of JCP staff offering drop-ins from community hubs. In these cases, Work Coaches identified individuals with more complex needs and referred them to JobsPlus. Co-location allowed for quick, smooth referrals and handovers and also helped raise awareness of the programme among Work Coaches. Where referrals from JCP were reported to work well, there was also senior commitment to the pilot from service leaders and partnership managers. They were in regular contact with JobsPlus managers and were well-informed about the programme and its offer.

Key challenges

A few sites reported challenges in the relationship with JCP and had not received as many referrals as anticipated from them. They perceived that it was difficult to build awareness of the programme among larger Jobcentres. Additionally, several sites had hoped to establish data-sharing agreements with JCP so that details of claimants who lived in their postcode areas could be transferred electronically. However, this had not been possible and more manual, time-consuming processes had been used instead.

Perceived competition between providers was also a key challenge. HAs reported that some other providers were reluctant to collaborate, particularly if they had payment-by-results contracts. Among some of these providers, there was a perception that partnership working would make it hard to prove contribution to employment outcomes and could affect payments. HAs acknowledged the challenge and many were working hard to differentiate their offer from that of others and to articulate the fit and complementarity between services:

What we've found is that it's quite a tough, tight competition in [this area] where the partners are all trying to fight for different contracts. So, they're all quite used to working independently, so when we're trying to bring the partnership together, we spent quite a lot of time working on how they're going to work as a team and how they're going to work as a seamless service.

Housing Association lead

Gradually, HAs had started to see progress in negative perceptions shifting, although this remained a focus for later months. Mechanisms such as partner forums, regular meetings and more informal and routine communication had been used to assist with this work.

Where partners had been more supportive and willing to collaborate, there had sometimes been challenges around them not fully understanding the area-based eligibility of the programme. Several HAs discussed receiving inappropriate referrals from partner organisations, sometimes in relatively high volumes.

In terms of partnerships with community health services, there had been mixed experiences. Some HAs reported success in engaging GP practices, with examples of GPs contacting eligible residents on behalf of the pilot. They were persuaded of the health and wellbeing benefits of the programme and so willing to provide this support. However, other HAs reported that it has been very challenging to engage GPs.

In relation to employer partnerships, some HAs cited the challenges of the predominance of small and micro-businesses in the local labour market. This affected the availability of vacancies and also made employer engagement activity resource intensive. Generally, HAs discussed that the focus in early months had been on outreach, engagement and support. As the number of JobsPlus participants increased they expected to focus more on building partnerships with employers.

2.3 Staffing

Interviews highlighted that some HAs seconded staff from other teams and programmes to JobsPlus or recruited new staff into roles. There was also an example of a HA subcontracting day-to-day management of JobsPlus to an external partner agency. The JobsPlus delivery teams typically comprised of:

- **A JobsPlus Manager or Director:** this typically was a full-time role, with responsibility for day-to-day management and coordination of the programme. Managers were responsible for monitoring progress and liaising with and managing partners.
- **JobsPlus caseworkers:** each site had two-three caseworkers; some sites referred to this role by different titles, such as coaches or advisors. These staff assessed residents' employment and training needs; arranged for services and monitored their use; helped residents arrange for childcare, transportation to work, and other support services; contacted prospective employers, helped residents locate job openings, and to file applications and prepare for job interviews, as necessary.
- **Administrative assistants:** administrative assistants helped the project manager/director and others with the logistical and other tasks needed to keep the programme functioning smoothly. This was an in-kind contribution from HAs.
- **Finance officer:** HAs' finance officers ensured appropriate checks and balances were in place at site level and administered financial incentive payments to qualifying residents.

In addition, HAs contributed the time and expertise of senior staff in-kind for leadership and oversight.

L&W provided guidance on staffing to HAs, suggesting that a team could consist of a team leader and two employment support officers or caseworkers; however, sites were able to make their own decisions about resourcing within their allocated budget. As the pilot had progressed, some HAs had requested permission to change the composition of their teams to meet evolving needs.

Sites also received Technical Assistance from L&W to support early implementation and delivery. This support included: online Community of Practice sessions so key staff in sites could share experiences and learning; assisting with the development of Local Needs Assessments; and collaborating with sites to identify and address key areas requiring further support.

Views on staffing

HAs commonly discussed that at the start of the pilot, new staff needed time to be trained and to understand the differences between the JobsPlus approach and previous employment services they may have worked for. HAs also discussed that needing to promote JobsPlus to a wide range of residents requires strong marketing and communications capability alongside outreach strategies. Some felt that they did not currently have the required skills and that they needed additional support in this area.

What was working well

In sites where pre-existing partnerships were more limited, some JobsPlus managers had been able to draw on their own networks to help build partnerships. Some staff had contacts from previous community-based roles, which had helped to bring in the right partners for JobsPlus:

Everybody in the network and the sector that I work in knows of [JobsPlus manager] and knows what she brings and knows her network is really strong. What's good about that is that it's a strong reputation, and then from the start, we align and we collaborate with ethical and like-minded organisations.

Delivery Partner

Key challenges

HAs were able to second staff from other roles within their organisation and backfill those positions to staff JobPlus teams within a relatively short implementation window. In a few sites, however, new staff had to be recruited, which meant some sites were operating without a full team of staff in place in the first few months of the pilot.

Additionally, the time-limited nature of the project funding meant that many advertised roles were fixed-term contracts, which proved less attractive to applicants seeking longer-term job security. This further slowed recruitment in some sites, affecting the pace of implementation.

Although staff turnover was relatively low in the early months, a few HAs reported concerns that the short-term nature of the funding was affecting staff morale and might lead to staff leaving.

Some HAs felt that the level of staffing allocated to pilot delivery was inadequate for the intended activities. They pointed to the multiple functions required to implement the pilot and how having several of these combined within the caseworker role created workload pressures that affected wellbeing. They also highlighted that the wide-ranging support that caseworkers had to provide was resource-intensive.

My role is employment coach, I've got 35 people I'm providing support with work, some with wellbeing, some with general life. And then on top of that I'm still doing the marketing, engagement, the recruiting, the admin, which there's a lot of. So, it's been really difficult to manage, and it feels like we're really understaffed for what we do.

Employment coach (caseworker)

Where possible, pilots were seeking to address these issues by hiring new staff members, exploring group sessions for participants with similar challenges or developing guidance for caseworkers about the purpose and goal of support sessions to shorten interactions. However, there remained a concern that workload was going to intensify as caseloads increased.

3 Implementing JobsPlus

This chapter draws on qualitative data from in-depth interviews with housing association (HA) staff, including caseworkers, Community Champions, delivery partners, key stakeholders, participants, and from observations. It also draws on Management Information (MI) about programme support. The chapter considers implementation of the key components of the JobsPlus model – onsite employment services, community support for work, saturation and the financial incentives.

Key findings: Implementing JobsPlus

There were positive early indications that the JobsPlus model could be implemented effectively in the UK:

- HAs used a variety of methods to engage residents, including informal community events, leaflets, door-knocking, and community outreach through partner organisations.
- HAs and participants considered the initial registration and needs assessment process to be effective, and only 9% of participants disengaged from the programme during the first four weeks.
- There was evidence of high-quality, tailored employment support being delivered. The flexible, holistic nature of the support was key to engaging residents and achieving outcomes.
- Pilots provided or linked to wide-ranging support to address complex barriers to work. This included: Jobcentre Plus; health and wellbeing services; food banks; housing; money management and debt advice; benefits advice; drug and alcohol issues; childcare; domestic abuse services; support for neurodivergent children; specialist immigration and asylum solicitors; social prescribers; and registering with a GP or dentist.
- A key feature of the JobsPlus model is its support for local residents to become Community Champions, who play a vital role in community outreach and support. By March 2025, all sites had at least one Community Champion in place. As this was a new way of working for HAs, they were developing the role.
- Recruitment to JobsPlus was relatively slow in the early months but increased over the following months. This was in line with the experiences of the US pilot programme and other voluntary employment support programmes in the UK.
- Participants were positive about the support received, often attributing this to their relationship with their caseworker and the accessibility of community hubs. Many compared their experience with JobsPlus favourably to other employment support services.
- The Into Work Bonus of £400 was being administered but, overall, early perceptions were that, although important, this level of incentive was not a key driver of engagement and outcomes. The offer of holistic, voluntary support was the main motivation for joining the programme.

Challenges during early implementation included:

- The general election in early July delayed pilot delivery, in-line with Cabinet Office guidance restricting government-funded activity in the pre-election period. As a result, the programme

launched during the summer when many partners were on leave and parents were managing childcare responsibilities. This contributed to slower progress in the early months.

- Managing staffing resources as JobsPlus became established and caseloads increased, practical issues with community hub premises, and managing disengagement effectively.

3.1 Onsite employment services

3.1.1 Community hubs

When selecting suitable premises for community hubs, HAs aimed to identify an accessible and permanent space that was already familiar to residents. They considered factors such as residents' potential reluctance to travel beyond 'their part' of the social housing estate and safety of staff. Often, the choice of hub was determined by what was available in the local area.

By April 2024, all areas had identified suitable hubs. They allocated budget and in-kind resources to ensure the venue was fit for purpose and included JobsPlus branding to increase visibility. Some hubs had been established in existing community venues, where other services were already operating; others had been set up in vacant premises that were previously used for other purposes. Where hubs had space, they co-located with other services. These included employability skills support, budgeting and financial literacy support, health provision and local authority services.

Hubs were usually centrally located but some were slightly outside the boundaries of eligible estates, while remaining accessible to residents. JobsPlus staff frequently mentioned making a conscious effort to ensure the hubs were as inclusive as possible. Examples included parents able to bring children, ensuring level access for those in wheelchairs and mobility scooters, providing baby changing facilities, and space to store scooters and bicycles.

Views of the community hub

Participants gave overwhelmingly positive feedback about the hubs and their accessibility, often describing them as friendly, informal and comfortable places. Participants compared the welcoming atmosphere of hubs to Jobcentres which they perceived to be more functional and intimidating. Interviews with both staff and participants clearly indicated that the welcoming nature of hubs had contributed to positive engagement with JobsPlus support.

When participants raised any negative feedback about the JobsPlus hubs, it was usually about issues related to a lack of privacy in an open plan space and/or background noise. HAs were aware of those challenges and were working hard to overcome them. For example, they had made modifications like partitions for privacy or had sourced a new, additional community venue.

For some sites, practical issues included limited office hours. For example, one site was only able to offer face-to-face appointments two days a week as the community hub was

booked out for other services the rest of the week. At a different site, one participant reported that their local hub was not completely accessible due to their physical impairment.

Numerous participants emphasised that the sites' location close to their homes was a significant benefit. Some valued the ability to visit without needing an appointment, a service typically unavailable through other employability services.

Community Hubs: what was working well and key challenges

Having a hub based in the heart of the local community appeared to have helped to raise awareness of JobsPlus and supported relationship building with residents. As noted by one site:

We walk around the area to and from home or lunch, or engagement sessions, and we do tend to bump into people we know, they recognise us and we have a chat, we have that trust because we are local. We're not on the top floor of some fancy building, we're not outside the area and having to travel. We're on your doorstep in a really accessible building. In terms of prams, it's all on one level.

HA lead

The community location had also enabled informal drop-ins from residents. HA staff perceived that this was attracting residents who might normally be reluctant to attend a formal appointment with a service. They valued this but anticipated that as caseloads increased, there could be challenges in managing the time and resources required for drop-ins. They reported that they were monitoring staffing carefully.

A few hubs did not have security measures that complied with DWP requirements (for example, security cameras), which impeded co-location of JCP staff.

3.1.2 Tailored employment support

JobsPlus support was participant-centred and took place at the participants' own pace. Common features of the support model were a needs assessment, the development of an action plan, and one-to-one support from a caseworker. The support was highly tailored to reflect the needs identified and personal circumstances. The key components of support are discussed below.

Initial registration and needs assessment process

When a participant expressed interest—by phone, email, visiting the hub, or filling out an online form— or if a referral was received from another service, the JobsPlus team scheduled an appointment to discuss formal registration. This typically occurred face-to-face at the hub. Registration either happened immediately, or it followed an informal conversation to build rapport and understand the participant's situation. All JobsPlus teams were mindful to avoid overwhelming participants with paperwork, while still obtaining key information and consents.

Sites assessed participant needs in early appointments through various methods. Some relied primarily on a conversational approach to surface areas of difficulties, strengths and interests. Observations highlighted the importance of caseworkers using active listening and open-ended questions to explore participants' circumstances fully. Others drew on a range of diagnostic tools and questionnaires to assess needs. Generally, a wide range of potential needs was considered in the assessment, including, for example, skills, health, finances, housing and employment aspirations and experience.

After the initial appointment and assessment, caseworkers worked with participants to create an action plan. This involved identifying participants' broader goals and breaking these down into step-by-step actions that provided structure while preserving a sense of agency. Caseworkers were mindful to ensure these goals aligned with the level of support they could offer and were arranged in a logical order.

On-site observations revealed that action plans were revisited during follow-up meetings, where progress was monitored, challenges discussed and any new actions agreed upon. These meetings also covered actions assigned to the caseworker. This reinforced the collaborative nature of the relationship and created a strong sense of joint commitment to the participant's progress.

Engagement at four weeks post-assessment

The MI data recorded whether participants were still engaged four weeks after their initial assessment. At the 4-week check-in, 79% of participants were still engaged with the programme, while 9% were known to have disengaged. This high level of engagement during the first month suggests that the initial registration and needs assessment process were successful in gaining commitment and motivation among participants (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Engagement at four-week check-in

Still engaged	Frequency	Percent
Yes	367	79
No	42	9
Missing or milestone not met	54	12

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025, base 463

The demographic profile of those still engaged after four weeks was similar to that of all participants, suggesting that engagement was consistent across different groups.

Flexible, one-to-one caseworker support

Caseworkers (also known as coaches and advisors) provided flexible one-to-one support designed to support the actions and goals in an individual's plan. The frequency of meetings with participants varied across sites. Some HAs had a more structured case management process, which included weekly or bi-weekly support sessions. Others had flexibility to meet with participants a couple of times of week, if workload allowed and the

participant needed it. As caseloads increased, sites were reviewing processes and guidance on the frequency and duration of support sessions. Generally, support was provided either face-to-face at the hub or another location, online or by telephone, according to individuals' preferences.

Caseworkers provided wide-ranging support, either delivering support directly or coordinating with other service providers. Key areas of support across the sites were:

Support aimed at developing confidence, motivation and work-related attitudes

Before engaging in employment-related activities, participants often needed to develop their confidence and motivation. HA interviews and observations indicated that JobsPlus teams spent considerable time on providing support to build soft skills. The types of support available to develop soft skills included positive activities such as community gardening, outdoor fitness activities, wellbeing courses, social events held at the hub, confidence and aspiration building courses, and healthy eating sessions. The aim of these was to encourage regular attendance, help forge social connections and build self-esteem from taking part in a fun activity. One site described this approach:

It's not 'come in, sit down, look for a job, apply for a job, go for an interview'. It's 'come in, do something enjoyable like gardening or whatever, and build your confidence', and organically you're moving towards your goals, you're removing your barriers.

HA lead

Caseworkers also used one-to-one sessions to identify and challenge negative self-perceptions and provide encouragement about the participant's abilities to develop and secure employment. Some sites noted that older individuals, in particular, required this encouragement.

Others noted that enhancing participants' motivation to work involved performing the 'better-off in work calculation.' This aimed to counter the belief that relying on benefits is more advantageous than working. This was particularly relevant for individuals who had little to no experience in paid employment or who had experienced inter-generational unemployment.

Employment-related support

Employment-related support offered to participants included:

- **Employability and job search support:** This included how to write a CV, cover letter and application forms; interview preparation and techniques; and information, advice and guidance on how to conduct a job search independently and find suitable vacancies in the local area.

Some caseworkers shared opportunities directly with participants, signposting them to vacancies they had seen advertised. For example, one HA sent out a monthly jobs bulletin with typically 20-30 jobs included. In another site, the hub had an 'opportunities board' featuring live jobs, training, and volunteering opportunities, available for everyone to come and look at. Caseworkers also provided guidance on finding "hidden

jobs” (which are not advertised), through speculative and proactive contact with employers.

In certain instances, caseworkers accompanied participants to visit employers to discuss available positions and distribute their CVs. Additionally, sometimes caseworkers provided local labour market information so participants could make informed choices. A distinctive aspect of the JobsPlus initiative is its emphasis on enhancing participants' aspirations, aiming for them to secure quality employment that they will be able to sustain:

I don't want to push them into low-paid, temporary jobs. I want to give them a bit more aspiration.

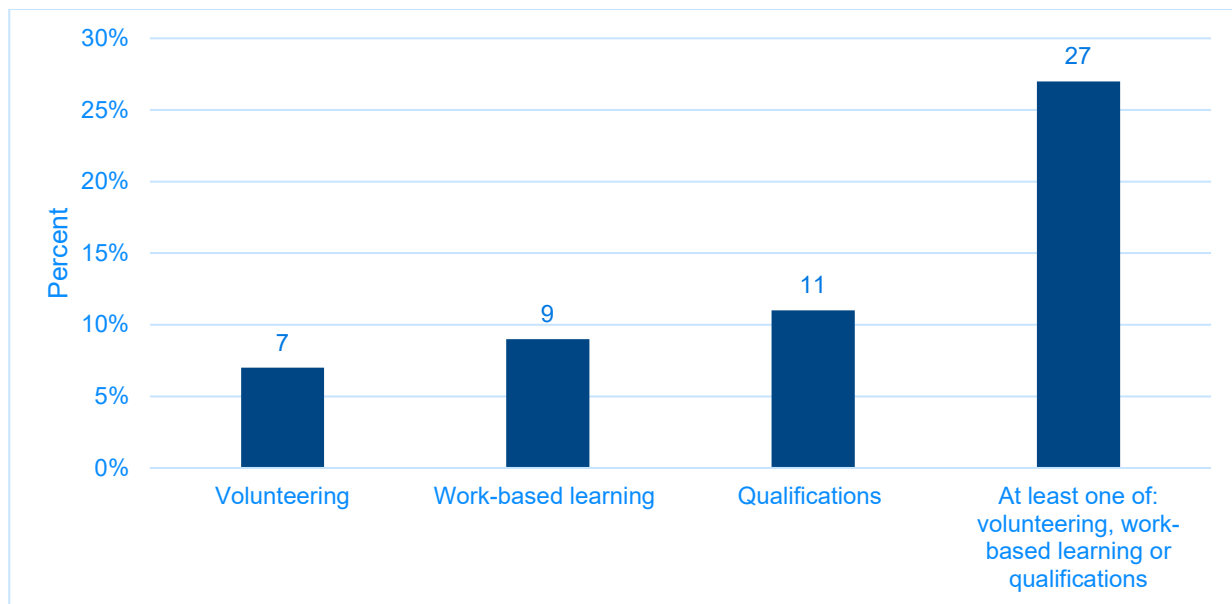
Caseworker

- **Skills development:** Some sites offered job-specific training for participants. These were typically short, online courses on food hygiene, health and safety and basic digital skills. One site provided an in-house course designed to prepare individuals for the workforce, covering self-support, workplace behaviour, and building resilience. Another site had appointed an external organisation to deliver barista training, and another team within the HA delivered a 4-day customer service training course. In other sites, referrals were made to training providers and colleges. This included training to secure Construction Skills Certification Scheme cards (CSCS) and forklift licences.
- **Volunteering and work experience:** Caseworkers supported participants to find voluntary work as well as paid employment. Staff and stakeholders recognised that this was an important route to gain work experience, boost confidence and reduce social isolation:

We're more likely to talk about volunteering [rather than jobs] as a way to build skills, which I don't think you would get from other providers, you certainly wouldn't get it from JCP. Not many other providers would offer that because they work towards jobs; we've got the flexibility to do that.

Project Manager

The MI data showed that close to a quarter of participants (23%) undertook either volunteering (6%), work-based learning (internships, traineeships or work placements) (9%), or qualifications (11%) after engaging with JobsPlus (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Participation in volunteering, work-based learning, and qualification activities

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025, base 463

Views on tailored employment support: registration and flexible caseworker support

Participants were positive about the enrolment process and variously described it as simple, easy, quick, informal and straightforward. One participant reported that she appreciated that the programme was advertised as 'no commitment'. She commented that this made her feel it was optional but also in her own best interests rather than feeling pressured to participate.

Participants and staff praised the flexible, one-to-one support available through JobsPlus. JobsPlus support was commonly contrasted with the more restrictive support available through JCP and described as a more positive experience with valuable support. They felt JobsPlus caseworkers had more time to build relationships, understand their needs, and provide appropriate assistance.

I wanted to get a job, and the Jobcentre is, you know, they're not great. This is much more tailored and much more person oriented...It's 100% better. You get to sit down and talk to someone, and they get to know you as a person rather than just filling in the form, then you go.

JobsPlus participant

Tailored employment support: what was working well

Caseworkers generally reported that the registration process at each site was working well. The ability of JobsPlus teams to respond quickly to new referrals was a common

theme and was felt to contrast to some other employment services. This responsiveness was seen as crucial for maintaining participants' interest and ensuring a referral converted into a registration.

One of the things that's working is that there is a quick turnaround. So, the referral comes in and then the coach contacts them, maybe even the same day, and then can see them the next day, which is very different to other services I've worked on where it's a couple of weeks before you can see someone...The quick turnaround of getting people in keeps the momentum, it keeps them interested.

JobsPlus manager

A key strength of the employment support was the trusted and consistent relationships caseworkers had built with participants. Site observations showed that caseworkers knew participants well and invested time in their interactions to maintain a friendly, non-judgmental and professional relationship. This was supported by participants having the same caseworker throughout their time with JobsPlus. Consequently, during the site visits and interviews, participants overwhelmingly spoke positively about their caseworker. The positive relationship appeared to be gradually building trust and challenging negative perceptions of employment services.

I trust her, which is a big thing for me. I've had a lot of experience with professionals that haven't listened to my point of view or actually cared with what I have to say because of my disability. And she's probably the first professional that hasn't seen my disability and then that's it. So I wouldn't say she was a friend, but she's someone I could confide in if I really needed to, and if I did and anything was wrong, I know she'd do the right thing to support me through it all, whatever it is.

I think it's a much more warmth and positivity than I expected, I think they care, the word is care, they show they care. I don't know if I was quite expecting that. I thought, you know, they'll help you, but yeah, they're here and they want to help you and it's actually better than I thought.

JobsPlus participant

The strength-based and participant-led approach to support was also working well and HA staff felt this would lead to more sustained outcomes. In some sites, there was an emphasis on caseworkers using coaching skills to build motivation as part of this type of approach. This involved listening to people and empowering them to identify solutions, and in so doing building confidence and capability. Participants commented on being able to have a say in the kinds of support they needed and the opportunities they wished to pursue. As the following comment from a JobsPlus participant demonstrates, this approach has the potential to inspire and raise aspirations:

Initially at the beginning I was thinking I just want a job, I didn't think about my progress from start to the future, I was like just want a job, I just want to be stable, I just want to do something with my life, but now it's more like it has a bit more purpose, I have an inspiring goal in mind, I'm not just doing this for the sake of being stable, I think it's more about who I become...I think I've grown a bit as a person

ever since I started looking for jobs and apprenticeships...it changed my perspective and the way I've been thinking.

JobsPlus participant

Striking a balance between pushing participants outside their comfort zone and not pushing to such a degree that they stopped engaging was also commonly identified as working well by HA staff.

Tailored employment support: key challenges

Despite these positive approaches to building engagement and motivation, some sites had experienced challenges around disengagement from support. Sites generally felt this was to be expected given the nature of the target group and the complex circumstances many faced. Often, reasons for disengagement were reported to be due to personal circumstances like ill health or bereavement, rather than the JobsPlus programme itself. In these circumstances, as noted above, sites generally used a soft-touch approach to maintain contact, allowing participants to re-engage on their terms and seek help without excessive pressure, as this quote demonstrates:

It's trying to strike that balance between reminding them that we're there, encouraging and motivating them to come along, but not stalking. It's about them going at their pace and how they want to go if they want to, and it's never going to work if it becomes, 'you must'.

HA staff

This was reported to be working well, and the next phase of the evaluation will further explore the extent to which individuals are re-engaged.

3.1.3 Additional support

Alongside employment support, pilots often provided or linked to wider support to address complex barriers to work. This was wide-ranging and included support with: food banks; housing; money management and debt advice; benefits advice; drug and alcohol issues; childcare; reducing household bills; domestic abuse; neurodivergent children; specialist immigration and asylum solicitors; social prescribers; and registering with a GP or dentist.

The MI recorded data on the support that participants received from other services. It showed that participants most commonly received support from:

- JCP (29%)
- Education and training providers (16%)
- Health and Wellbeing services (11%)

Support from social care or substance misuse services were less commonly recorded (4% and 1% respectively). For 34% of participants support from a wide range of other services was recorded under the 'other category', which could be further broken down to support such as CV writing and interview preparation (10%), financial support including financial

resilience support (7%), debt advice, digital support sessions and eLearning (6%), and housing support (3%).

Caseworkers assisted participants in accessing these services (for example, by making calls and completing paperwork), and they also checked in with them to ensure that appointments were attended and successful. Caseworkers also provided immediate, practical support to put in place precursors to employment. For example, they helped participants get a bank account, personal identification documents or National Insurance number.

Health and wellbeing support

One of the most prevalent areas of need among participants was related to their mental and physical health. Health issues were often picked up during initial assessments which enabled staff to signpost participants to appropriate services such as MIND, local community health, fitness and wellbeing groups, talking therapies, physiotherapy or GPs.

As noted above, around one in 10 of all participants accessed support from a health and wellbeing service. Of those with a health condition lasting or expected to last 12 months or more, close to a third received support from health and wellbeing services (31%) (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Participants with a health condition lasting 12 months receiving support from health and wellbeing services

Received support from health and wellbeing services	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	35	31
No	76	68
Total	111	100

Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

Several sites had also been working to address health and wellbeing needs either in-house or through more formalised partnerships. These services included: walking clubs; drama therapy; healthy living workshops; mental health workshops; a wellbeing fair including health MOTs and exercise classes; reflexology; social activities and groups to reduce isolation; a motivational and confidence boosting course which encouraged healthy eating and exercise; men's mental health group; blood pressure checks; and workshops on stress and resilience management.

Views on wider support

Some HAs reported that they had underestimated the breadth of wider support that would be required. The steps needed to create a pathway towards employment, often beginning with building trust and confidence, extended beyond their initial expectations. As they were gaining a fuller understanding of needs, they were starting to extend access to wider

specialist support such as more targeted mental health support, or wider family support for example, through partnerships with external organisations.

From the participants' perspective, many were unaware of alternative support options or did not understand the application processes required; without the help of JobsPlus, they would not have been able to access this support. Some participants who had accessed wider wellbeing support were positive about their experience, believing it has been beneficial to them. Participants receiving wide-ranging additional support commented on how it made them feel like that their caseworker was interested in them 'as a person'. Some contrasted the approach to previous attempts to go to multiple services to try and sort out problems they were experiencing.

Wider support: what was working well

The availability of financial support, which caseworkers could access quickly and at their discretion, was working well. In addition to helping to remove immediate barriers and providing practical help, it helped to build trust among participants.

There were emerging examples of JobsPlus teams tackling complex barriers to employment through long-term, intensive support and partnership working. As a caseworker described, by taking a step back from employment and focussing on more fundamental difficulties, such as mental health or housing, they were able to help people move towards employment.

Housing is a huge crisis at the moment, people struggling with the space in the house, mould... people don't tend to look for anything else until the housing's fixed. We've had cases people come to us with mould issues, they're ill and the children are getting sick, they don't want to talk about anything until that's fixed... we have seen where we've helped someone with that and then they've said I'm now ready for employment support, which is just an example of how reducing those barriers can work.

Caseworker

Wider support: key challenges

Although the wide range of support available was a strength of the JobsPlus model, there were challenges to working in this way. JobsPlus managers described the time and resources required to build and maintain partnerships, and the changeable nature of the landscape due to short-term grant funding.

Caseworkers sometimes lacked the tools and knowledge to navigate the broader landscape of potential support. Working with numerous services required detailed knowledge of eligibility and funding criteria for these. One site noted that caseworkers were not accustomed to working in this manner, indicating a need for a shift in mindset and the development of different skills.

3.1.4 In-work support

JobsPlus pilots aimed to keep in touch with participants who had secured work to provide ongoing support to ensure they could remain employed. In many cases, in-work support was quite light-touch. It typically involved informal check-ins with participants to gain an understanding of their roles and determine if they required further support. Staff noted that doing this was particularly important when someone had not worked before or for a long time, or was less confident.

Some pilots discussed the ongoing support available for individuals who had started their own businesses. Examples of this included signposting to appropriate training courses, providing equipment such as laptops, and helping a participant register with the local Chamber of Commerce. Some pilots also made referrals to specialist support for self-employment (sometimes delivered by other teams within the HA).

There were also examples of caseworkers providing more intensive assistance once a participant secured employment. For instance, some participants secured jobs but were eager to pursue other opportunities, particularly if they had temporary positions without preferred shifts. Caseworkers supported these aspirations and tried to help people find employment that was a better fit. For the early weeks of work, JobsPlus could also provide practical support, including work clothing, equipment, and transportation expenses until participants received their first wages.

At the early stage of implementation in March 2025, a full assessment of views on in-work support and key enablers and challenges was not possible. However, some early themes had emerged. The main challenge in delivering in-work support was that participants often focussed intensely on their jobs, making it difficult to reach them, especially as they were unavailable for personal calls during work hours. This is commonly found in other evaluations of in-work support. One site mentioned that participants who gained employment sometimes felt 'embarrassed' about needing assistance, which made them hesitant to maintain their relationship with JobsPlus.

3.2 Financial incentives

A key aspect of the JobsPlus model was the financial incentive (£400 Into Work Bonus) offered to individuals who secured and maintained employment or self-employment for at least two months. During initial interviews, most HA staff and stakeholders felt this would be an important element of promoting JobsPlus and encouraging participation. However, subsequent interviews suggested the Into Work Bonus was less influential than originally anticipated. This related to:

- **Underlying motivation:** caseworkers observed that participants were more driven by long-term earning potential or a desire for purpose. Few participants cited the bonus as a motivation for taking part in JobsPlus. Caseworkers also considered a one-off payment was unlikely to attract those with deeply entrenched negative views about employment.

- **Economic context:** The incentive was perceived by some staff as insufficient given the pressures of inflation and the cost-of-living crisis.
- **Participant awareness:** some were unaware of the incentive altogether.

3.3 Saturation approach

The saturation approach, central to the JobsPlus model, aimed to engage all local residents of working age to ensure that everyone, whether directly participating or not, benefitted from JobsPlus and the culture of work the programme promotes. Overall, at the end of March 2025, it was too early to comment on whether the pilots were on track to deliver the JobsPlus vision of saturation.

However, the saturation approach was viewed positively by HAs. Staff welcomed the opportunity to be able to work with a more diverse cohort, particularly those in work or who were not claiming benefits who often did not meet the eligibility criteria of other programmes:

Currently, if we meet people who've got a job, even if they've only earned a small amount that week, a lot of our [other] funding says we can't help them. JobsPlus just flips it all around and says 'if you live here, it doesn't matter what situation, all the people in your household can all just come in.' And I think that's the beauty of it.

Delivery Partner

A Community Champion observed that the place-based approach that used only geography to determine eligibility had led to increased diversity at events meaning that 'no one was out of place'. Conversely, the tightly defined geographical boundaries had meant that some residents had to be turned away despite living on the same estate or (even the same road in some cases) as eligible residents. Some HAs expressed frustration that people who could benefit from support were having to be signposted instead to other provision that might be less appropriate for them. One site had addressed this by expanding its original eligibility area, working in collaboration with the evaluation team to ensure no negative consequences for any future impact evaluation.

3.4 Community support for work

3.4.1 Active outreach and engagement

HAs used a range of methods to engage residents with the JobsPlus programme, including leafleting, mail outs in coloured envelopes to attract attention, posters in local businesses and community centres, door knocking, monthly newsletters, community social events and social media.

Informal, non-employment focussed events were a key element of many sites' engagement strategies, providing opportunities for residents to meet the JobsPlus team and learn about the programme through casual conversations. Examples included festive events around religious and cultural calendars, coffee mornings, and wellbeing events.

These were often delivered in partnership with community organisations. The emphasis was on building relationships between members of the community and JobsPlus teams, with the aim of instilling belief in the project based on a positive community experience. One HA staff member described this approach:

We could say come along to our CV workshop and nobody will come because it's dry. It's boring. People aren't that interested. But if we badge it up differently or we say come along to something different, like come along to our Zumba session and then we can start talking to people.

HA staff member

As delivery progressed, word-of-mouth became an increasingly important mode of engagement—especially from family and friends of residents who had participated in the support and found it beneficial.

Sites tended to tailor marketing materials to emphasise messages they consider would most appeal to their residents. Generally, marketing downplayed employment and jobs. Sites believed the offer of flexible and broader support with other aspects of life, were more of a hook and were concerned a focus on employment would deter residents. Some sites emphasised for example, help with housing, childcare and the financial support available through JobsPlus. Many emphasised the voluntary nature of support, and the community and social aspects of support.

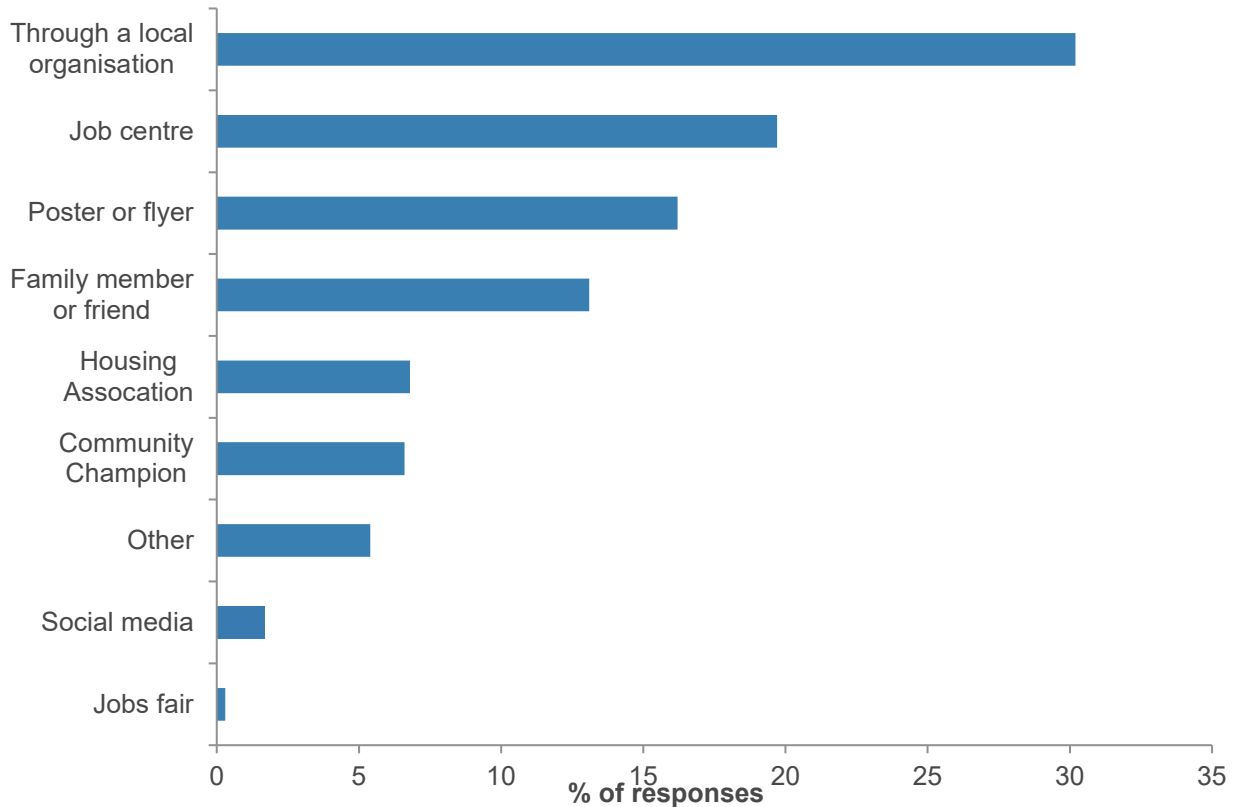
The extent to which financial incentives were emphasised in marketing varied. Some pilots did not mention the incentive, while others felt it was crucial for outreach (see section 3.2 for views on the financial incentive and its role in engagement).

As discussed in the section on 'partnership working', voluntary and community sector organisations were key outreach partners for sites. Many HAs had focussed on building links with well-known and trusted organisations to support outreach efforts.

Views on outreach and engagement

How participants heard about JobsPlus

Figure 3.2: How participants heard about JobsPlus



Base: 344

Source: Baseline survey *Participants could choose more than one option so responses do not total 100%.

The most common way respondents to the baseline survey heard about JobsPlus was through a local organisation (30%) (see Figure 3.2), reflecting the emphasis on community outreach. One in five (20%) became aware of the pilot through JCP. A further 16% saw a poster or flyer. Community Champions, social media and jobs fairs were less commonly mentioned (7%, 0.5% and 2% of survey respondents, respectively).

In interviews, several participants described their positive experiences of hearing about JobsPlus through texts, emails, and door-knocking from their HA.

It was a knock on the door by [caseworker]. They said it was new to the area, to be honest, I thought it was handy and not at my local jobcentre. I suffer from my mental health, so I find it hard to go out. I thought yeah, I'll give it a go, they are nice and polite, it's only around the corner, why not.

JobsPlus participant

Over one in 10 baseline survey respondents (13%) heard about the support through family and friends. In interviews, participants described this process:

Once I came down here and saw what was on offer, I thought it was really useful, and I told some of my neighbours about it.

JobsPlus participant

Residents' awareness of JobsPlus

Residents not participating in JobsPlus showed varying levels of awareness about the programme in interviews. Some had limited knowledge of JobsPlus; some knew support was available at certain locations but did not realise employability support was included. Some residents suggested that more proactive promotion on social media platforms like Facebook could boost awareness. Residents said they tend to discover support through schools, and some suggested that this would be a useful channel for disseminating information.

Others learned about the programme through their HA and felt it was better suited to younger people, who they perceived could adapt more easily. This contrasts with delivery experiences in some areas, where HAs found it easier to engage older residents than younger ones.

Outreach and engagement: what was working well

Overall, pilots found that strategies that were most effective were those that enabled face-to-face interactions, such as door-knocking and events in the community. HA staff felt in-person approaches helped to tackle misconceptions and present the unique approach of JobsPlus. Methods that were described as somewhat less effective included text campaigns – one site noted that people opted out of messages, and that it was difficult to explain the support within a word limit. Another site felt that banners describing the programme were not effective in engaging residents.

Outreach and engagement: key challenges

Recruiting participants to JobsPlus was relatively slow during the early months. The key reasons discussed for this by HAs were:

- Delays in some sites in establishing their full team of staff (see Chapter 2 for a fuller discussion of this), which meant outreach and engagement activity took place on a more limited scale early on.
- The delayed start to the programme. Sites expected seasonal lulls over summer, with challenges in recruiting new staff, mobilising partner organisations and engaging parents in support over this period. It had originally been planned that the programme would launch in Spring. HAs had hoped to use the Spring months to fully establish staffing and partner arrangements and raise awareness of the programme ahead of the quieter months. The later start to the programme due to the general election meant that the programme started in a quieter period, which contributed to relatively slow progress and uptake in the early months.

Aside from these delays, sites had anticipated from the start that it would take time to build trust among their communities. They knew from their experience of providing employment support previously that engaging people with multiple and complex barriers to employment is a gradual process that typically happens over many months. This was in line with the experiences of the US pilot programme and other voluntary employment support programmes in the UK (such as Connecting Communities, see Bramley et al., 2022) and was expected by sites. Despite the slow start, by end of March 2025, substantial progress had been made in implementing the programme, and participant numbers were increasing.

As of March 2025, sites were reflecting on which groups within the community were engaging less and were making plans to target their efforts appropriately. For example, some were looking to put on more family-oriented activities, or events to reach lone and/or young parents and target spaces where they were more likely to be, such as children's centres. Others were considering how to use key events such as the National Apprenticeship Week as a lever to promote services to young people, or designing workshops based on skills young people might want to develop. Generally, it was acknowledged that social media was most effective in attracting younger residents and some sites hoped to build their social media presence over later months.

Engagement was more challenging in sites where the estate tended to be quieter and there was generally little footfall around the community hub. Having few residents visibly around the estate made it difficult for some sites to engage potential participants through face-to-face methods such as social events, which were effective in close-knit communities. Attracting residents through face-to-face interactions was especially difficult during winter months, with icy footpaths making door-to-door visits challenging, and residents reluctant to stand at the door for too long.

The programme's branding was also identified by some HA staff as a barrier to engagement, with 'JobsPlus' viewed as ineffective at fully conveying the wider support available beyond job-related training and sounding too similar to 'JCP'.

More generally, HAs discussed the challenges of building trust in the local community. JobsPlus teams were keenly aware of the distrust and suspicion for authorities and employment initiatives (particularly those associated with the DWP) and knew they would need time to overcome negative perceptions. Sites worked hard to establish trusted relationships with residents through a range of mechanisms, including Community Champions, and at the time of fieldwork, were gradually starting to see the benefits. Nonetheless, there was a concern that the short-term grant funding for JobsPlus might undermine these efforts and lead to greater distrust of employment programmes in future.

3.4.2 Community Champions

The JobsPlus model envisaged that at each site a number of local residents would be engaged as Community Champions. Their role would be to engage people in their community in JobsPlus, 'spreading the word', and helping to influence provision, and in some cases providing peer support.

By end of March 2025, all pilots had identified at least one Community Champion but there were varying levels of formality in terms of how they had been appointed. For example, two pilots had created contracted and paid roles to make the position more attractive, while another had three informal champions who promoted JobsPlus as part of their existing role in the community. All Community Champions were well-connected locally, and several had participated in JobsPlus.

Community Champions were still in the early stages of implementation, with HAs still planning and trialling how the role would work in practice. There were examples of Community Champions:

- Playing a role in social and community events to support outreach efforts, for example leading craft or cooking sessions.
- Leading on 'door-knocking' initiatives.
- Helping to approach small businesses to help spread the word.
- Having casual conversations in passing with residents about the available support.
- Making more individualised approaches, such as inviting residents for friendly chats, offering a cup of tea or access to a computer, and approaching these interactions as entirely optional and at residents' own pace.

There were fewer examples of Community Champions co-designing elements of programme activity with HAs sites.

Community Champions described tailoring their messaging based on the audience, emphasising the friendly and supportive nature of JobsPlus staff and the positive, non-judgemental environment of the programme. They also drew on their own personal experiences of the programme, where relevant, and shared aspects of their own circumstances to demonstrate empathy and understanding.

Some sites recognised the need to develop their training offer for Community Champions. One site offered Mental Health First Aid courses, and another was considering bringing its Community Champions together to reflect and share experiences informally.

Sites were keen to recruit young people into the Community Champion role to support outreach and engagement, and they were exploring how best to do this.

Views on Community Champions

HA staff with more established Community Champions noted they had been vital for engaging residents, promoting events, fostering trust, sharing their positive experiences, and relaying community feedback to JobsPlus staff. One site reflected that this role had allowed the JobsPlus team to adopt a more bottom-up decision-making approach, leading to a stronger sense of ownership among residents but for most sites it was too early to make this type of assessment.

Community Champions involved in on-site observations and interviews reflected that the role was an opportunity to support their local communities and 'give something back'.

They felt that the role gave them a sense of purpose and it was clear that the increased contact with others on the estate was a positive experience for them. They usually thought highly of the support on offer and were therefore keen to promote it.

Community Champions: what was working well

In the two pilots that remunerated Community Champions, this approach recognised the value of time and effort of Community Champions and made the role more attractive.

In sites where the Community Champion roles was more established, the lived experience of Community Champions was perceived to be working well in making the programme relatable. As one Community Champion described:

Once you start explaining to people your story, where you come from, [that] you started from nothing, you can sort of resonate with people a bit more [than] the person that's maybe been sitting in an office all their life.

Community Champion

Community Champions: key challenges

For some sites, engaging Community Champions has taken time. In some cases, this was linked to initial delays in getting JobsPlus up and running while grant agreements and staffing arrangements were put in place and delays with processes such as the DBS check. There had also been challenges with encouraging people to take the role. For example, some residents lacked confidence or faced health issues that limited their ability to commit consistently to the role. Consequently, sites reported that although Community Champions were proving valuable, they still felt they were in the early stages of exploring how the role could be most effectively used.

In pilots where there was not a paid role, pilots tried to overcome challenges in recruiting voluntary Community Champions in creative ways. For instance, one site was using a 'refer a friend' voucher scheme and engaged what they referred to as 'professional Community Champions', such as the family support worker at the local school, to disseminate information about the programme. Both this and another site recognised the importance of informal advocacy, but found it challenging to formalise this into a concrete role:

We've always had Community Champions [in other programmes], but we haven't had a formal structure for them to sit within. When you try and formalise that, people get a bit scared away. They want to be free to use their time as and when.

Housing Association lead

While the personal, face-to-face approach from a Community Champion could be effective, it was also constrained by the extent of the individual's existing networks. Engaging residents outside of these networks presented greater challenges. Furthermore,

personal engagements demanded more time and effort, which created limitations for Community Champions who had other commitments or limited availability.

Among some HAs there was recognition that involving Community Champions in outreach and delivery required greater support from delivery teams than anticipated, which had increased the JobsPlus team's workload and prompted a reassessment of their strategy. At the time of fieldwork, this work was in progress and will be explored in greater detail in the next phase of the evaluation.

3.4.3 Other forms of community support

In the US JobsPlus model, there was an intention to create “sustained support for work during and beyond the period of the JobsPlus program” (Tessler et al., 2017). The evaluators of the demonstration MDRC, defined this as ‘creating a lasting environment where there is mutual support among residents to help each other become employed and stay employed’ (Tessler et al., 2017). In practice, this might include peer support with job preparation, residents helping each other to address barriers (for example, looking after each other’s children or carpooling) and residents sharing external connections with each other.

Unsurprisingly, at the end of March 2025, after just nine months of set-up and early implementation, the evaluation did not identify evidence of this type of activity.

4 Participant profiles

Key findings

There was emerging evidence that JobsPlus was reaching Housing Association residents who faced complex barriers to employment and who would benefit from the intensive support available. Based on data collected between July 2024 and March 2025:

- Over a quarter (28%) of JobsPlus participants had no or low qualifications (i.e. a highest qualification of Level 1 or below) compared to 31% of residents across all pilot sites.
- Most participants (81%) were out of work at registration. Their employment backgrounds varied: 13% had never worked, 37% had been mostly employed, and 28% had experienced alternating periods of employment and unemployment.
- Nearly half (48%) of participants had below average wellbeing (with 21% of these people experiencing very low wellbeing).
- Common barriers to employment were perceptions of a lack of local job vacancies (31%), not having the right skills (23%), a lack of work experience (20%), and a lack of self-confidence (19%).

There were positive signs that the model was reaching people who would not typically be well-engaged with employment services, including those who were economically inactive. This included:

- Those with parental and caring responsibilities (36% of participants); and
- Those who had a long-term health condition lasting or expecting to last more than 12 months, and which reduced their ability to carry out day-to-day activities (28% of participants, compared to 20% of residents in the JobsPlus pilot sites and 17% of people in England as a whole).

JobsPlus had been particularly effective at reaching young people and people from a black ethnic minority background:

- 25% of participants were aged 16–24-year-olds and 27% of participants were from a black ethnic minority background, compared to 12% of residents in the pilot sites overall within these groups.

This chapter explores the demographics and circumstances of people who engaged in the JobsPlus programme. It illustrates the diverse range of people who participated in the programme, their wide-ranging motivations for engagement and varied support needs. Findings are drawn primarily from Management Information (MI) data, with additional insights from baseline survey responses and qualitative interviews with JobsPlus participants, where available. Where an alternative source to MI data is used for analysis, this is noted in the text. Findings from MI, survey and interview data broadly supported one another with no major inconsistencies across the three sources.

4.1 Programme registrations by site

JobsPlus registrations by site ranged from 19-76 between July 2024 and March 2025. The Stockton-on-Tees site had the most people registered, accounting for 16% of all registrations, followed by Borehamwood (13%) and Swale (12%). The Wirral site had 4% which was the smallest number of people registered. Some of this variation likely reflects the number of households in each site, with the Wirral site being the smallest in terms of both registrations and the number of households. However, this does not entirely account for differences in registrations, as Stockton-on-Tees had the highest number of registrations despite being one of the smaller sites in terms of households. Delivery team interviews suggested that existing engagement between the housing association (HA) and residents on employment needs had some influence, particularly in areas with more entrenched issues with trust within the community.

Table 4.1: Programme registrations by site

Housing Association	Frequency	Percent
Stockton-on-Tees	76	16
Borehamwood	61	13
Swale	57	12
Wybourn	52	11
Maltby	43	9
Penge	43	9
Toxteth	43	10
Leyton	42	9
East Finchley	27	6
Wirral	19	4
Total	463	100.0

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

4.2 Profile of JobsPlus participants

JobsPlus engaged a diverse range of individuals across pilot sites (Figure 4.1). A quarter (25%) of participants were aged 16-24 years old, compared to 12% of residents in pilot sites in that age group (see Table 2.3 in Technical Annex), indicating the pilots had been particularly effective at engaging and reaching young people. Just under a third (32%) were aged 45-64-years-old and the programme also engaged some participants over 65 (2%). A little over half of the participants (52%) were male, reflecting the overall demographics in pilot sites.

JobsPlus was also effective in reaching people from an ethnic minority background. Table 4.2 below shows that:

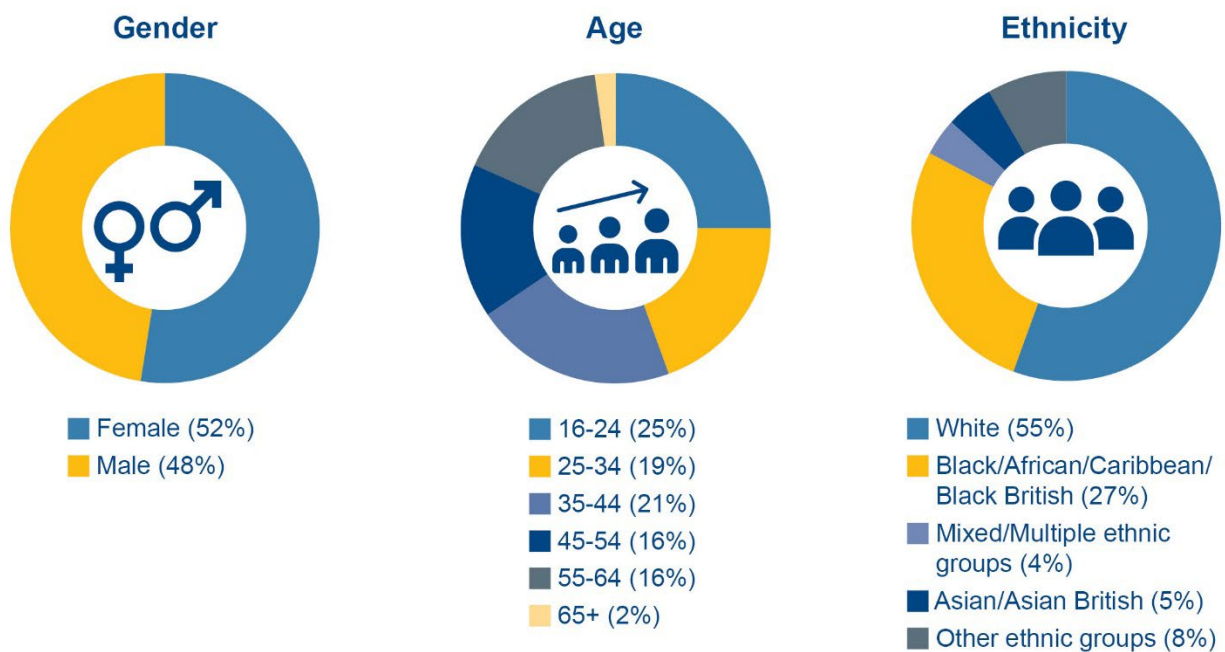
- 44% of JobsPlus participants were from an ethnic minority background compared to 32% of residents in pilot sites.

- The pilot was particularly successful in reaching people from a black ethnic minority background: 27% of JobsPlus participants compared to 12% of residents in pilot sites.

Table 4.2: Ethnicity of participants

Ethnicity	Percent	Percent
	Residents in pilot sites	Participants
White	69	55
Asian, British Asian	10	5
Black, Black British, Caribbean or African	12	27
Mixed or multiple	5	4
Other	5	8

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025 (base 459) and 2021 census data

Figure 4.1: JobsPlus participant demographics

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025, bases 463, 460 and 459

4.3 Circumstances at registration

4.3.1 Education

Over a quarter of JobsPlus participants had no or low qualifications (28%) when they joined the programme. This meant their highest level of qualification was at Level 1 or below (including vocational qualifications and GCSE grades D-G or 1-3) (Table 4.3 below). This is relatively similar to the pilot site population overall (31% of residents - see Table 2.7 in the Technical Annex). However, there was a smaller percentage of people with no qualifications among JobsPlus participants (8%) than in the pilot site population overall (19%).

Around one quarter (24%) of participants reported that their highest qualification was at Level 2 (including vocational qualifications and GCSE grades A*-C/4-9) at the time of registration for JobsPlus. This figure was higher than for all residents in the pilot site areas, which ranged from 9.9% to 20.4%

There were similar proportions of people with a Level 3 qualification (including AS and A levels) among JobsPlus participants and the pilot site population overall (15% and 17% respectively). In just under one-fifth of cases (17%) no information on qualification level was recorded (Table 4.3).

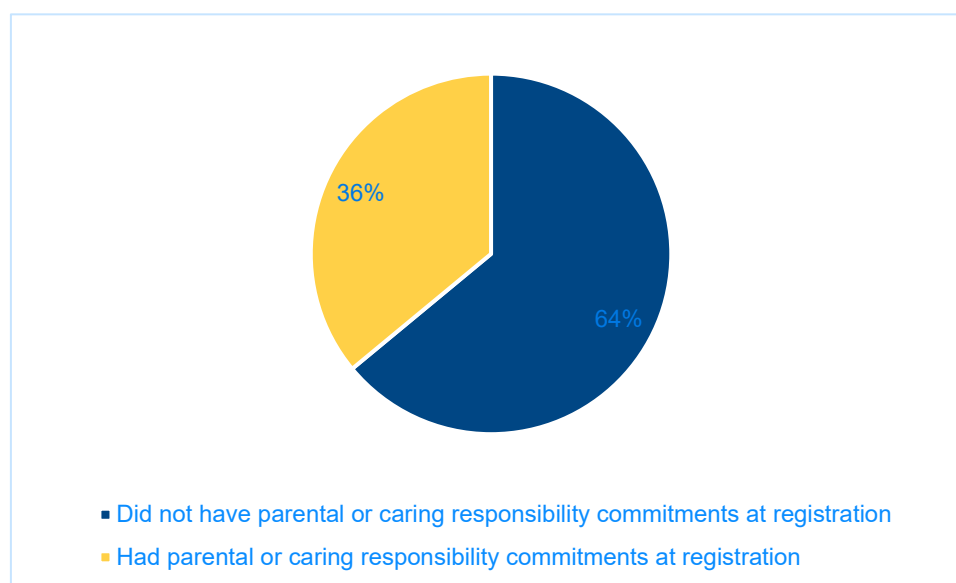
Table 4.3: Highest level of educational attainment at registration

Qualification level	Frequency	Percent
Entry level/ other qualifications below level 1	25	5
Level 1	69	15
Level 2	110	24
Level 3	69	15
Level 4-6	44	9
Level 7 and above	30	6
No qualifications	39	8
Missing information	77	17
Total	463	100

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

4.3.2 Caring responsibilities

Just over one-third of participants (36%) had parental or caring commitments at the time of registration with close to two-thirds (64%) not having any commitments (Figure 4.2).

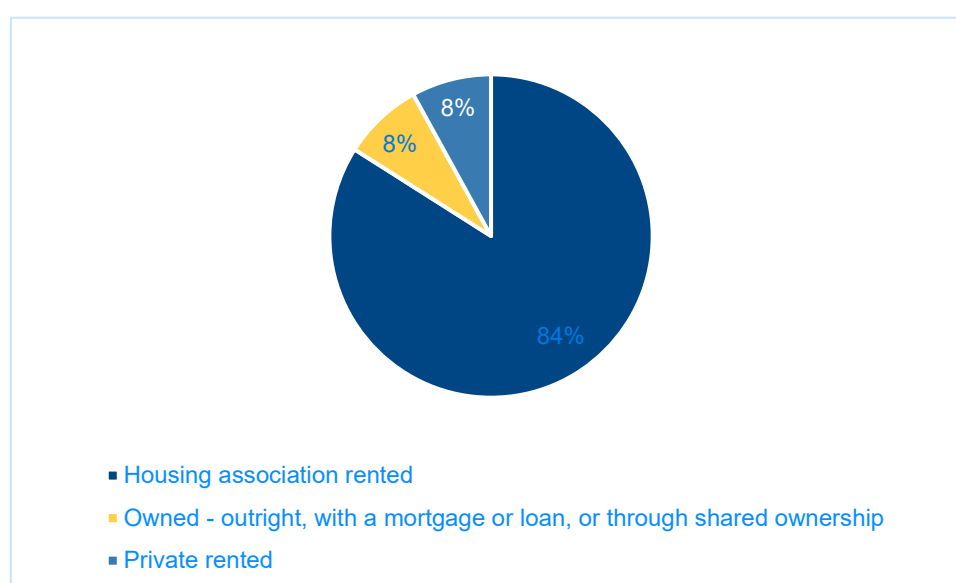
Figure 4.2: Parental or caring responsibility commitments at registration

Base: 462 (No. participants who answered this question)

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

4.3.3 Housing status

At the time of registration for JobsPlus over four-fifths of participants (84%) were living in housing association rented properties. This was considerably higher than the proportion overall in pilot sites, which ranged from 13.6% - 60.9% (see Table 2.8 in the Technical Annex). There were equal proportions of participants living in private rented properties, or in properties which they owned or had a share of ownership (8% each) (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Household tenure at registration

Base: 446

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

Just under one-third of respondents to the baseline survey (30%) reported living in an ‘other multi-person household’, while around a quarter (24%) lived alone. Fewer than one in five were a single parent living with dependent children (17%) or were part of a couple with dependent children (14%) (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4: JobsPlus participants’ household composition

Household composition	Frequency	Percent
One person household	83	24
Couple, no dependent child(ren) under 18 years	24	7
Couple with dependent child(ren) under 18 years	49	14
Lone parent with dependent child(ren) under 18 years	59	17
Other multi-person households	102	30
Don’t know	25	7
Total	342	100

Source: JobsPlus participant baseline survey, IES, 2025

4.3.4 Financial circumstances

Data from the baseline survey indicates that over two-thirds of respondents (68%) were claiming Universal Credit, while around a quarter (24%) were not receiving any type of benefit (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5: Benefits received by JobsPlus participants

Benefit type	Frequency	Percent
Universal Credit	233	68
Housing Benefit	34	10
Personal Independence Payment	27	8
Council Tax Benefit	26	8
Child Tax Credit	15	4
Carers Allowance	9	3
Disability Living Allowance	9	3
Employment and Support Allowance	8	2
Jobseeker’s Allowance	6	2
State Pension	4	1
Pension Credit	3	1
Working Tax Credit	-	-
Other	5	1
None of these	81	24
Total	462	135

Base: 342

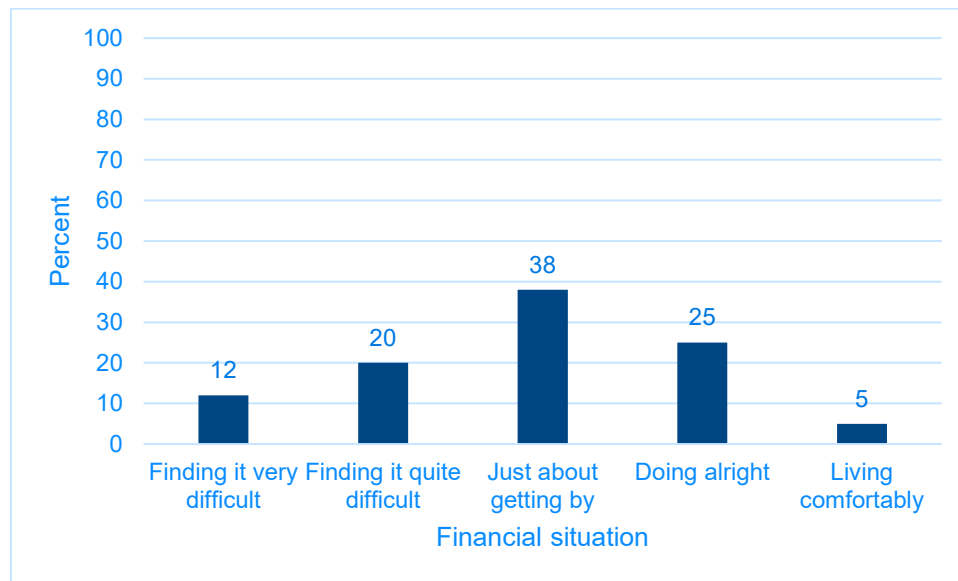
Note: This question was multiple choice, therefore the base and % exceeds the total number of respondents for this question.

‘-’ denotes suppressed data due to low numbers

Source: JobsPlus participant baseline survey, IES, 2025

When asked how well they were managing financially (Figure 4.4) around two-fifths of survey respondents (38%) reported that they were 'just about getting by' and around one-third (32%) were either 'finding it quite difficult' (20%) or 'finding it very difficult' (12%). Just one in 20 respondents (5%) said they were living comfortably.

Figure 4.4: JobsPlus participants' financial circumstances at registration



Base: 342

Source: JobsPlus participant baseline survey, IES, 2025

Exploring this in more detail, around two-thirds of survey respondents (65%) were managing to keep up with the cost of household bills (Table 4.6). However, over one-third (35%) said they had fallen behind with household bills in the previous 12 months, and over one-fifth (22%) reported that either they or their partner had used a foodbank in the same period. Almost all (96%) had a bank account to receive and make payments.

Table 4.6: Household bills, food bank use and bank account access for JobsPlus participants

Financial circumstance	Frequency	Percent
Fallen behind with household bills	122	35
Used a foodbank	74	22
Has access to a bank account	328	96

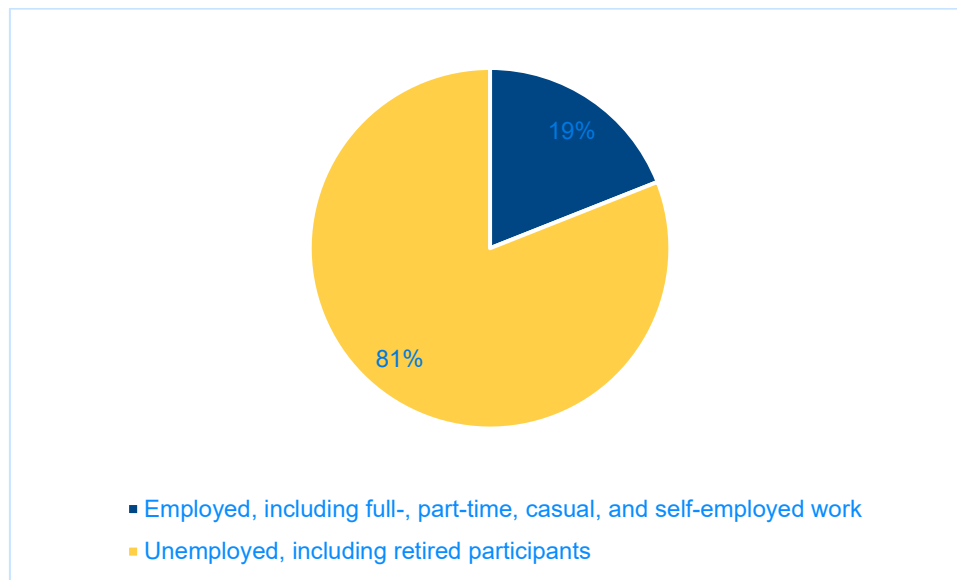
Bases: 334, 343, 346

Source: JobsPlus participant baseline survey, IES, 2025

4.3.5 Employment status

Just over four-fifths of participants (81%) were out of work when they registered for JobsPlus, while around one-fifth (19%) were in some form of paid employment (Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5: Employment status at registration



Base: 455

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

The baseline survey explored this in more detail and found that respondents had varied employment histories:

- Just under two-fifths (37%) had mostly been in paid employment prior to joining JobsPlus.
- Over a quarter (28%) had been in and out of paid employment.
- Just over one in ten respondents (13%) had never been in paid employment (Table 4.7).

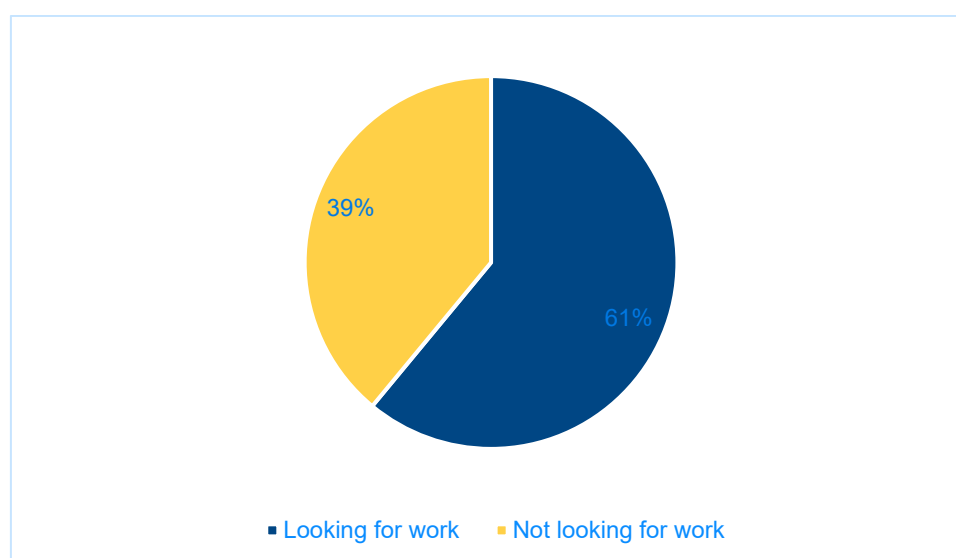
Of those who had never worked, half were aged 18–24 (n=20), while just under a quarter were aged 35–44 (n=10).

Table 4.7: JobsPlus participants' employment history

Employment history	Frequency	Percent
I have never been in paid employment	43	13
I have mostly been out of paid employment	52	15
I have been in and out of paid employment	96	28
I have mostly been in paid employment	127	37
Don't know/prefer not to say	17	8
Total	345	100

Source: JobsPlus participant baseline survey, IES, 2025

The findings from the baseline survey indicate that two-fifths of respondents who were not in work at registration (39%) reported not having looked for work in the past four weeks (Figure 4.6 below). Four-fifths of respondents not in work (81%) had not engaged in any education, employment or training-related activities in the seven days before enrolment (Table 4.8 below).

Figure 4.6: JobsPlus participant work search status in the last four weeks

Note: This question was only presented to participants who were not in work on registration

Base: 240 Source: JobsPlus participant baseline survey, IES, 2025

Table 4.8: JobsPlus participant activities in the 7 days prior to registration

Activity	Frequency	Percent
Volunteering	21	9
Part-time education, training or apprenticeship	13	5
Full-time education, training or apprenticeship	8	3
Retired	4	2
Work experience	-	-
None of these	197	81
Total	245	101

Note: This question was multiple choice, therefore the base and % exceeds the total number of respondents for this question.

‘-’ denotes suppressed data due to low numbers

Source: JobsPlus participant baseline survey, IES, 2025

For the 87 people who were in work at the time of registration, over half (n=47) were on a full-time or permanent contract, 17 were on a casual contract, and the remainder were on a part-time, fixed period or temporary contract (Table 4.9)

Table 4.9: Contract type for those in employment at registration

	Frequency
Casual contract	17
Full-time or permanent contract	47
Part-time, fixed period or temporary contract	11
Missing	12
Total	87

Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

Information pertaining to income was often missing or not provided. In over two-fifths of cases where this was reported participants were earning between £1-£399 in the previous week (Table 4.10 below).

Table 4.10: Participant income in the previous seven days, for those in employment at time of registration

Weekly income	Frequency
Less than £399	36
£400 or more	9
Missing	42
Total	87

Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

4.4 Support needs and motivations for engaging in JobsPlus

4.4.1 Barriers accessing and progressing in work

Despite high levels of active job search at programme registration, JobsPlus participants experienced a range of challenges in finding and accessing work or progressing in their careers. The three most common barriers, each reported by just under one-third of survey respondents, were mental and physical health issues or disabilities (32%), and the lack of vacancies or too much competition in the labour market (31%) (Table 4.11). Beyond these, respondents reported not having the right skills for the jobs they were interested in (23%); a lack of work experience (20%); and a lack of self-confidence (19%). The 7% who reported facing another barrier to work were asked to describe these. The most common barriers mentioned were a lack of job search and application skills, as well as language barriers for those with English as a second language.

Table 4.11 Barriers to finding work for JobsPlus participants at registration

Barrier	Frequency	Percent
Physical or mental health issues or disabilities	107	32
Lack of vacancies/too much competition for jobs interested in	105	31
Not having right skills for jobs interested in	77	23
Lack of work experience	69	20
Your own self-confidence	65	19
Child care responsibilities	44	13
Length of time out of work/between jobs	36	11
Current or previous caring responsibilities	19	6
Age-related factors	19	6
Lack of adequate references from previous employment or volunteering	18	5
Housing issues	16	5
Presenting previous criminal convictions to prospective employers	7	2
Other	24	7
None of these	51	15
Don't know	12	4
Total	669	197

Base: 342. Note: This question was multiple choice, therefore the base and % exceeds the total number of respondents for this question.

Source: JobsPlus participant baseline survey, IES, 2025

Interviews with JobsPlus participants reflected the breadth of challenges faced in trying to enter work, as identified in the baseline survey. Interviewees frequently discussed the implications of ongoing health conditions on their ability to find and sustain suitable employment. Others felt that they needed to develop skills relevant to the work they were interested in to be successful in job applications.

At the time of registration for JobsPlus, over one-third of participants (35%) had a health condition that was expected to last 12 months or more, while over half (54%) did not (Table 4.12).

Table 4.12: Health condition lasting 12 months or more at time of registration

Participant has a health condition	Frequency	Percent
Yes	164	35
No long-lasting health condition	250	54
Missing information	49	11
Total	463	100

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

The baseline survey explored this in more detail, gathering information on the types of health conditions and disabilities respondents were living with (Table 4.13). Of the 135 respondents who had a health condition or disability lasting 12 months or more many had more than one condition. Mental health conditions were the most common. Over half of respondents (59%) with a health condition or disability reported that this was a mental health condition. Chronic health conditions (36%) and mobility problems were also common (28%). A fifth (20%) had difficulties with learning, understanding or concentrating and over one in 10 had long-term pain (15%) or social or behavioural conditions (14%).

Table 4.13: Health conditions/disability among JobsPlus participants

Type of health condition or disability	Frequency	Percent
Mental health	79	59
Chronic health condition (for example, but not limited to diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke, epilepsy and hypertension)	49	36
Mobility (for example walking short distances or climbing stairs)	28	21
Learning, understanding or concentrating	27	20
Long-term pain	21	15
Social or behavioural (for example, but not limited to associated with autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or Asperger's syndrome)	19	14
Memory	14	10
Dexterity (lifting and carrying objects, using a keyboard)	13	10
Hearing (deafness or partial hearing)	6	4
Vision (for example blindness or partial sight)	6	4

Speech or making yourself understood	3	2
Other (unspecified)	3	2
Don't know	1	1
Total	269	198

Base: 135 Note: This question was multiple choice, therefore the base and % exceeds the total number of respondents for this question. Source: JobsPlus participant baseline survey, IES, 2025

Amongst those with a health condition, over half (51%) felt this had reduced their ability to carry out day-to-day activities a little and over a quarter (28%) felt it had reduced their ability a lot. Close to one-fifth (18%) felt their health condition had no impact on their day-to-day activities (Table 4.14 below).

Overall, 28% of JobsPlus participants had a health condition lasting or expected to last more than 12 months that reduced their ability to carry out day-to-day activities, which compared to 20% of residents in JobsPlus sites and 17% of people in England as a whole (see Table 2.9 in the Technical Annex). This suggests a substantial proportion of participants would require additional support, such as workplace adjustments, flexible roles, or health-related interventions, to help move into or sustain employment.

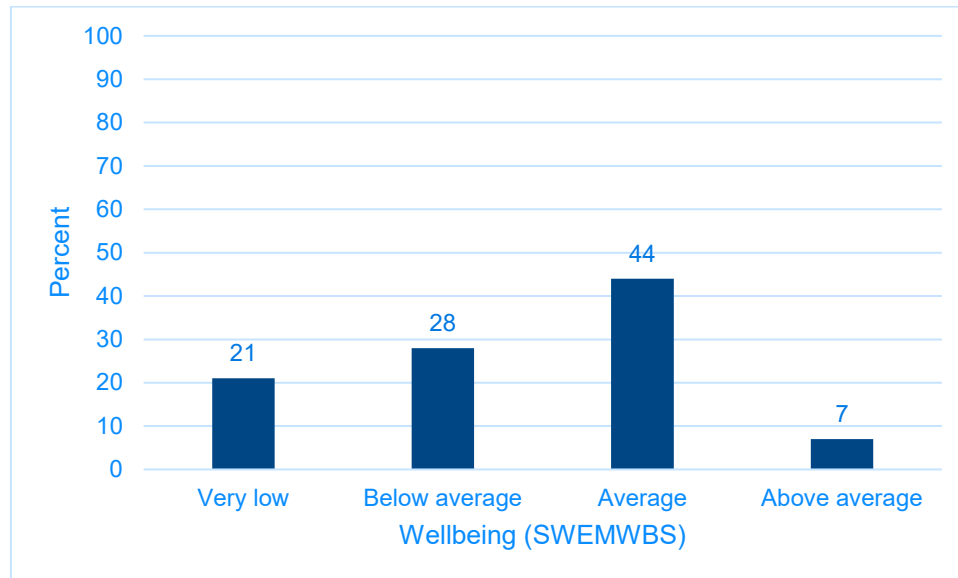
Table 4.14: Health impacts on day to day-to-day activities at registration

Health condition	Frequency	Percent
Yes, a little	83	51
Yes, a lot	46	28
No	29	18
Missing information	6	4
Total	164	100

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

Exploring participants' wellbeing in more detail, survey respondents were asked to complete the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale² (SWEMWBS). Responses indicated that around half of the respondents (49%) had either very low (21%) or below average (28%) levels of wellbeing (Figure 4.7)

² The [SWEMWBS](#) asks respondents to respond to seven positively framed statements using a five-point scale where one indicates 'none of the time' and five indicates 'all of the time'. The sum of individuals' scores is then calculated and categorised into levels of wellbeing. Scores range between 7-35 on the scale and higher scores indicate positive mental wellbeing. Score categories, low 7-17, below average 18-20, average 21-27 and above average 28-35.

Figure 4.7: JobsPlus participants' wellbeing at registration (SWEMWBS)

Base: 343

Source: JobsPlus participant baseline survey, IES, 2025

4.4.2 Support needs

Over two-thirds of respondents to the baseline survey (69%) said that job search and support in applying for jobs, including CV writing, completing job applications and interview training, would be most likely to help them move into work (Table 4.15).

Table 4.15: What would help JobsPlus participants to find work

Support needs	Frequency	Percent
Support and training around finding/ getting a new job (e.g. interview skills, CV skills, communication skills)	237	69
Support and training with work-related skills (e.g. spoken or written English; IT skills; job-specific skills)	99	29
Help with the cost of travel to and from work	67	20
Support to continue/start further or higher education	52	15
Support to manage a physical or mental health condition	50	15
Support with using technology/internet	42	12
Access to digital technology/internet	35	10
Access to affordable/good quality childcare	19	6
Support to find suitable housing	18	5
Support to manage other caring responsibilities	11	3
Other	17	5
None of these	25	7
Don't know/prefer not to say	18	5
Prefer not to say	3	1

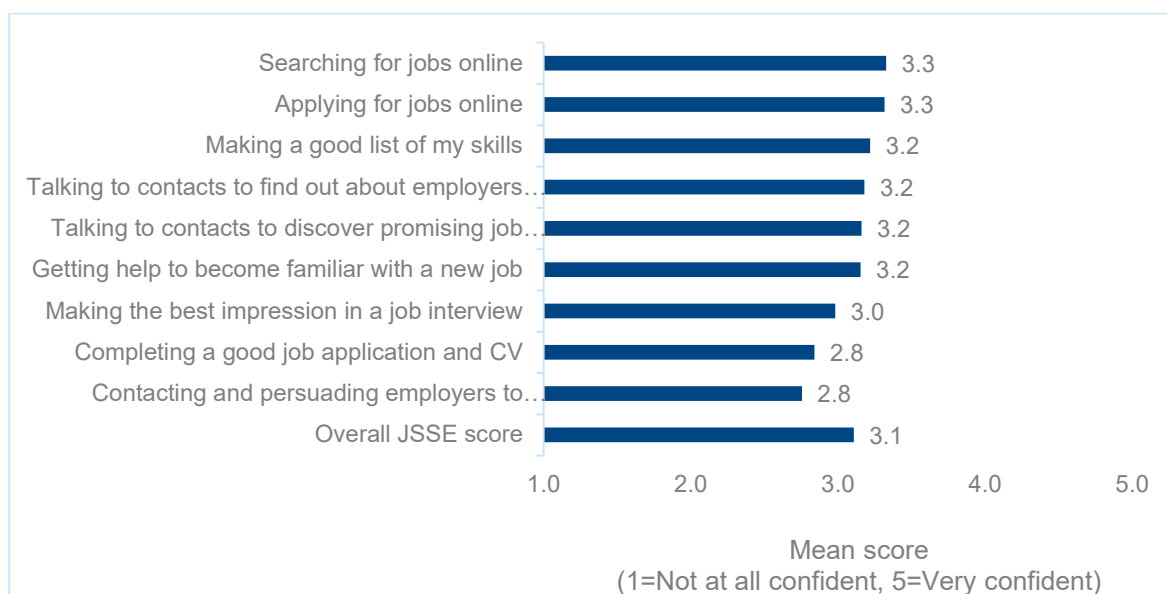
Total	693	202
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Base: 343. Note: This question was multiple choice, therefore the base and % exceeds the total number of respondents for this question.

Source: JobsPlus participant baseline survey, IES, 2025

Confidence with job search and applications was explored in more detail using the Job Search Self-Efficacy (JSSE) scale³. In line with the data above, respondents were 'moderately' confident in their job search and application abilities, with an average score of '3.1'. Respondents had lower confidence in contacting employers and persuading them to consider them for a job (mean = 2.8) and in completing a good CV and job application (mean = 2.8). A full breakdown of JSSE scores is displayed in Figure 4.8.

Figure 4.8: JobsPlus participants' Job Search Self-Efficacy (JSSE) mean scores



Base: 340-343

Source: JobsPlus participant baseline survey, IES, 2025

Beyond job search and application support, respondents indicated that they would benefit from support and training with work-related skills, such as IT skills and spoken or written English (29%); help with the cost of travel to and from work (20%); support to manage a health condition (15%); and support to continue/start further or higher education (15%).

³ The [Job Search Self Efficacy \(JSSE\) Scale](#) presents nine key job search and application skills and asks respondents to rank their confidence with each skills on a 5 point scale where 1 is 'Not at All Confident' and 5 is 'Very Confident'.

4.4.3 Motivations for engaging in JobsPlus

The baseline survey captured the reasons why those employed at the time of registration chose to take part in JobsPlus (Table 4.16). Almost half (47%) said they wanted to apply for a job in a different workplace, and under a quarter (23%) hoped to make a career change. Over two-fifths (43%) were looking to take a training course to improve their skills. Others sought support in their current role, particularly to increase their hours (37%), to secure a promotion (13%), or to apply for a different job within their workplace (13%).

Table 4.16: Goals of JobsPlus participants who were in work at registration

Goals	Frequency	Percent
Apply for a job in a different workplace	40	47
Take a training course to improve my skills	37	43
Increase the number of hours I work	32	37
Change career or leave self-employment for employment	20	23
Start a second job	16	19
Get promoted at work	11	13
Apply for a different job in my workplace	11	13
Reduce the number of hours I work	3	3
None of these	9	10
Don't know	5	6
Total	184	214

Note: This question was multiple choice, therefore the base and % exceeds the total number of respondents for this question.

Source: JobsPlus participant baseline survey, IES, 2025

Interviews with JobsPlus participants who were out of work revealed a range of motivations for engaging with the programme. Some were primarily driven by dissatisfaction with alternative employment services, with many describing their experience of JCP as impersonal, rigid, and unsupportive.

Other key motivations included a desire for more meaningful employment support, assistance with job searching and CV writing, enhanced confidence and well-being, and practical guidance on benefits.

Some participants also sought help with developing work-related skills—such as digital competencies—or obtaining certifications for specific sectors, like Security Industry Authority licences, but were uncertain about where to access these resources.

5 Early evidence on outcomes

In this chapter, we examine emerging evidence on the employment and non-employment outcomes achieved by JobsPlus participants. We draw on data from the first nine months of the project. Sites started recruiting participants from July 2024 onwards and, as would be expected, focussed primarily on outreach and engagement activities. As such, this chapter provides a brief discussion of very early evidence on outcomes. A fuller assessment of outcomes will be carried out in the later phases of the evaluation and the planned impact evaluation will take a counterfactual approach.

Key findings on employment outcomes

Despite the complexity of participants' circumstances and the early stages of the pilot, there was positive emerging evidence of employment outcomes:

- 18% (n=83) of JobsPlus participants secured employment. Of these, 15% (n = 69) were out of work at the time of registration and subsequently secured employment and 3% (n=14) were already in work and transitioned into a new role.
- Over a quarter (27%, n=47) of participants who were out of work at registration and who registered in the first three or four months moved into work.
- Over half of those who entered employment or changed job (n = 45) did so within two months of registering, suggesting JobsPlus is effective in supporting quick job entry, alongside providing longer term support for those who need it.
- More than half (n = 47) of employment outcomes (defined as entering employment or changing job) achieved after registering for JobsPlus resulted in permanent contracts.
- Around three-fifths of participants who were not in employment at the time of registration and gained employment following participation in JobsPlus (n = 26) reached the two-month in-work bonus milestone. This is a positive early indication of participants being able to sustain employment beyond the initial period.

Key findings on non-employment outcomes

- Case workers and participants reported short-term outcomes including personal development (i.e. increased confidence and communication skills, reduced social isolation), improved job readiness, and increased skills and knowledge (including both employability skills and essential skills).
- Intermediate outcomes included: improved mental health and wellbeing, and achievement of qualifications and accreditations.

5.1 Employment outcomes

The following section focuses on participants who found employment or alternative employment following participation in JobsPlus. It covers:

- the characteristics of those who experienced an employment outcome;

- the time taken to achieve an employment outcome;
- the nature of employment, considering contract type, sector, hours worked, salary; and
- job retention against two-month and twelve-week milestones.

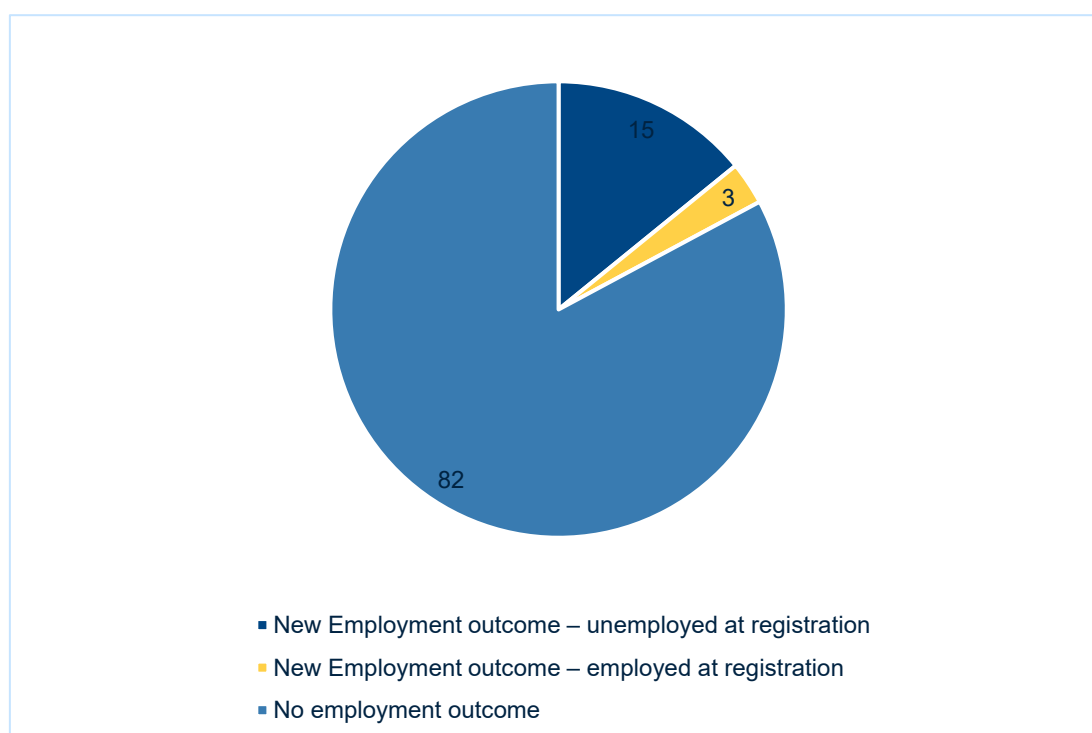
Regardless of employment status at registration, participants were considered to have achieved an employment outcome if they moved into employment or a new role after registering. Additionally, qualitative interviews with programme delivery staff and participants provide further supplementary information on the quality of employment outcomes.

5.1.1 Characteristics of participants who experienced an employment outcome

Figure 5.1 shows that of the 463 participants who registered for JobsPlus between July 2024 and March 2025, 18% (n=83) achieved an employment outcome. Of all 463 participants, 15% (n=69) were out of work at the time of registration and then entered work, while a further 3% (n=14) of participants moved to a different job after registration.

Among those who joined the programme in the first four months (and who therefore had the longest time on the programme) and who were out of work, 27% (n=47) moved into employment.

Figure 5.1: Percentage of participants who achieved an employment outcome



Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025, base 463

Over half of those who achieved an employment outcome were female (n = 48), over half were white (n=46) and over a quarter of participants achieving an employment were black (n=21) (Table 5.1 below). Most also lived in housing association (HA) rented accommodation (n=70). This is a similar profile to all JobsPlus participants (see Technical Annex).

Table 5.1: Gender and ethnicity of participants who achieved an employment outcome

Characteristic	Frequency
Male	35
Female	48
total	83
White	46
Black	21
Asian	3
Other Ethnic Groups	12
total	82

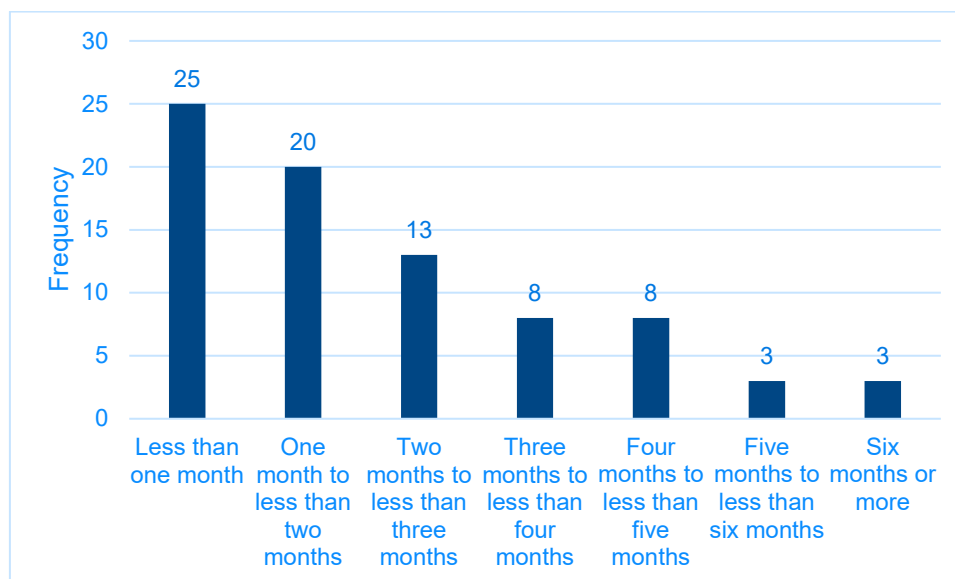
Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

Of those who had a health condition and were out of work at registration, 19% (n=14) moved into employment, compared to 35% (n=33) who did not have a health condition. The lower job entry rate for people with a health condition is common in other employment programmes too and reflects both the impact of the health condition and the type and quality of support provided.

5.1.2 Time taken to achieve an employment outcome

Over half of participants who achieved an employment outcome entered employment less than two months after registering for the JobsPlus programme (n = 45). An additional 29 participants entered employment within two to five months of registration (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: Time taken to achieve an employment outcome after registration

Base: 80

Note: Three employment outcomes excluded from analysis due to incorrect date entry

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

5.1.3 Quality of employment outcomes

Contract type

In terms of contract type, 47 participants were employed on a permanent contract, and nine participants were on a casual or fixed-term contract, with a further six on temporary contracts (Table 5.2). The prevalence of permanent contracts can be considered as a positive indicator that employment outcomes were likely to be sustained.

Table 5.2: Contract type of participants who achieved an employment outcome

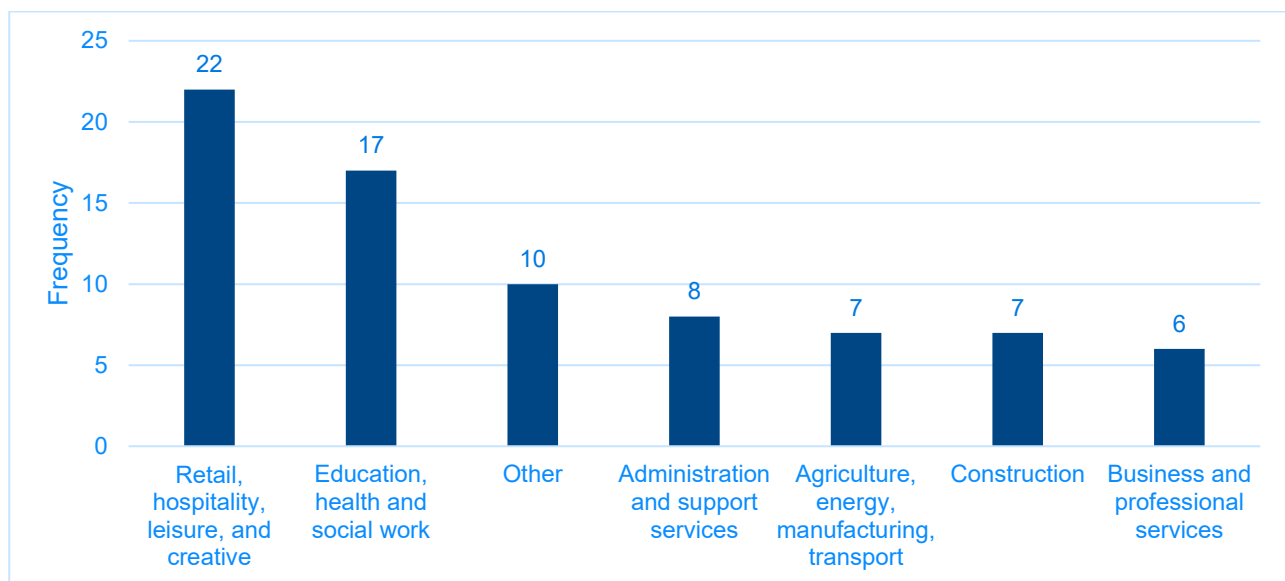
Contract type	Frequency
Permanent	47
Casual or fixed-term	9
Rolling or temporary work with no agreed end date	6
Missing information	21
Total	83

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

Employment sectors

Out of 79 participants who achieved an employment outcome where the sector of employment was recorded, 22 entered: retail, hospitality, leisure and creative industries, and 17 found employment in: education, health and social work sectors (Figure 5.3). This suggests participants were more likely to find employment in more customer-facing or service-oriented sectors, which could reflect the availability of entry level jobs in those sectors and participants' skills profiles.

Figure 5.3: Employment sector of participants who achieved an employment outcome



Base: 77

Employment sector information was missing for 4 participants

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

Hours worked

From the 83 participants who achieved an employment outcome, 37 worked 35 hours or more (Table 5.3) In addition to this, 24 participants had worked for between 16-34 hours in the past week. Information on the working hours of employed participants in the past seven days was missing in 12 cases, limiting a comprehensive understanding of their working patterns.

Table 5.3: Hours worked in the past seven days of participants who achieved an employment outcome

Hours worked in past 7 days	Frequency
Less than 16	9
16-24	11
25-34	13
35 or more	37
Missing information	13
Total	83

Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

Salary

Participants who secured employment through the JobsPlus programme (including those already employed at registration) provided information on their net income in the last seven days from their current job. Of 83 participants, a quarter (n=21) earned less than £299 and over a fifth (n=17) earned £400-£499 (Table 5.4), with participants more heavily concentrated in the lower pay bands.

Table 5.4: Salary during the past seven days of participants who achieved an employment outcome

Earnings in past seven days	Frequency
Less than £299	21
£300-£399	14
£400-£499	17
£500-£599	7
£600 or more	7
Missing information	17
Total	83

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

Sustained Employment: two-month Into Work Bonus

Participants who were out of work at registration could earn a bonus if they stayed in work for at least two months and earned at least £677 per-month: 26 out of 44 eligible participants achieved this milestone (Table 5.5)⁴.

Table 5.5: Participants unemployed at registration who reached the two month in-work bonus milestone

Two-month in-work bonus milestone met	Frequency
Yes	26
No – did not reach milestone	18
No – got job less than 8 weeks ago	25
Total	69

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

12-week milestone

Of the participants who secured an employment outcome, 27 participants (just under three-fifths) remained in work for 12 weeks or more, including 22 who were unemployed at the point of registration. 35 participants were yet to reach the 12-week milestone at the time of reporting (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6: 12 weeks in-work milestone achieved

12-week milestone met	Frequency
Yes – out of work at registration	22
Yes – in work at registration	5
No – did not reach milestone	21
No – got job less than 12 weeks ago	35
Total	83

Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

5.2 Education and training outcomes

Of the 463 participants who registered for JobsPlus between July 24 and March 25, 11% (n=51) undertook a qualification as a result of JobsPlus (e.g. their advisor had signposted or supported them to take part). Of these, where information on the level of qualification was recorded, this was always between entry level and a full level 3 qualification (n = 18). However, information on the qualification level was missing in close to two thirds of cases where a qualification was undertaken (n = 33), due to inconsistencies in the MI data recorded by HAs limiting the conclusions drawn from the data (Table 5.7).

Table 5.7: Qualification level achieved for participants who achieved a qualification outcome

Qualification details	Frequency
Entry level up to full level 3 vocational qualification	18
Missing information	33
Total	51

Source: JobsPlus MI analysis, IES, 2025

Interviews with participants indicated that participants were enrolled on essential skills courses as well as vocational courses. For example, several participants talked about basic digital skills course intended to provide skills to navigate a computer and email. Examples of vocational courses included construction, food hygiene, manual handling and security courses. Participants also described non-accredited, recreational courses to build confidence and soft skills.

5.3 Short-term outcomes

5.3.1 Personal development

JobsPlus participants discussed a range of personal development outcomes. Increased confidence was a common theme, highlighted by caseworkers, partners and participants themselves. In particular, participants explained that their employment advisers affirmed their skillsets and encouraged their goals and aspirations, boosting their confidence and generating a more positive outlook on their next steps. This also supported them to feel that they were in full control of their journey towards employment, causing them not to feel pressured to take work that did not meet their needs.

My confidence was at rock bottom when I came here, and they've managed to build it up. So, I think from that respect alone, that's helped a lot. Just having someone believe in you and say, yeah, you can get a job. Yeah, it's really important.

JobsPlus participant

Enhanced confidence in socialising was another frequent personal development outcome noted in interviews. Participants reported an increased ability to interact with other

residents, which reduced feelings of social isolation and gave an increased sense of community and belonging among residents. Caseworkers and HA staff felt that this was facilitated by the JobsPlus community hub model of support, where participants could meet others on the programme.

5.3.2 Improved job readiness

Several participants commented that they felt more motivated to search for work and more confident about moving into employment. Many participants felt that through one-to-one discussions with their caseworker they had a better understanding of the opportunities available to them locally. This helped to inform the types of jobs they were interested in applying for. Some participants also talked about longer-term career paths they would be interested in pursuing, reflecting that JobsPlus has a focus beyond immediate job entry. This included discussions about apprenticeships, with some interviewees indicating that following conversations with their caseworker, this was their preferred route to employment.

With this improved knowledge about available opportunities, JobsPlus participants were able to conduct targeted job searches, often working closely with their caseworker. Looking for jobs together provided participants with a better understanding of how to find vacancies and what to look for in a job advertisement. It also encouraged them to apply for roles outside of their comfort zone.

Just by the fact that I actually talk to someone about it and someone is helping me look, so it's already helpful in a way. Just having someone on your side.

JobsPlus participant

There was also evidence that caseworkers following up with participants about the outcomes of job applications and interviews, helped to build resilience. Participants praised caseworkers for supporting them to consider the positives from unsuccessful applications, and to apply the lessons learned from these experiences to future applications. Participants felt this was a key driver of their improved attitudes to work and motivation to continue applying for opportunities.

Before I signed up, I was out of work for a while, and I was getting really down and unmotivated with it all. But since being enrolled with JobsPlus, they've really put me back up again and I'm already seeing the benefits of good news actually coming through for once. So yeah, it's definitely, definitely helped me get myself back up.

JobsPlus participant

5.3.3 Increased skills and knowledge

The skills and knowledge participants reported developing through JobsPlus were wide-ranging, including employability skills, essential skills, and other work-related skills. Of these, improvements in employability skills were the most commonly reported. Programme staff, caseworkers and participants all noted an increased understanding of the importance of a CV, and improved skills to develop a CV. With these newly developed

skills, participants reported feeling more confident sharing their CV with employers. People who had recently moved to the UK and were not aware how CVs should be presented particularly valued this support.

When I first started... Applying for the jobs just after my youngest started school, it was hard at first because I didn't know what to put in a CV, just a basic CV with nothing on it whereas now with the help [from JobsPlus] there was a lot more on my CV.

She helped me with my CV, I haven't written one since 16 at school. She took a look at it, tidied up and made it look more professional. I read it and I said I can't believe that's me! I was so happy! I instantly applied to every job application.

JobsPlus participants

Improved employability skills also extended to application and interview skills. Participants reported increased confidence in their ability to produce good quality job applications and perform well in interviews. This included confidence in using the Situation, Task, Action, Result (STAR) approach to interviewing.

Despite not yet having moved into employment, participants who were ready to enter the workforce spoke positively about their employment support. They indicated that they were receiving more responses to job applications and securing more interviews than before engaging with the JobsPlus support.

5.3.4 Improved health and wellbeing

Interviews with HA staff and participants suggest that JobsPlus is supporting participants to improve their health and wellbeing. Participants often attributed this to the wide-ranging support and activities available in the community hub.

For some, JobsPlus provided routine and motivation to leave the house, which had immediate positive effects on their mental health. Through regular appointments, participants built strong relationships with their caseworker. Participants talked about the empathetic approach of caseworkers, which encouraged them to open up about their circumstances and their concerns. Case workers were described as providing light-touch emotional support and signposting to more formal support where needed.

The emotional support has been life-changing. It really has. Being able to have somewhere to come, have someone friendly to talk to, who's supportive, who can say, you know, let's get you on board, let's help out, you can do this and just make me feel valued has been life changing. Because I just thought it was over.

JobsPlus participant

There was some evidence of caseworkers sharing their own similar circumstances and experiences with participants. Participants expressed appreciation for this, explaining that this helped them feel less isolated in their experiences and increased their motivation to address their support needs. Interviews provided examples of participants signing up to a

GP, moving into counselling, and receiving support to manage substance misuse and addiction.

Well, [advisor] said she gets anxious as well. Just knowing other people. It's not so isolating. You don't feel like, oh my god, isn't it just me? I'm not the weirdo.

JobsPlus participant

Access to healthy food and kitchenware was another common type of support leading to improved health and wellbeing. Participants felt that the access to food banks and hubs that JobsPlus facilitated, as well as the provision of shopping vouchers, allowed them to increase the quantity and nutritional value of the food they were consuming. Additionally, some were able to purchase cooking utensils and kitchenware, allowing them to develop their cooking skills.

The way they helped me with the food is the greatest help... they gave me a voucher for Tesco, and for Argos, so I bought food from Tesco, I bought some utensils from Argos, and I started cooking. Every week I went to the food bank, yeah, they gave me enough food so that I could survive.

JobsPlus participant

6 Conclusions

This chapter sets out conclusions about implementation of the JobsPlus pilots in the UK over the first nine months of delivery, early outcomes achieved and key success factors. This is followed by a discussion of the implications of the findings for ongoing delivery of the JobsPlus pilot and the next steps for the evaluation.

6.1 Early evidence on the JobsPlus pilot

6.1.1 Was it possible to implement the JobsPlus programme effectively?

There were positive early indications that the JobsPlus model could be implemented effectively in the UK. By March 2025, all pilots were fully mobilised, with community hubs established and all the main components of the model – on-site employment services, community support for work and financial incentives – operational. Sites had moved into a phase of continuous development and improvement of the programme. Below we consider each of the key components of the model.

Onsite employment service

- The onsite employment services demonstrated features of effective practice, which are well-evidenced in the literature. These included:
 - a thorough needs assessment;
 - highly personalised one-to-one support;
 - a consistent and trusted caseworker/employment adviser;
 - access to specialist services to address more complex needs;
 - and flexible financial support to help overcome barriers to work.
- Housing associations (HA) had drawn on existing skills, expertise and partnerships, which had enabled them to implement this element of the model relatively quickly.

Community support for work

- There was a significant focus on community outreach and engagement in the early months of the pilot. Sites worked extensively with community organisations to raise awareness of the programme and used informal community events such as family days, festive events and coffee mornings to build social networks and introduce JobsPlus to residents.
- There were positive signs that the model was reaching people who would not typically be well-engaged with employment services, including those who were economically

inactive. This included those who were out of work and had parental or caring responsibilities or had a long-term health condition, which reduced their ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

- The community outreach and place-based model appeared to be reaching people with significant needs who would benefit from the intensive support available, such as those with no qualifications and those who had never worked.
- All sites had Community Champions in place and were in the early stages of developing this role.
- Recruitment to JobsPlus had been relatively slow in the early months, which was broadly as expected. This was in line with the experiences of the US pilot programme and other voluntary employment support programmes in the UK, which demonstrate that engaging people with multiple and complex barriers to employment is a gradual process that typically happens over many months.
- Other factors affecting the slow recruitment in the first few months of the pilot were:
 - Some sites did not have full teams of staff in place early on so outreach and engagement activity was comparatively small scale. HAs were able to second staff from other roles within their organisation and backfill those positions to staff JobPlus teams within a relatively short implementation window. In a few sites, however, new staff had to be recruited, which meant some sites were operating without a full team of staff in place in the first few months of the pilot. Further, a few sites had difficulties attracting applicants, which they perceived to be due to the short-term contract offered.
 - The delayed start to the programme, which meant it was launched in the summer when partners were on leave and many parents were occupied with childcare, contributed to slower progress in the early months. Engagement increased over the following months.

Financial incentives – the Into Work Bonus

- The Into Work Bonus of £400 was being administered but, overall, early perceptions were that, although important, this level of incentive was not a key driver of engagement and outcomes. The offer of holistic and voluntary support close-to-home appeared to be a greater influence.
- The Into Work Bonus will be explored further in the next phase of the evaluation as it may be perceived differently by those who join the programme later on. Nonetheless, if JobsPlus were to continue beyond the pilot phase, it would be worth exploring a higher level of financial incentive.

HAs, partners and residents were positive about the JobsPlus model and persuaded of its suitability for their contexts. HAs felt the model was well-suited to address the complex social issues in their areas, and it aligned with their ethos of social value and inclusion. They appreciated that JobsPlus enabled them to work with a wider range of residents than typical employment support. Participants valued being able to access support close to home and personalised support for a wide range of issues beyond employment.

6.1.2 What outcomes were being achieved?

Despite the significant barriers to work among JobsPlus participants, and the early stages of the pilot, there were emerging outcomes:

- 18% of JobsPlus participants moved into employment.
 - Of these, 15% were out of work when they registered on JobsPlus and moved into employment. A further 3% were in work when they joined JobsPlus and moved into a new job.
- Over half of those who entered employment or changed job did so within two months of registering, suggesting JobsPlus is effective in supporting quick job entry, alongside providing longer term support for those who need it.
- Among those who joined the programme in the first four months (and who therefore had the longest time on the programme) and who were out of work, 27% moved into employment.
- There was qualitative evidence of short and medium-term outcomes that would be expected on a pathway towards employment. These include improved personal development (i.e. increased confidence and communication skills), improved job readiness, increased skills and knowledge (including both employability skills and essential skills), improved health and wellbeing, and achievement of qualifications and accreditations.

6.1.3 What factors were contributing to the success of implementing JobsPlus and achieving outcomes?

Many HAs had strong pre-existing partnerships with a wide range of public and voluntary and community sector organisations. Their ability to quickly coordinate and convene with partners enabled the pilot to get up and running quickly despite curtailed planning and set-up periods. There were some examples of co-location, shared goals and effective communication, which enabled partnership working.

Community hubs also appeared to be contributing to successful implementation. Participants viewed community hubs positively and considered them to be a convenient and welcoming place, which they compared favourably to Jobcentres. This was supporting engagement. Where there was space for partners to co-locate in hubs, this was perceived as beneficial for providing a more coordinated service to participants.

Finally, JobsPlus staff had built strong, consistent and trusting relationships with participants. Participants felt that their needs and aspirations were listened to and taken seriously, which harnessed trust and motivation. This, coupled with a highly personalised and flexible model of support, appeared to be contributing to the achievement of outcomes for individuals.

6.2 Considerations for ongoing implementation of the JobsPlus pilot

6.2.1 Engaging residents and extending reach

- **There should be a continued focus on outreach through community intermediaries over the coming months.** HAs had worked hard to build relationships with local voluntary and community sector organisations to support outreach activity. While there had been much progress in collaborative working to promote the programme, building trust in JobsPlus was taking time and uptake by March 2025 had been lower than expected.
- **Trying to increase reach should be a key focus for pilot sites over coming months.** Sites were aware that particular groups in their community had been less engaged in JobsPlus than others and were working to tailor their outreach strategies to more effectively engage these groups. Continuing to expand partnerships, improving marketing and communications, making greater use of Community Champions, and ongoing tailored technical assistance, including communities of practice to share learning, will support with this work.
- **Sites should prioritise working with former participants to market and promote the programme** as more participants move through JobsPlus and into employment. This could be through the Community Champion role, but also through other more informal roles and use of participant case studies to share success stories as part of a marketing strategy, for example.
- **The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) should continue to encourage JCP engagement with the pilot and HAs should continue to prioritise building close working relationships with JCP.** There were examples of strong partnership working with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) but this was not consistent across sites, with particular challenges in engaging with larger Jobcentres.

6.2.2 Delivering on-site employment services

- **Sites may need to develop stronger guidance on case management.** As the number of JobsPlus participants increases there may be risks around workload pressures and maintaining the high quality of personalised employment services. The intensive, highly tailored support appeared to be critical for engagement and achieving outcomes so this should not be lost as more residents register on the programme. Some sites had already started to incorporate more group support sessions. It is likely that all sites will need to focus on introducing more group sessions and develop their practice in this area.
- **Sites will need to invest in training and resources to ensure staff knowledge on available provision is kept up-to-date.** Being able to provide effective personalised support relies on caseworkers having excellent knowledge of available local services. The challenges of mapping fragmented provision, which often changes due to short-term funding, are well understood from other evaluations. Some HAs had mechanisms

in place to convene partners; building on these may help ensure information about local services is up-to-date and duplication of effort to map services is avoided.

- **There will need to be more employer-facing work to ensure that the JobsPlus model is demand-led and able to provide employment opportunities for an increasing number of residents.** This may require a re-configuration of some delivery teams – with specific employer engagement roles, for example.
- **Sites should, as far as possible, develop strategies to mitigate and manage the risks of key staff leaving.** There were some early signs that the uncertain and short-term nature of the grant funding for the pilot may affect staff turnover. Greater certainty and longer-term funding could help sites with planning, building trust and momentum, and recruiting and retaining key staff members.

6.2.3 Wider support

- **Sites should consider a focus on building stronger links with community-based health services** given the high prevalence of mental and physical ill health among JobsPlus residents. There were early examples of sites having made progress with this – for example of joint working with local GP practices and voluntary and community sector organisations, including some services co-locating in JobsPlus hubs – but these links were not consistently in place and some sites had experienced difficulties trying to engage health partners. Ensuring representation from key strategic health partners on steering groups will support improved operational links.

6.2.4 Community support for work

- **Sites may require additional technical assistance to support them to define, develop and manage the Community Champions role.**
- **Sites should consider how to facilitate greater involvement of residents in co-development, planning and monitoring pilot activities.** This could be through Community Champions and other mechanisms. This is likely to be helpful in building trust and community ownership of JobsPlus over time.

6.2.5 Governance and sustainability

- **Sites should focus on developing strategic steering groups, which ideally monitor how JobsPlus contributes to local economic priorities.** While there was some evidence of strategic partners playing a role in the monitoring of pilots' progress, this varied across sites and could be improved. As noted above, this could help to:
 - achieve better integration and partnership working with health and other partners;
 - position JobsPlus within the wider local service landscape;
 - reduce misunderstandings and ease concerns about competition between providers; and
 - mainstream JobsPlus after the pilot phase ends.

- **Resident and community representation on governance boards could be strengthened to build community ownership of the model.**
- **Governance arrangements should enable effective information sharing with Combined Authorities and partners.** As Combined Authorities develop their 'Get Britain Working' local plans and consider place-based, locally led strategies to address economic inactivity, ill health, and unemployment, it is essential that the learning, innovation, and outcomes from JobsPlus pilots inform future planning.

6.3 Next steps for the evaluation

This early report provided a summary of the pilot sites' set-up and early implementation experiences, discussing what worked well and key challenges, rather than exploring the experiences of individual JobsPlus sites in detail. The final evaluation report, due in 2026, will consider delivery of the pilot from April 2025 onwards. It will build on this initial evidence to provide an assessment of evidence on key research questions related to: the effectiveness of implementation; how the programme worked overall and in different contexts; outcomes achieved, and for whom, how these varied for different groups; enablers and barriers to implementation; and future scalability of the pilot.

The final report will include more cross-site comparison and will examine commonalities and difference in strategies and outcomes and consider how the local context influenced these. It will also explore the development of the model over time, documenting the pathway from initial set-up to a more steady-state delivery. Specifically, the final report will:

- Explore the nature of longer-term support (i.e. over six months) for JobsPlus participants who are further from the labour market.
- Explore further the nature of in-work support and perceived outcomes resulting from this.
- Examine how delivery progresses and develops over time, including: understanding how changes to the local context affect ongoing delivery; whether enablers and barriers to delivery change over time; whether approaches to employer engagement change; and how partnerships evolve.
- Assess the development of community support for work over time, and explore the extent to which awareness and community ownership of the model grows.
- Understand the extent to which participants return to JobsPlus for further support after disengaging or initially moving into education, training employment, and the support they receive.
- Build on research into short-term and intermediate outcomes by examining these outcomes for those who joined JobsPlus between October 2024 and March 2025, as well as continuing to measure these outcomes for new cohorts who engage from April 2025 onwards.
- Examine in more detail variations in participant journeys for different groups.
- Consider the scalability of the JobsPlus pilots.

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Inclusive Terminology

The terminology used to define ethnicity continues to evolve, and greater awareness has arisen about gender, cognitive differences as well as of disability. Institute for Employment Studies (IES) seeks to be a learning organisation; as such we are adapting our practice in line with these shifts. We aim to be specific when referring to each individual's ethnicity and use their own self-descriptor wherever possible. Where this is not feasible, we are aligned with Race Disparity Unit (RDU) which uses the term 'ethnic minorities' to refer to all ethnic groups except white British. RDU does not use the terms BAME (black, Asian, and minority ethnic) or BME (black and minority ethnic) as these terms emphasise certain ethnic groups and exclude others. It also recommends not capitalising ethnic groups, (such as 'black' or 'white') unless that group's name includes a geographic place. More broadly, we understand that while individuals may have impairments it is society that disables them, hence we refer to disabled people. Not all people identify with male or female and we reflect their self-descriptions in our work and use the term non-binary should abbreviation be necessary. We value neurodiversity. Where possible we always use people's self-descriptors rather than impose categories upon them.

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