

Work-first interventions: types and effects

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Summary

The UK Government's Get Britain Working strategy aims to increase the national employment rate to 80% by expanding labour market participation and reducing economic inactivity. However, the UK labour market continues to face deep-rooted challenges worsened by the pandemic. Young people and older adults remain disproportionately affected, with nearly one million 16–24-year-olds not in employment, education or training, and over 2.8 million working-age individuals inactive due to long-term health conditions.

The current 'work first' model, which prioritises rapid job placement over long-term development, has been criticised for focusing heavily on compliance rather than tailored support. This approach often leads to poor job matches and limited progression, particularly for those with complex needs. There is growing recognition that a more personalised, supportive system is needed to help people find sustainable and meaningful employment.

This systematic review examines the strengths and limitations of the UK's current approach, drawing on recent evidence (2018–2024) from other OECD countries. It aims to build understanding of the relative effectiveness of different strategies to encourage job seeking, whether through supportive (assisting) measures or coercive (sanctioning) approaches. The review focuses on individuals who engage with work-first Active Labour Market Policies either voluntarily or as a condition of benefit receipt. Based on 61 studies covering 70 interventions, the analysis evaluates both employment status and additional outcomes.

The findings aim to inform reforms under the Get Britain Working strategy and support the development of a more inclusive, evidence-based approach to helping individuals secure stable, high-quality employment.

Key findings

Evidence shows that assisting interventions can significantly improve employment outcomes. Interventions focused on job search assistance, training and vocational profiling consistently show the highest rates of positive outcomes, particularly in terms of increased employment likelihood, wages, and employment duration. These effects are more pronounced over longer periods (a minimum 12 months following the intervention) and are especially beneficial for disadvantaged groups, such as those with limited work capacity or the long-term unemployed. Tailored job assistance and coaching can substantially enhance the employment prospects of people with disabilities.

Monitoring and sanctioning interventions generate mixed results. While they can be effective in reducing unemployment duration and improving compliance-related

intermediary outcomes, they are also frequently associated with higher instances of negative or non-significant results on wellbeing, wages, and long-term employment outcomes. Punitive measures implemented without support are less likely to reduce unemployment or economic inactivity compared to other types of intervention.

Combined approaches show potential for improving employment outcomes.

Programmes combining assisting elements with sanctions often lead to positive outcomes, particularly in terms of increased employment likelihood and duration, and reducing unemployment duration and subsidy dependence. However, despite their apparent potential, the limited number of evaluations of these programmes means a more comprehensive study to confidently ascertain their effectiveness is required.

Wider evidence highlights the importance of frequent and personalised contact with employment advisers (especially during the first three months of unemployment), which becomes a driver to success. Lower caseloads, tailored action planning, and trust-based relationships contribute significantly to positive employment transitions.

Policy implications

The findings highlight the importance of **prioritising personalised employment support**. ‘Work-first’ interventions are more effective when they prioritise personalised, supportive measures over punitive approaches. Personalised support is particularly effective for people with disabilities and health conditions. The government should ensure that Pathways to Work offers are co-designed with disabled people and focus on personalised, non-punitive support. As previously recommended, the UK Government should introduce an Employment Support Guarantee for priority groups with a commitment of access to specialist, regular and consistent adviser support, alongside additional services based on an individuals’ need.

The UK Government should also reform its approach to conditionality and sanctions to support sustainable employment. Sanctions alone tend to be ineffective and can be counterproductive, particularly for older adults, disabled people, and those with complex needs. The Department for Work and Pensions should end the 35-hour job search rule, which may be contributing to increased transitions on to health-related benefits. There also should be stronger checks and balances in how decisions regarding sanctions are made, including a statutory definition of ‘good cause’, and the government should legislate to reduce the severity of sanctions, ensuring that they are proportionate and fair.

The overarching purpose of employment services should be to enable and empower people, not to monitor or penalise them. A system that prioritises support, rather than implementing punitive measures, would foster more meaningful engagement, better meet the needs of diverse groups and lead to more sustainable employment outcomes.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The UK Government has set an ambitious goal to raise the national employment rate to 80% as part of its wider *Get Britain Working strategy*. These reforms aim to broaden labour market participation, reduce economic inactivity, and improve access to sustainable employment, particularly for disadvantaged groups.

The UK labour market saw underlying structural issues worsen during the pandemic and it has struggled to recover since. Young people and older workers have been particularly affected. Nearly one million young people aged 16 to 24 were not in employment, education or training (NEET) between October and December 2024, representing 13.4% of this age group, an increase of 110,000 from the previous year (ONS, 2025). For individuals aged 50 to 64, the inactivity rate in 2024 stood at 27.4%, higher than pre-pandemic levels. Furthermore, 2.8 million 16–64-year-olds remain out of the labour market due to long-term health conditions.

The effectiveness of the UK's employment support system has long been debated, particularly in relation to the intersection between employment services and the benefits system. Under the prevailing 'work first' model, unemployed benefit claimants must accept any available job after just four weeks, prioritising rapid job entry over long-term career development. Over the last 20 years, increasing emphasis has been placed on compliance and conditionality – with the UK now having some of the strictest rules in the developed world – rather than tailored support, often at the expense of sustained labour market integration. This narrow focus can lead to poor job matches, high turnover, and limited career progression – particularly for those with complex barriers to employment.

International evidence, including from high-income OECD countries, shows that Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) can significantly improve employment outcomes when they are well-designed, properly funded, and attuned to local labour market conditions. These policies typically include job search assistance, vocational training, wage subsidies, and personalised employment support. While the UK has implemented a variety of ALMPs over the past two decades – from the New Deal and Work Programme to more recent schemes like Restart and Kickstart – their effectiveness has been mixed. Many critics argue that these programmes have focused too narrowly on short-term job placement rather than supporting individuals into stable, meaningful, and higher-quality employment (Berry, 2014; Green & Sissons, 2023; Tomlinson, 2024).

The UK Government's proposed reforms provide a key opportunity to reimagine employment services to be more responsive, person-centred, and effective. However, policy changes must be grounded in robust evidence. By examining the strengths and limitations of different 'work first' approaches, this systematic review aims to identify reforms that can lead to improved outcomes in terms of job quality, sustainability, and

inclusivity. It explores the effectiveness of various 'work first' intervention strategies drawing upon the best available evidence across the OECD. Through this evidence-based review, we aim to highlight the policy changes necessary to support a more inclusive, supportive, and ultimately more successful labour market strategy for the UK.

2 Approach

2.1 Inclusion criteria

This review includes ‘work-first’ interventions designed to promote rapid labour market re-entry, targeted at recipients of unemployment benefits, individuals with limited capacity to work, and economically inactive individuals not currently receiving benefits. ALMPs included are categorised into four groups based on the nature of the intervention:

2.1.1 Assisting with sanctions

- **Assisting** – Support through proactive measures that enhance employability and job search effectiveness. Some examples are job search assistance offering action planning, vacancy matching and brokerage services to connect candidates with employers; job search or employability training for improving skills, such as using job platforms, networking, interview techniques and CV writing; and vocational profiling for assessing individuals’ skills, interests, and career goals to guide them toward suitable opportunities. These interventions are aimed at helping individuals identify, prepare for, and secure appropriate employment aligned with their skillsets.
- **Monitoring** – These interventions ensure individuals follow required steps and attend caseworker interviews but are not directly tied to benefit receipt or sanctions. Examples include interventions that provide monitoring systems under unconditional benefits, granting more autonomy to claimants; interventions for long-term unemployed individuals who no longer receive benefits; mobile messages reminding individuals of upcoming caseworker interviews; and interventions where job search assistance and obligations are removed.
- **Monitoring with sanctions** – These interventions involve monitoring an individual’s adherence to the conditions for receiving unemployment benefits, such as engaging in job search activities, attending appointments with employment advisors, or accepting the first available job offer, regardless of professional preferences. Non-compliance may result in the threat or application of benefit sanctions to encourage programme participation and active job seeking.
- **Assisting with sanctions** – These interventions combine job search assistance with enforcement of benefit sanctions for non-compliance.

The impact of these ALMPs is reviewed on a range of outcomes, including **primary outcomes** (employment likelihood and duration, wage, and measurements in unemployment likelihood and duration), and additional **secondary outcomes** (employment characteristics, reception of benefits, intermediary outcomes, other exits from unemployment, socio-economic status and wellbeing).

This review only includes studies that incorporate a counterfactual, such as Randomised Controlled Trials or Quasi-experimental Designs. To ensure the findings are relevant to the UK labour market, this review only includes evidence from high-income OECD countries and from recent years (2018 and 2024). Further detail on the inclusion criteria for the review is included in Annex 1.

2.2 Methodology

This review follows a systematic process to ensure rigour, efficiency and quality of evidence gathered. The search begins by gathering studies from major systematic reviews including Card et al. (2018), Puerto et al. (2022), Orfao and Malo (2023), and the Evidence Gap Map by White and Apunyo (2021); and grey literature sources such as Google Scholar, the World Bank, OECD, and UK Government portals. This resulted in 1,375 unique studies. This is followed by title and abstract screening and full-text review ultimately leading to the inclusion of 61 studies in the final analysis. A comprehensive review of the methodology is described in Annex 2.

2.3 Nature of the evidence

The review presents data from 61 studies evaluating a total of 70 interventions. Of the 70 ALMPs covered in this review, 47% can be classified as ‘assisting’, 34% as ‘monitoring with sanctions’, 11% as ‘assisting with sanctions’ and 7% as ‘only monitoring’. The majority of these studies (80%) focus on individuals receiving unemployment benefits, with a lesser focus on people with limited capacity to work (11%) or those not working and not claiming benefits (9%). One in five studies (20%) examine interventions for people who are long-term unemployed, with most focused-on individuals receiving benefits, while 15% of studies examine interventions for people who are short-term unemployed. Finally, 39% of the studies include participants with multiple barriers to employment (e.g. low levels of education or skills, challenging social environment, dependent care responsibilities). Individuals with limited capacity to work or those not working and not claiming benefits are mostly targeted by supportive programmes. There are some variations in terms of demographic groups included in ALMP evaluations. Nearly 44% of studies include all age groups, but 25% only include individuals under 25 years of age and the distribution further varies by the type of intervention.

This systematic review captures a total of 388 outcomes, split between 237 primary outcomes, and 151 secondary outcomes. Out of 237 primary outcomes, 52% report employment likelihood, 21% wage, 12% unemployment duration, 8% unemployment or inactivity likelihood and 7% employment duration. The distribution of these outcomes further varies by the type of ALMP. Assisting and monitoring interventions focus on employment duration and wage, however when sanctions are included a higher proportion of evaluations focus on unemployment duration.

A wider range of secondary outcomes are captured in the studies. The most frequently measured secondary outcomes are wellbeing and social wellbeing, reported by 27% of studies. The second most frequently measured outcome is unemployment benefit receipts

(reported by 23% of studies), closely followed by participation in ALMP (22%) and employment characteristics (20%). Variables such as 'exit from unemployment' and reported socio-economic status are far less frequently captured, reported by 6% and 2% of studies, respectively. Secondary outcomes are predominantly measured and reported by evaluations of assisting ALMPs, covering aspects of job and life quality such as individual and social wellbeing, employment characteristics and unemployment receipt. In contrast, evaluations of monitoring and sanctioning interventions collect fewer secondary outcomes, placing relatively greater emphasis on intermediary indicators like programme participation, benefits receipts and wellbeing. Further details on the data characteristics are available in Annex 3 of the report.

This review does not aim to estimate the effect size of various 'work-first' interventions, which would require a meta-analysis. Instead, it focuses on gathering preliminary evidence to understand the general direction of effect associated with different types of 'work-first' interventions.

3 How effective are different types of ‘work first’ intervention?

Key Findings

- Assisting interventions are most likely to have a positive impact on employment likelihood and wage.
- Monitoring with sanctions interventions are more likely to either have no impact, or a negative impact on employment likelihood and wage.
- Assisting interventions, including when paired with sanctions, show a stronger link compared to other types of interventions, to reduction in subsidy dependence and improvement in employment characteristics and wellbeing.
- Assisting interventions are most likely among all types of interventions to have a positive impact on wellbeing.
- Supportive measures yield cumulative benefits and may lead to more sustainable, long-term improvements, as indicated by a rising proportion of positive outcomes over time. In contrast, monitoring with sanctions tends to have a short-term impact that diminishes over time, suggesting these interventions may function as immediate deterrents or motivators, but lack the structural support needed to sustain behavioural or economic change.

3.1 Primary Outcomes

This section looks at the effects of different types of intervention on primary outcomes including employment likelihood, wage, employment duration, unemployment duration, and inactivity.

Overall, assisting interventions have highest proportion of studies that show positive impact on primary outcomes, along with those paired with sanctions, which appear to outnumber negative outcomes in both cases. In contrast, evaluations combining monitoring with sanctions have a lower proportion of studies showing significant positive effects on comparable primary outcomes.

3.1.1 Employment likelihood

Assisting interventions are most likely to have a positive impact on employment likelihood, while monitoring with sanctions interventions are least likely to have a positive impact. Employment likelihood is the most frequently reported outcome across all four types of interventions, among the studies included in this review. Assisting interventions have the highest proportion of cases showing significant positive effect on employment likelihood (64%), followed by assisting and sanctions (58%), monitoring (50%) and monitoring and sanctions (37%). Both assisting and monitoring with sanctions interventions have significant negative effects reported, in 15% and 16% of cases respectively. No significant

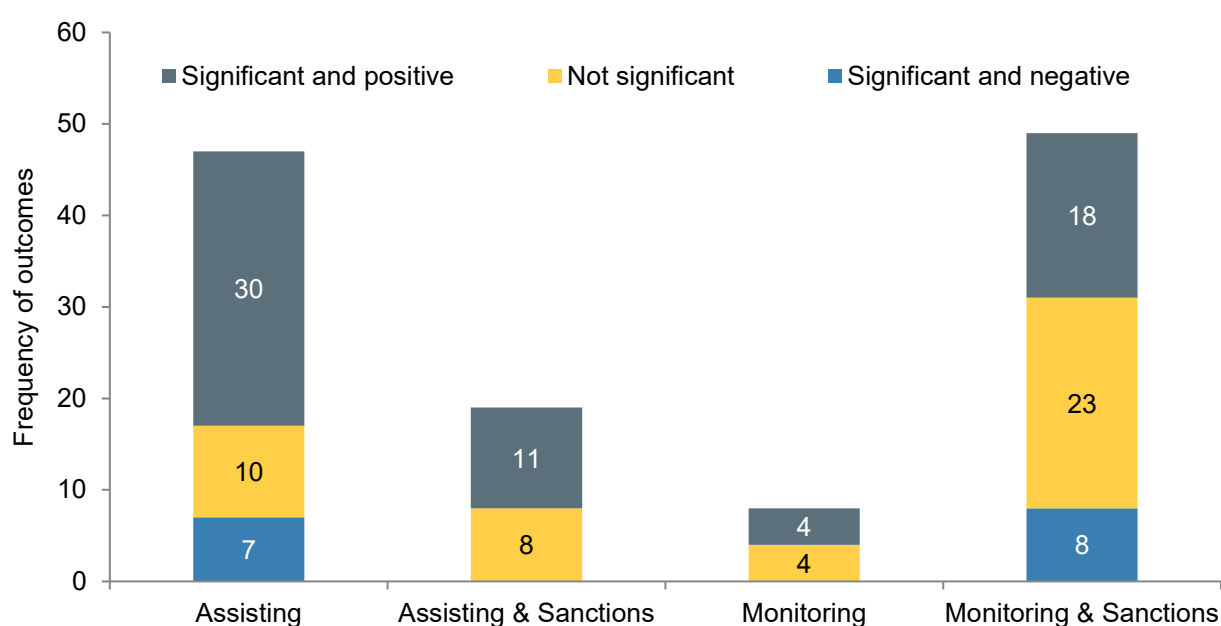
negative effects were reported in evaluations of monitoring or assisting with sanctions evaluations. However, this may be due to the relatively low number of studies in these two categories.

The introduction of sanctions may mitigate the negative impacts associated with assisting only interventions, as no negative and significant outcomes are reported when sanctions are introduced alongside assistance. However, this comparison is limited, as only 4 studies evaluate employment likelihood for the combined type of intervention compared to the 24 different studies of assisting-only interventions.

Monitoring-only interventions are less likely to have a significant positive effect compared to assisting interventions, although this finding is based on far fewer studies. When sanctions are combined with monitoring, the proportion of cases reporting a significant positive effect reduces further and a relatively large proportion (47%) report a negligible effect.

The higher likelihood of positive employment outcomes in assisting interventions can be attributed to several interrelated factors that enhance employability. Targeted support activities, such as CV development, interview training, job search assistance, and action planning help individuals address specific barriers by reducing informational gaps, equipping them with practical tools, and boosting their confidence to engage more effectively with the labour market. In contrast, interventions that rely primarily on enforcing compliance through the threat of benefit sanctions appear less effective in fostering meaningful engagement or proactive job search behaviour (Aeberhardt et al., 2022).

Figure 1: Employment likelihood



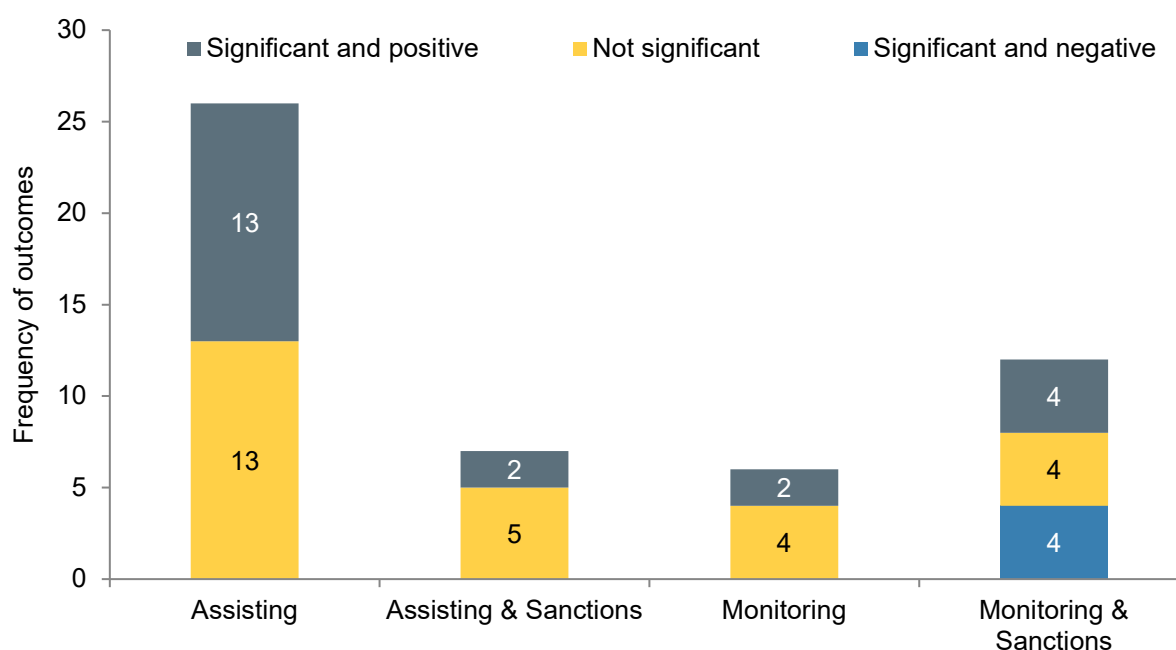
Source: Data generated by IES from studies included in the review

3.1.2 Wage

Assisting interventions are most likely to have a positive impact on wage, with a significant positive effect in 50% of cases. Other types of interventions including assisting with sanctions, monitoring and monitoring with sanctions, are more likely to either have a negligible effect or a significant negative impact on wage rather than a positive impact.

Interventions that involve sanctions appear less likely to lead to increases in wage. A third of cases (33%) ‘for monitoring with sanctions’ report a significant negative impact on wage. Similarly, the proportion of cases with significant positive impact on wage falls substantially when assisting interventions include sanction, although this is based on a far smaller number of cases compared to assisting-only interventions. This aligns with wider evidence that supporting programmes foster higher wages (either through better-paying jobs or longer tenure), whereas restrictive policies can induce job seekers to accept less stable employment with lower economic compensation (Arni et al., 2022).

Figure 2: Wage



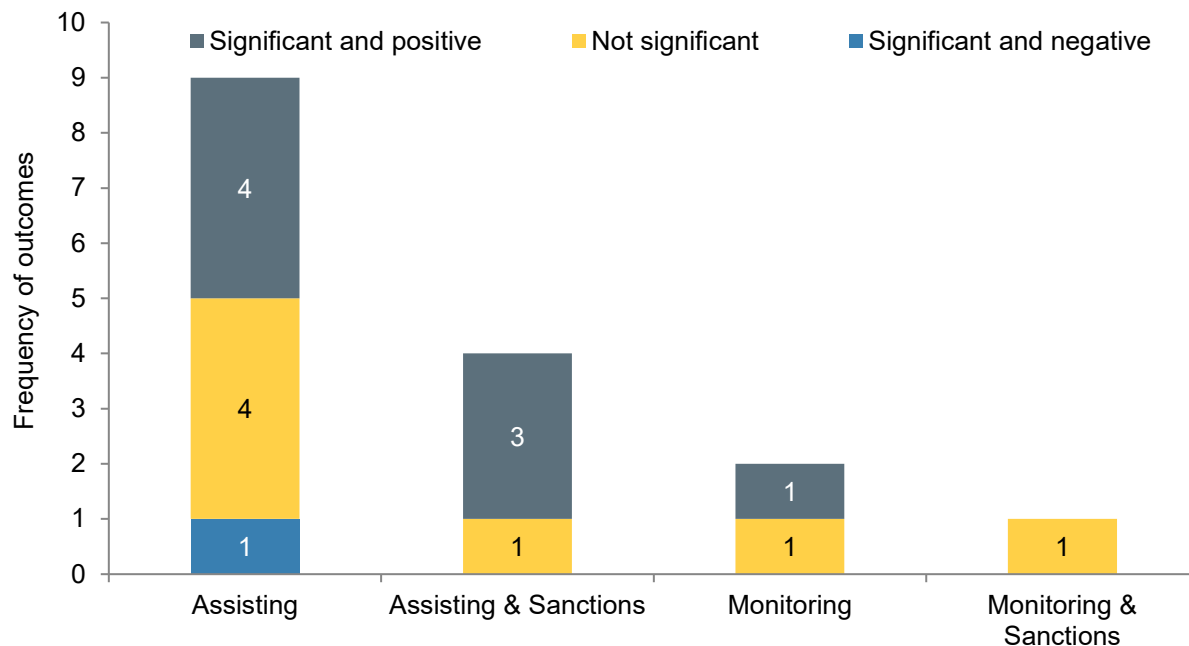
Source: Data generated by IES from studies included in the review

3.1.3 Employment duration

Overall, fewer studies measure employment duration. Employment duration is most frequently reported in studies evaluating interventions that include an assisting component and is rarely reported in studies focused on monitoring interventions. This reflects the focus of assisting interventions, whether they include sanctions, on helping individuals secure employment that aligns with their qualifications, interests and long-term goals.

Assisting only interventions are equally likely to result in either a positive or negligible effect on employment duration. When sanctions are added to assisting interventions, there appears to be a higher likelihood of a significant positive impact. However, the number of cases within ‘assisting with sanctions’ is too small to allow for a robust comparison with assisting-only interventions.

Figure 3: Employment duration



Source: Data generated by IES from studies included in the review

3.1.4 Unemployment duration

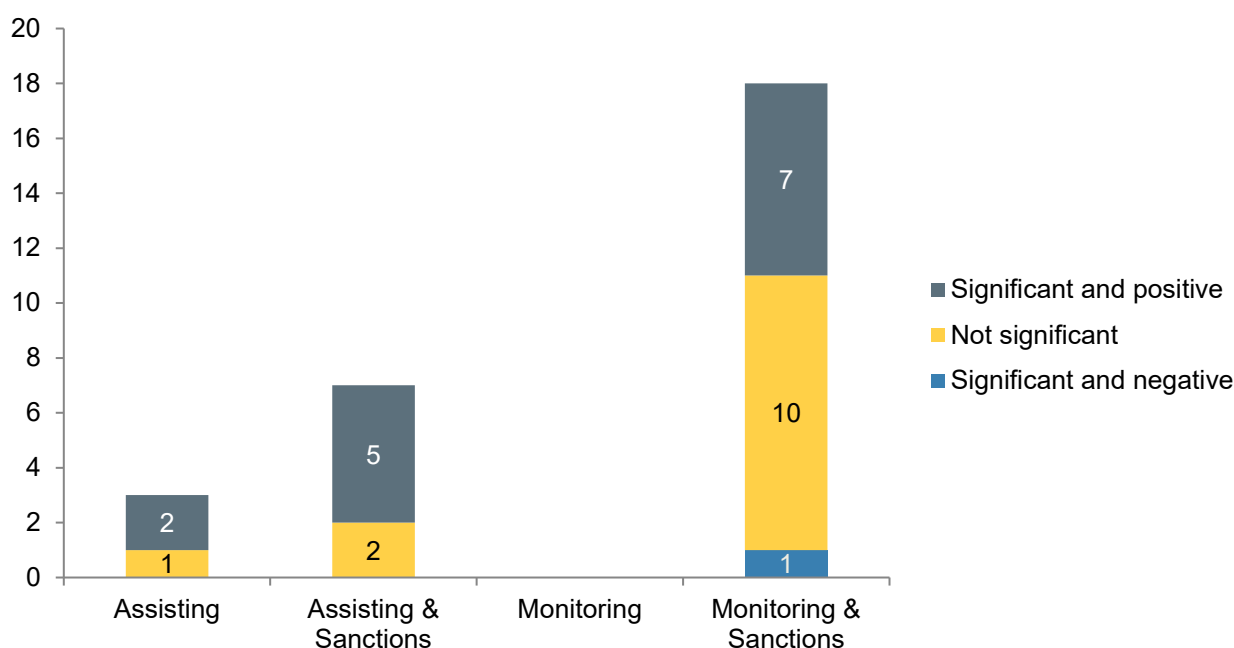
Unemployment duration is most frequently reported by studies evaluating interventions that include sanctions, particularly monitoring with sanctions. Programmes that incorporate monetary penalties tend to focus on reducing the time individuals are unemployed or receiving benefits, which aligns with the patterns observed in the literature (Hohenleitner & Hillmann, 2019; van der Berg et al., 2004; van den Berg & Vikström, 2014; Bookmann et al., 2014).

Among cases reported under monitoring and sanctions, interventions are more likely to have a negligible effect (53%) than a positive effect (39%). Interventions involving sanctions often focus on unemployment duration because the aim is not just to increase the chance of re-employment but reduce the duration of unemployment. However, monitoring with sanctions may be counterproductive in reducing unemployment duration, as longer periods out of work often reflect deeper structural issues, such as skills mismatch, that cannot be effectively addressed through monitoring and sanctions alone.

Although fewer cases of unemployment duration are reported under ‘assisting with sanctions’, it is observed that the proportion of cases showing significant positive impact

is higher than cases showing no impact. These findings suggest that combining supportive measures with a sanctioning element may be effective in shortening the duration of unemployment. However, it is important to interpret these results with caution. A reduction in unemployment duration is not necessarily associated with an increase on employment likelihood because people might be moving to inactivity. For example, a recent study demonstrated that the increased likelihood of long-term unemployed individuals exiting unemployment was primarily driven by a higher probability of them receiving disability insurance benefits (De Brouwer et al., 2023).

Figure 4: Unemployment duration



Source: Data generated by IES from studies included in the review

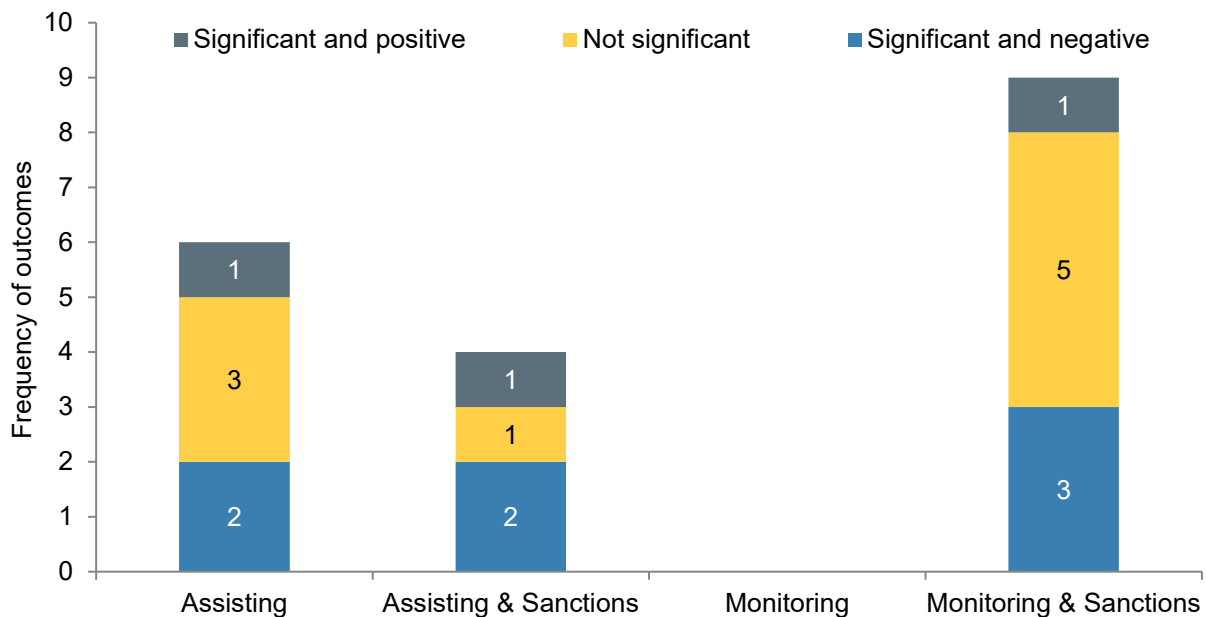
3.1.5 Unemployment or economic inactivity likelihood

Unemployment or economic inactivity likelihood is most frequently reported by studies evaluating monitoring with sanctions. Although unemployment or economic inactivity likelihood may seem like the reverse of employment likelihood, there are some fundamental differences in what these measures can tell us. Employment likelihood measures positive integration into the labour market, whereas unemployment or economic inactivity likelihood measures persistence of disadvantage or disengagement. Measuring both offers a fuller picture since an intervention may increase employment likelihood but that does not capture people cycling between short jobs and unemployment without real long-term improvement.

All types of interventions are more likely to have no impact or a negative impact as opposed to a positive impact and this is the only primary outcome where all interventions report having at least some cases of significant negative impact. These findings suggest that regardless of the type of intervention a proportion of individuals may find it difficult to

find sustainable employment. A larger number of studies are needed to better understand whether there are specific factors, such as health, skills or structural barriers, that make labour market engagement more difficult, and how these factors interact with different types of intervention.

Figure 5: Unemployment/Inactivity likelihood



Source: Data generated by IES from studies included in the review

3.2 Secondary Outcomes

This section extends the analysis to secondary outcomes, including subsidy receipt, employment characteristics, intermediary outcomes, socio-economic status, other exits from unemployment such as education or disability recipients, and wellbeing.

Overall, assisting interventions, especially when combined with sanctions, tend to produce the most consistently positive effects on employment likelihood, duration, and subsidy reduction. However, the addition of sanctions yields mixed results for other secondary outcomes. While it can strengthen outcomes tied to employment characteristics, it also increases the incidence of insignificant or negative effects in areas like wage, wellbeing, and socio-economic status, particularly when combined with monitoring. These patterns suggest that while sanctions can enhance certain outcomes, they can undermine progress in broader, non-employment dimensions. This underscores the importance of in-depth analysis to understand how support and enforcement mechanisms function, both independently and in combination, to encourage sustainable labour market engagement.

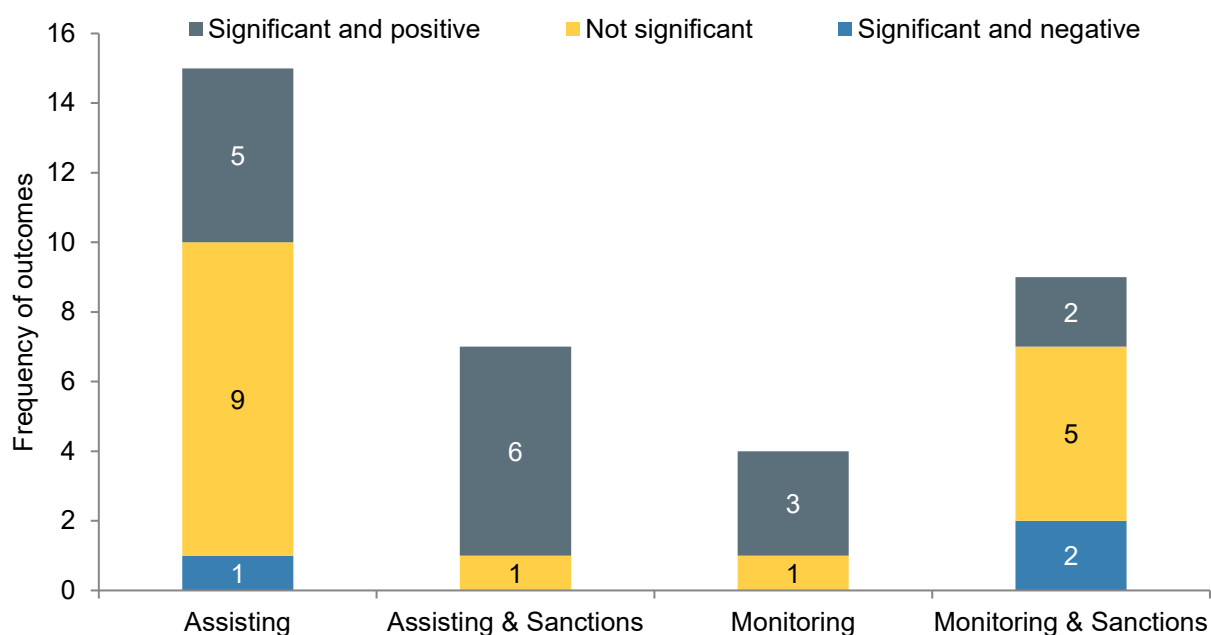
3.2.1 Receiving subsidies

This outcome measures whether or not individuals are receiving subsidies as benefits. This is one of the frequently measured outcomes especially among assisting only interventions, followed by monitoring with sanctions.

Assisting with sanctions interventions are most likely to have a positive effect on a reduction in subsidy dependence, although findings are based on a relatively small sample. Assisting only interventions are more likely to have no significant effect compared to a positive effect on receipt of subsidies. Monitoring with sanctions is more likely to have either a negative effect or no effect on receipt of subsidies. Overall, interventions involving an assisting component are more likely to have a positive impact on receipt of subsidies as opposed to interventions involving monitoring.

This suggests that the combination of supportive measures with sanctions may prompt individuals to comply with the programme requirements and eventually reduce their reliance on subsidies. However, the mixed results from assisting-only and monitoring with sanctions suggest that the implementation of these programmes is relevant.

Figure 6: Receiving subsidies



Source: Data generated by IES from studies included in the review

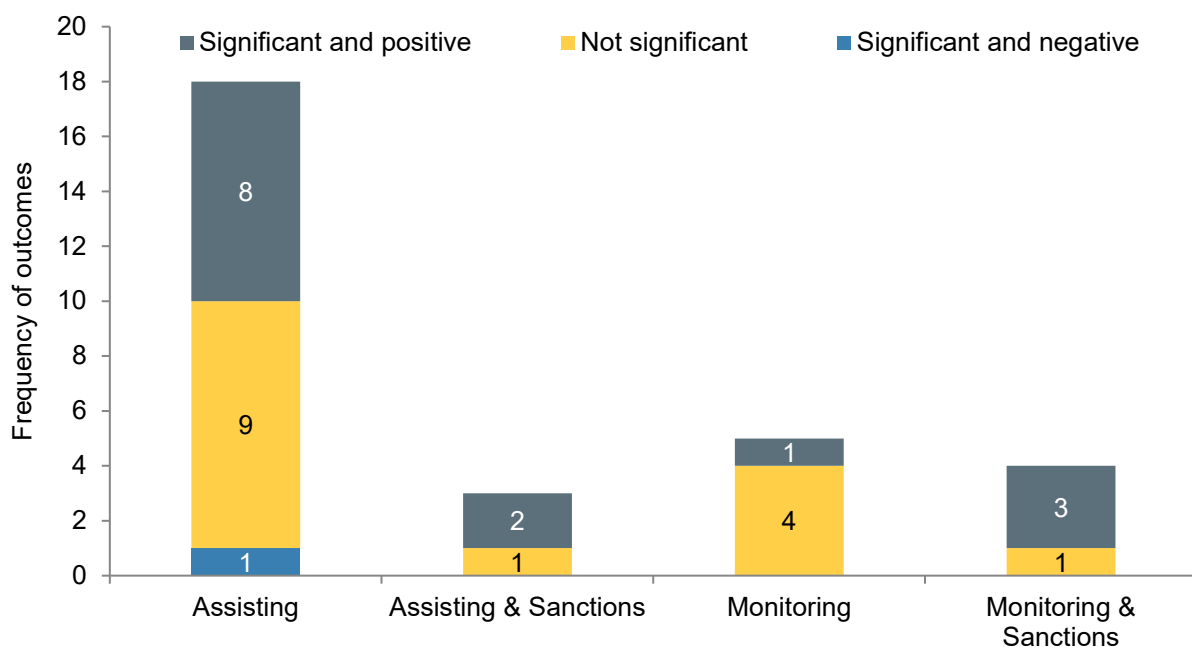
3.2.2 Employment characteristics

Employment characteristics can include working hours, type of contract, regular employment, job stability or occupational mobility. This outcome is most frequently reported by evaluations involving assisting-only interventions, suggesting that programmes focussing solely on support tend to prioritise job quality over rapid job

placement. Positive results include increased work hours, permanent contracts, higher-earning positions and sustained long-term employment.

The effectiveness of assisting-only interventions in relation to employment characteristics appears mixed, suggesting that their impact on job quality is not consistently strong despite targeted support. Evaluations of the remaining three categories of interventions report very few cases of measuring employment characteristics. Interventions that combined sanctions with either assisting or monitoring components yield more favourable results, despite their lower representation. These types of interventions require more comprehensive research to determine whether this could be a systematic effect, or if it is context dependent.

Figure 7: Employment characteristics



Source: Data generated by IES from studies included in the review

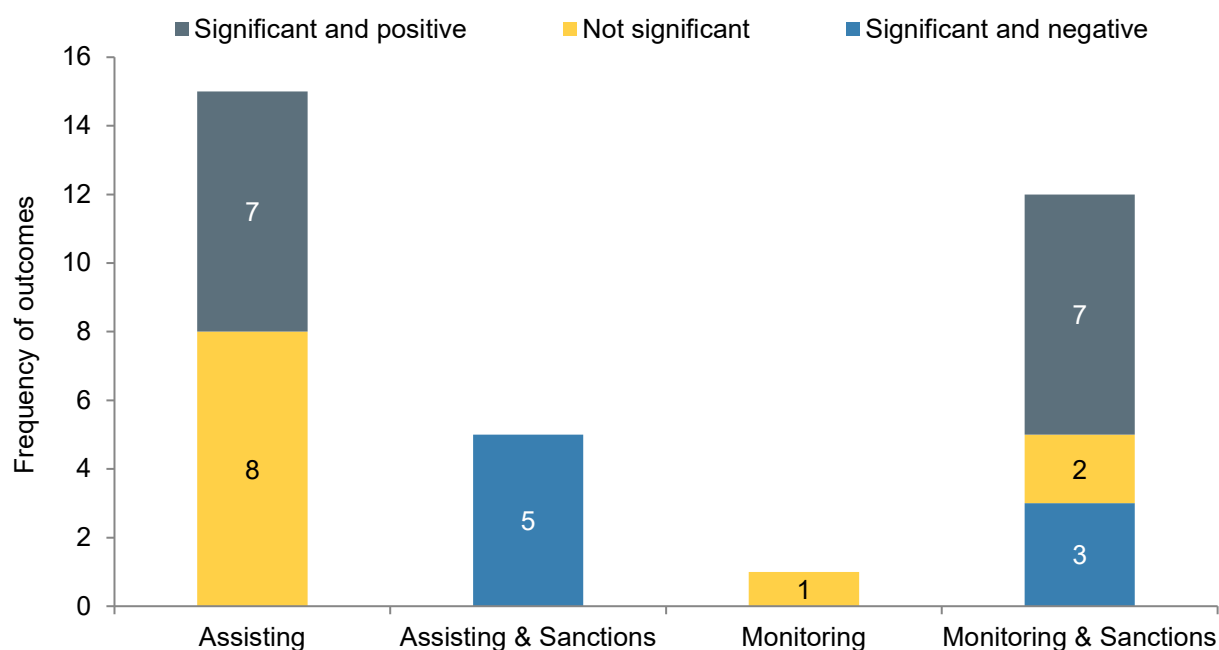
3.2.3 Intermediary outcomes

Intermediary outcomes include ALMP effort and compliance, sanction impositions, or pre-employment outcomes, such as vacancy referrals or interview likelihood.

Monitoring and sanctioning interventions are most closely associated with positive intermediary outcomes, although there are also several cases where they led to negative outcomes. Seven out of 15 assisting interventions had a positive effect, and the remainder had a negligible effect. Therefore, while both interventions may positively impact compliance, supportive measurements demonstrate no negative evidence, unlike punitive measurements. This suggests that while external pressure on benefit recipients might improve an individual's overall participation, participants may still not engage in all programme activities and could still incur sanctions (Lombardi, 2022).

Notably, assisting and sanctioning interventions yielded only negative and significant results. This can be attributed to the fact that all these cases are reported from the same study and intervention (Schemider & Trenkle, 2020). Therefore, the evidence indicates that this intervention may have failed to improve participants' short-term outcomes, such as invitations to interviews, vacancy referrals or private placement services. However, we can infer little about the causes of these results.

Figure 8: Intermediary outcomes



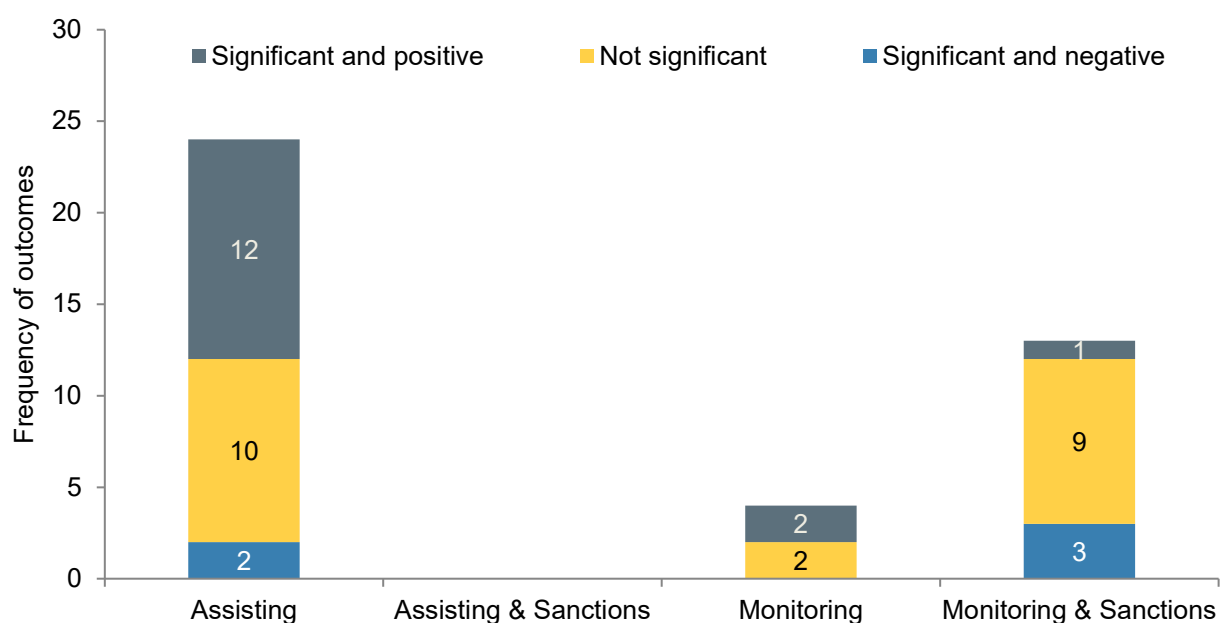
Source: Data generated by IES from studies included in the review

3.2.4 Wellbeing and Social wellbeing

Wellbeing and social wellbeing are the most frequently measured secondary outcomes and are most commonly reported by evaluations of assisting only interventions, followed by monitoring with sanctions.

Assisting interventions are most likely to have a positive impact on wellbeing.

Assisting only interventions are just as likely to have a positive impact, as they are to have a negative or negligible impact on wellbeing. The same pattern holds for monitoring only interventions, though this is based on far fewer cases. In contrast, monitoring with sanctions interventions have a higher likelihood of having either no impact or negative impact as opposed to positive impact on wellbeing. This aligns with previous findings that supportive ALMPs may play an important role in promoting sustainable employability, positive wellbeing, and quality of life for job seekers (Whelan N. , 2018).

Figure 9: Wellbeing and social wellbeing

Source: Data generated by IES from studies included in the review

3.3 Additional analysis

This section presents an analysis of the overall effectiveness of the four primary types of interventions across different subgroups, to determine whether the results of each intervention strategy vary, depending on whom it targets and under what conditions. Specifically, we examine how these interventions perform across different target groups, age groups, long-term unemployment status and timing of the outcome measurement.

3.3.1 Population type

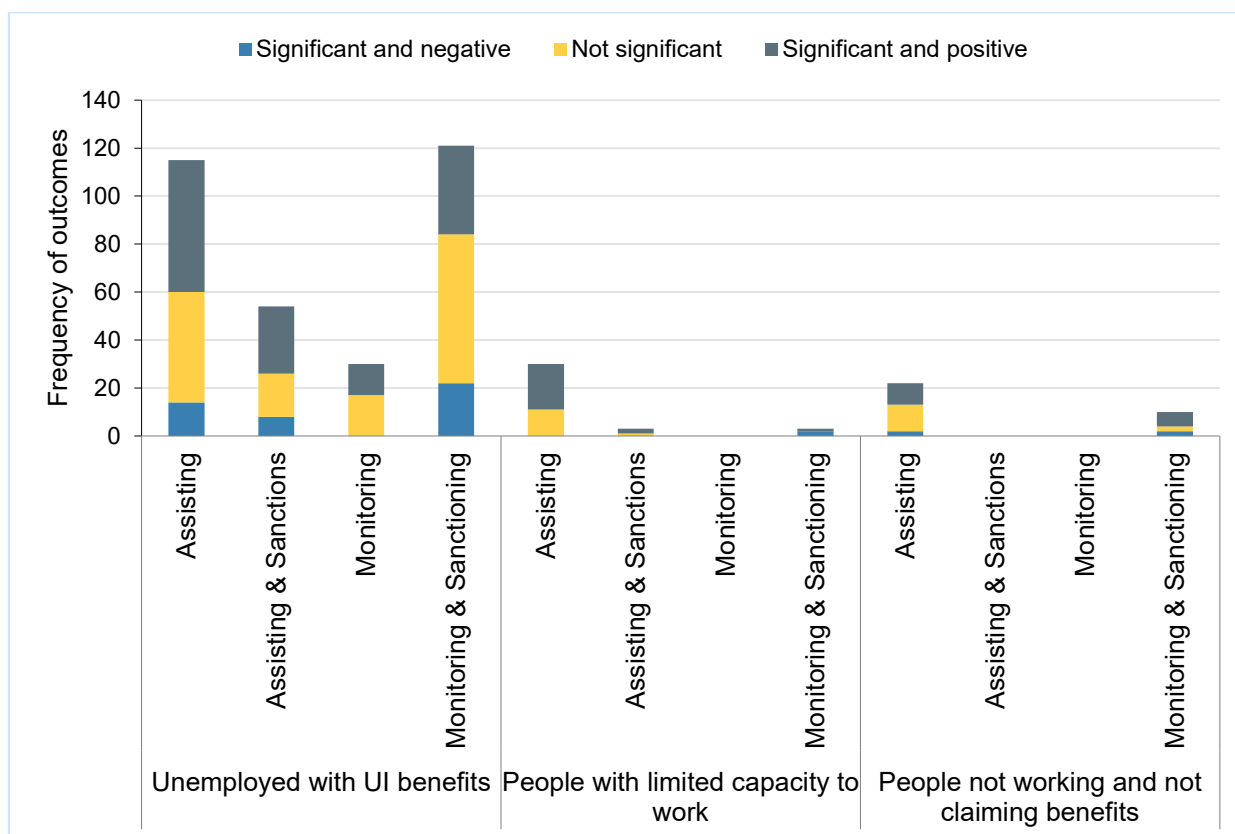
Figure 10 presents the differential impacts of the four types of interventions on three main distinct population groups: unemployed individuals, people with limited capacity to work, and those not working and without benefits. There is notable variation in how each group responds to different intervention strategies.

Unemployed individuals with Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits are most likely to experience positive outcomes when in receipt of assisting interventions and most likely to have negative or no significant changes in outcomes when exposed to monitoring with sanctions.

Similarly, though with fewer results, individuals with limited capacity to work, experience a higher proportion of positive outcomes from assisting measures, compared to monitoring and sanctioning interventions. This suggests that supportive measures might be more effective, as compared to other types of interventions, at facilitating positive behavioural

or economic changes for more disadvantaged groups; likely due to the structural or health-related barriers they face in accessing employment (Cmar & McDonnall, 2018).

Figure 10: Effect of outcomes over population



Source: Data generated by IES from studies included in the review

3.3.2 Age group differences

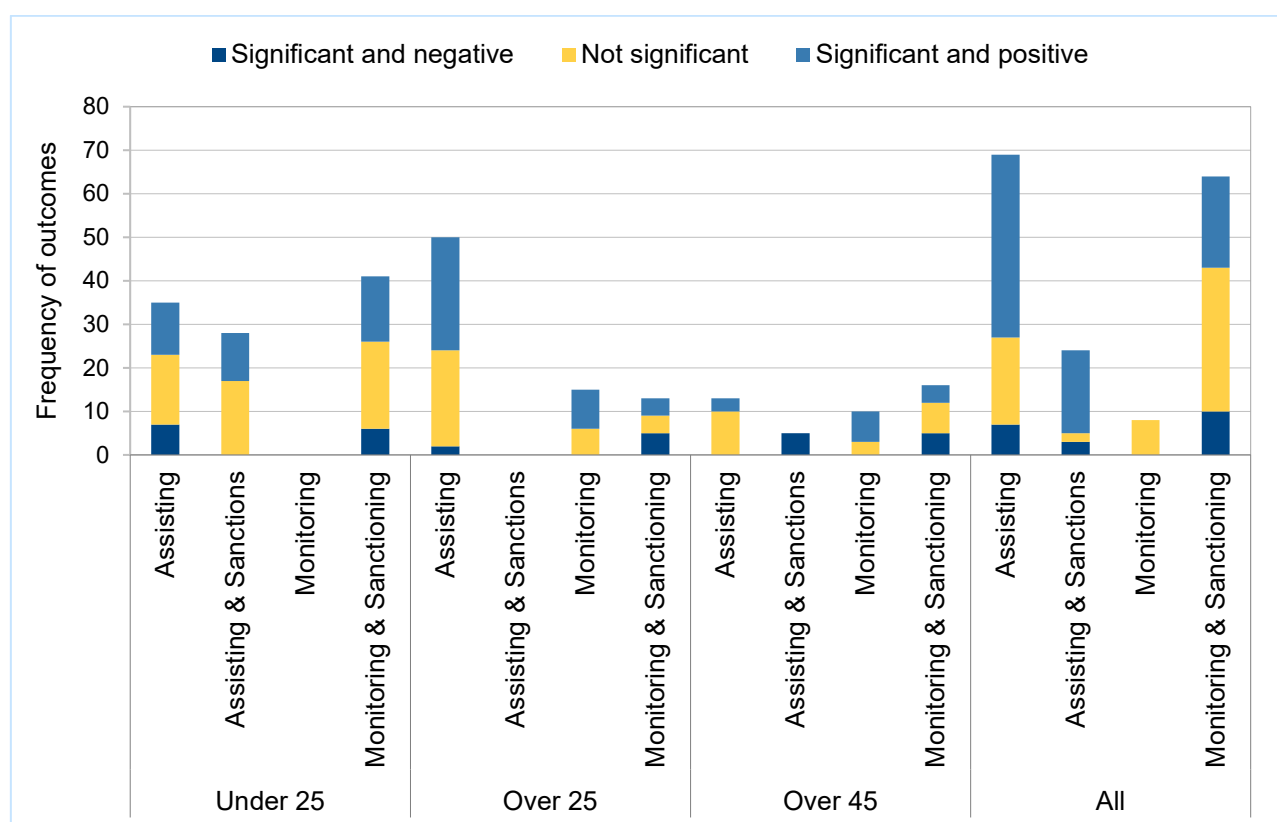
Figure 11 presents the effectiveness of four primary intervention types across different age groups. **On average, interventions including an assisting component are most likely to yield a positive outcome, while monitoring with sanctions is most likely to yield a null or negative outcome.** This general pattern suggests that supportive elements embedded within interventions are broadly more effective across all age groups. However, this varies across age groups.

Assisting-only interventions are most effective among individuals aged 25 to 45, followed by under 25. In contrast with the overall trend, monitoring with sanctions appears to be marginally more effective than assisting-only interventions among individuals under 25. For this group, 34% of the cases resulted in positive and significant outcomes for assisting-only interventions (while 20% were negative and significant), while for monitoring and sanctioning interventions there were 37% of positive and significant cases and 15% of negative and significant cases. This suggests that younger individuals may respond marginally more favourably to structured accountability mechanisms as

compared to other age groups. However, these differences are based on a relatively small number of cases and should therefore be interpreted with caution.

There are fewer cases reported for 45 years and above compared to other age groups. Within the small sample, interventions including a monitoring component are likely to be more effective than interventions including an assisting component. In fact, assisting and sanctioning interventions in this group are associated exclusively with negative outcomes. The most successful outcomes for this demographic are observed under monitoring-only interventions, suggesting that they may benefit more from minimal but consistent engagement rather than complex or coercive strategies.

Figure 11: Age group outcomes



Source: Data generated by IES from studies included in the review

3.3.3 Long-term unemployment

Figure 12 focuses on the effectiveness of various interventions targeting long-term unemployed people. This subgroup is characterised by prolonged job-seeking periods and, in many cases, the cessation of unemployment benefits. Their circumstances present unique challenges, making the choice of intervention especially critical.

Assisting combined with sanctioning interventions yield the highest rate of positive and significant outcomes for people who are long-term unemployed. This suggests that a dual approach – offering support while also incorporating elements of accountability

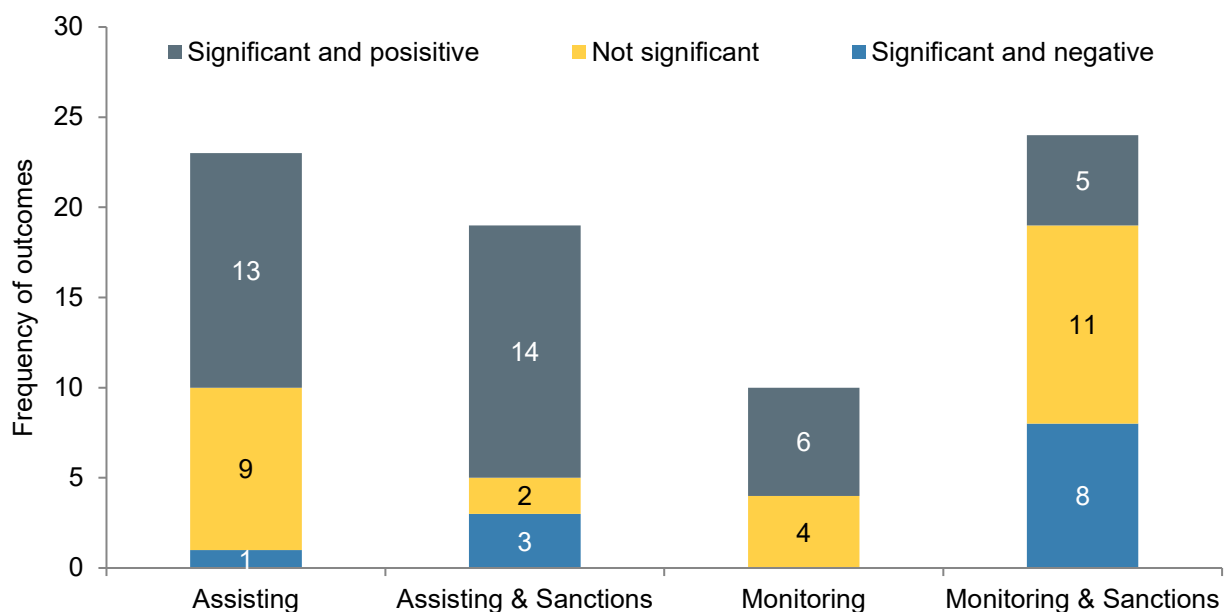
– may provide both the motivation and the means necessary for reengagement with the labour market.

Assisting only interventions also demonstrate a strong rate of positive outcomes and a comparatively lower incidence of negative effects. This supports the idea that long-term unemployed individuals benefit meaningfully from targeted support, such as skills development, counselling, or access to resources, especially when punitive measures are either minimal or applied constructively.

Monitoring only interventions also show a degree of positive impact, although to a lesser extent. This suggests that some form of oversight or engagement may help maintain activity or orientation toward employment, even in the absence of direct support.

In contrast, monitoring and sanctioning interventions emerge as the least effective strategy for this group of population. It not only accounts for the lowest proportion of positive outcomes but also registers the highest rate of significantly negative effects. This result underscores the potential counterproductivity of punitive-only frameworks when applied to individuals already facing entrenched barriers to employment.

Figure 12: Long-term unemployed individuals



Source: Data generated by IES from the studies included in the review

3.3.4 Individuals with physical or mental disabilities

Three studies in our sample focus on individuals with mental or physical disabilities who are receiving benefits but are considered highly likely to transition onto Disability

Insurance (DI).¹ The interventions for each of the three primary studies were assisting interventions, though each of these were adapted to meet the specific needs of the target population. In the case of Holmas et al. (2021) and Hagen (2019), the target population included individuals with mental illness whose programmes were mostly focused on individualised job assisting and coaching to support their reintegration into the labour market. In Cmar and McDonnall (2018), the target population were individuals with blindness as a physical disability, in which the programme focused on job search training (including intensive training on job search strategies, interview skills, résumé writing and self-efficacy building) after an existing summer work experience program.

In the case of the individuals with visual impairments (Cmar & McDonnall, 2018), the intervention group showed significant improvements in job search knowledge and behaviour, although there was no significant effect on early job acquisition. For those individuals with moderate to severe mental illness (Holmås et al., 2021), the employment support received positive and significant impact on regular and unsubsidised employment, duration and wage. However, there was no significant effect on healthcare use or benefit receipt. Finally, for those recipients of Disability Insurance (DI) the individualized coaching resulted in an increase of wage and reduction of DI benefits even in the long run. There were no significant negative impacts reported across the three studies. **Tailored job assistance and coaching can substantially enhance the employment prospects of people with disabilities.**

Contrary to the studies stated above, De Brouwer et al. (2023) evaluated monitoring and sanction interventions for individuals who are long-term unemployed and receiving unemployment benefits, were between 44 and 54 years old and with high probability of transition to claim DI benefits. Although there is a significant reduction in both the likelihood and duration of unemployment, this improvement does not translate into increased employment. Instead, the results show a significant increase of disability insurance claimers. **Therefore, it suggests that for vulnerable populations, punitive measures could be discouraging for their reincorporation into the labour market.**

3.3.5 Outcome time

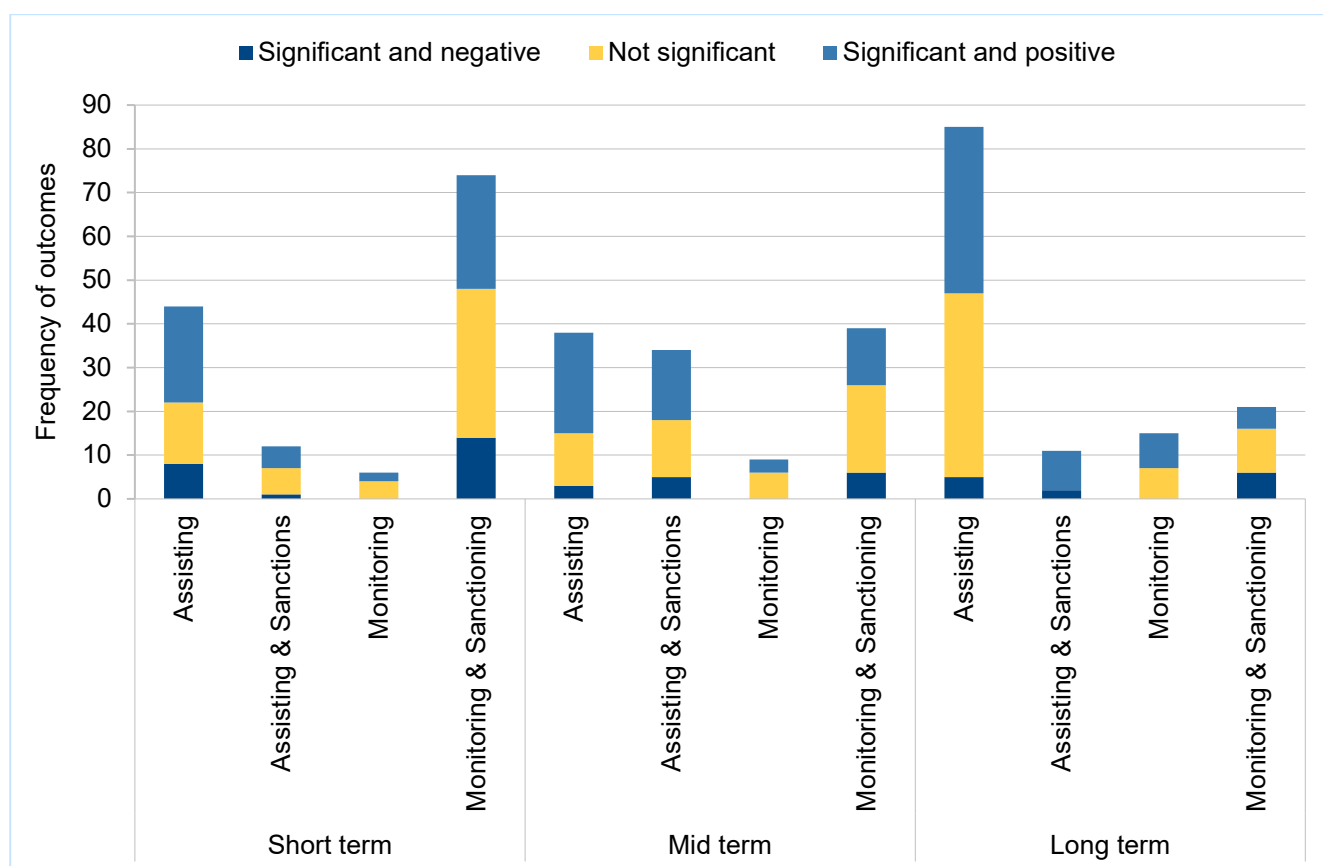
Figure 13 illustrates the temporal dimension of intervention outcomes by comparing the effects of the four primary types of interventions across three timeframes: short-term (less than six months after programme implementation), mid-term (between six and twelve months), and long-term (beyond one year). Monitoring with sanctions is most likely to focus on short-term outcomes, whereas, assisting only interventions are more likely to focus on long-term outcomes.

¹ (Holmås et al., 2021; Hagen, 2019; Cmar & McDonnall, 2018), and an additional paper (De Brouwer et al., 2023)

The effectiveness of assisting interventions increases over time. The rate of positive outcomes associated with these interventions increases steadily over time. This trend suggests that interventions are instrumental in fostering sustainable, long-term improvements in the circumstances of the individuals they target.

In contrast, the positive effects of monitoring and sanctioning interventions tend to be more prominent in the short-term and diminish over time. This temporal decline implies that such interventions may act as immediate deterrents or motivators but lack the structural support necessary to maintain long-term behavioural or economic change.

Figure 13: Short-term, Mid-term and Long-term outcomes



Source: Data generated by IES from studies included in the review

4 Delivering effective interventions

Key Findings

- Adviser empathy emerges as a critical factor in fostering participant engagement and achieving successful outcomes. Effective adviser support blends encouragement and mentoring with practical job search assistance. Personalised contact, whether delivered in-person or remotely, is generally more effective than group-based approaches for job search support, although group sessions remain valuable for training purposes.
- Reducing caseloads and increasing adviser meeting frequency improves performance and accelerates job entry, particularly for the newly unemployed. More frequent contact boosts vacancy sharing and supports faster transitions into work, though it may also lead to higher system withdrawals.
- Effective job search activities involve an action plan with clear activities, practical assistance in identifying and accessing vacancies, support with job applications (such as CVs and application forms), an emphasis on developing soft skills, and opportunities for work experience.
- Programmes are most effective when incentives and sanctions work in tandem. Financial stipends tied to attendance help those facing financial insecurity stay engaged and focus on job search.
- Understanding local needs, such as transport barriers or responsiveness to local market conditions, is crucial. Client-led approaches allow advisers to tailor services to both individual needs and local labour market conditions.

4.1 Introduction

Following the systematic review, seven studies were selected which showed **significant positive outcomes from interventions**, and these have been analysed in greater depth to understand and distil the elements of success. This has been approached as a ‘**what works**’ exercise, mindful that there are a wide range of contextual factors (including cohorts, geography, social security requirements, labour markets and delivery models) which may impact attempts at replication.

The classification used in the systemic review provides a useful frame to categorise the activity described in the seven studies analysed here. Three studies evaluate Active Labour Market Programmes offering ‘assisting’ support such as job search assistance, training or vocational profiling: one combines assisting and sanctioning; one focuses on monitoring and sanctioning; and one study compares assisting approaches with monitoring and sanctions interventions.

There are a range of activities reviewed within the studies:

- Increasing the frequency of meetings between jobseekers and employment advisers within the first three months of unemployment.
- Increasing the number of employment advisers, lowering caseloads and increasing the activity levels of jobseekers.
- Providing flexible and holistic support on a voluntary basis, through the development of a relationship with an employment adviser and access to group activities.
- Extending access to work focused support to groups, previously not included in intensive schemes.
- Providing access to multiple work experience placements as soon as possible, with a focus on support to deal with barriers to unsupported work (for example mobility, housing and health) addressed while on placement rather than beforehand.
- Introducing work search requirements to lone parents at an earlier point in their youngest child's life.
- The impact on outcomes (job entry) as a result of the use of 'carrots' (support) and 'sticks' (monitoring and sanctioning).

4.2 The importance of context

The studies considered cover interventions in six European countries: Sweden, Ireland, Germany, France, the UK and Austria.

The participants in the programmes covered by the studies include new claimants or those unemployed for a short period of time, very long-term unemployed people with low educational attainment, those from particularly marginalised groups such as Travellers and homeless people, older people (50+), young people (16-25), and lone parents.

The elements that contributed to positive outcomes were consistently identified, despite the differences in the focus of the studies.

4.3 What works? Key features of effective programmes

This review identifies and distils the core 'what works' elements from programmes that demonstrate significant positive outcomes. Where possible, these features are abstracted from their original contexts to build a repository of broadly effective practices. This analysis builds on the systematic review, identifying and exploring in more depth the range of interventions and factors that are contributing to delivery success.

4.3.1 The role of the adviser

Employment advisers are the 'face' of labour market interventions, shaping the service those accessing them receive, and providing a human link between activities, provision and any institutional requirements in place. Establishing trust and developing a rapport are key to ensuring advisers are equipped to overcome barriers to participation by

jobseekers in both voluntary and mandatory settings (Senghaas et al., 2019). The literature reviewed for this study found **client-led approaches allowed the adviser to adapt services to meet the needs of the individual and the local labour market, particularly where the individual had high levels of need** (Whelan et al., 2020).

Over the last two decades, there has been considerable emphasis on the importance of the adviser in ‘what works’ analysis of employment support, as the adviser, or coach, has sat at the centre of much Active Labour Market Programme design. **One-to-one contact, both in person and remotely delivered through technology, was shown to be more effective than groups for delivering job-search support, although there was value in group work in supporting the delivery of training** (Cheung et al., 2025). As elements of delivery become digitised, there is a shift away from early in-person interaction (see, for example, Workforce Australia (2023) year one delivery reform on White papers and Job Opportunities). It will be useful to review the impact of changing the point of contact with a caseload carrying adviser as these approaches become more embedded.

The fundamental skills and characteristics of a ‘good adviser’ seen in the studies analysed for this review, are consistent with evidence seen in other studies and meta-analyses. **Effective adviser support combines encouragement and mentoring with practical job-search help** (Whelan et al., 2020). The role is varied and demanding. The personal qualities of advisers (particularly warmth and empathy) were identified as important by jobseekers in the SIDAC programme, many of whom had remained in contact for ongoing advice and support (Whelan et al., 2020). **The skillset required of an effective adviser is a combination of personal empathy and attitude, an understanding of employability and employment barriers, an understanding of the jobs market, as well as case management and organisational skills** (Krishnan et al., 2024).

In voluntary programmes, which are reliant on engagement, the warmth and empathy of advisers were identified as important factors for supporting people with high levels of disadvantage and need (Whelan et al., 2020). In mandatory programmes, successful advisers are able to balance support with clear messaging around potential restrictions to benefits as a result of non-engagement: ‘caseworkers... can strongly increase the exit rate from unemployment by using supporting or restricting policies more intensively’ (Arni et al., 2022).

4.3.2 Frequency (and timing) of contact

The effectiveness of the adviser relationship, and indeed the intervention, is also impacted by the intensity of the contact (seen in increased regularity of appointments rather than length) and the timing of additional, or frequent appointments. In the UK, and as noted in 4.3.1, in Australia, people in the early stages of unemployment receive less intensive support. This is either delivered digitally, or through short, fortnightly meetings.

In Sweden, **doubling the frequency of meeting in the first three months of unemployment was found to not only streamline the process, but also increase the number of vacancies passed from adviser to jobseeker, and from there positively**

impact on the transition into work. This was indicative of the important role caseworkers play in getting jobseekers back in work and emphasized that how the extra assistance is designed is critical. It is important to note that these positive impacts held across instances where increased one-to-one support was provided, irrespective of whether this was in-person support or delivered remotely: ‘Since technological advancements make distance communication a convenient complement to traditional face-to-face assistance, the fact that the distance meetings perform well is a highly policy-relevant finding.’ However, where these additional interventions were delivered to groups, there was no similar uplift in the numbers of vacancies passed to jobseekers, and no exit into employment benefit (Cheung et al., 2025).

Increasing the frequency of meetings also improved performance in Austria. A randomised control trial, reduced caseload sizes for the treatment group within the Public Employment Service. **Lower caseloads led to more intensive meeting schedules and was found to significantly shorten the duration of unemployment** for the treated group over the control group, throughout the observation period. This was a result of faster and more frequent exits to employment, as well as more withdrawals from the labour market. While this uplift in performance was evident from the first month of increased intensity, it continued to be felt over time: ‘it is likely that a part of the effect materializes only after some time as more intensive counselling leads to more training. More training may reduce exits from unemployment in short-term due to a lock-in but might increase exit-rates later’ (Böheim et al., 2022).

The study’s authors were clear that more intensive counselling has a significant positive effect on exits from unemployment. This is because an increase in activity (‘counselling’) leads to both an increase in speed with which people return to work, as well as how often people are helped. Results of this study clearly show that **‘the number of caseworkers for the unemployed is an important parameter of labour market policy’**. This is a direct result of more advisers leading to more meetings, and those meetings resulting in more ‘programme assignments’, more job offers, but also, in some cases, a moderate increase in sanctions as jobseekers were unable to comply with the new, more intense, regime. An increase in activity leading to jobseekers exiting a programme and withdrawing from the labour market has also been seen in other programmes. In this study, the results suggest that this was more likely to occur with jobseekers who had lower labour market attachment. Similarly in the UK, an analysis of the impact of decreasing the age of the youngest child at which single parents are required to seek employment, showed that lone parents with lower labour market attachment were more likely to move onto health-related benefits, than those with stronger labour market attachment (Avram et al., 2018).

In both the Swedish and the Austrian studies, increasing the frequency of contact was seen to benefit all jobseekers, showing a reduction in unemployment for both new and existing clients, however the positive impact was most strongly felt by those newly unemployed. This suggests **there is a greater impact when the first experience of a programme or intervention is advisers with lower caseloads and more intensive activity rather than switching to this approach part way through.** In France, a successful work first programme, utilising work experience placements strengthened

support particularly towards the start of the scheme, where jobseekers benefitted from an additional individual interview each month, as well as five workshops, two days of immersion in a workplace, and an additional stipend of €220, within the first three months of joining the programme (Gaini et al., 2020).

4.3.3 Job search activities

As can be seen in Böheim et al. (2022), an increase in ‘programme assignments’ (driven by more intensive programmes) has a positive impact on transitions into employment. This is an area in which historically there has been a gap in the evidence as to how the different activities that make up job search support impact on transitions into employment (see, for example, Hasluck & Green (2007)). In many of the studies reviewed for this paper, this was also found to be the case. While the impact of increasing activity was clear as discussed above, there is less evidence showing how a specific intervention changes adviser and job seeker behaviour, and how these changes translate into positive employment effects (Cheung et al., 2025). The researchers analysing the French ‘Garantie jeunes’ employment assistance programme for 16-25 year olds not in employment, education or training found it difficult to attribute the clear positive impact of the scheme to one specific component - ‘is it due to the increased intensity, to the collective support that creates a dynamic of mutual aid among the young people being supported, to the stipend that supports their efforts over time, or to its overall philosophy that puts the professional situation at the forefront, ahead of all other interventions?’ (Gaini et al., 2020).

Certainly, some studies demonstrate evidence of the **value of practical help with identifying and accessing vacancies and applying for jobs through support in creating CVs and completing application forms**. In the German Perspective 50plus, an Active Labour Market Programme aimed at supporting jobseekers over 50 back into work, Boockmann & Brändle (2019) identify that a skills assessment is often the first step for personal advisers in their initial meetings with jobseekers, accounting for 14.2% of all individual activation measures, with general job search assistance and coaching accounting for almost 40%, training measures for 12.5%, and interventions to improve health and mobility for 13.6%. In the French Garantie Jeunes model too, there are practical group sessions focusing on job search skills and techniques and building on the work experience offered by the ‘immersions’. Interestingly, within this programme, these skills are delivered in groups in order to build peer support and ‘dynamic cooperation’ amongst the young people (Gaini et al., 2020).

Work experience placements, and the early access to them, were identified as a critical design feature of Garantie Jeunes. The young people on the programme are encouraged to engage in multiple work experience placements (called ‘immersions’) to build experience and exposure to the workplace. The ‘work (experience) first’ programme design means that other barriers to gaining paid employment (including mobility, housing and health) are dealt with simultaneously or later in the programme.

In Ireland, the SICAP programme was effective at supporting groups with high levels of need into work. Findings show that the programme’s positive outcomes were driven in the

main by employment interventions by an adviser in a 1-1 setting. In these a range of activities were covered, including coaching and encouragement, job search assistance such as CV preparation, filling in job applications and cold calling employers. Advisers also offered support to address other barriers, such as literacy and mental health.

Significant emphasis was placed on soft skills, particularly for those participants who had high levels of need and were some distance from the labour market.

Interestingly, the probability of progressing into employment or self-employment through SICAP is correlated with the number of adviser meetings - a single intervention increases probability by 6%, whereas three or more interventions increases probability by 22%, and these effects persist for six months after finishing SICAP supports (Whelan et al., 2020). The emphasis on soft skills was welcomed by participants who described how their self-confidence and desire to engage with the programme was enhanced by the support they received.

4.3.4 Role of conditionality

The studies included in this review cover both mandatory and voluntary programmes. However, in both, there is an emphasis placed on the value of engaging participants. In the SICAP programme in Ireland, participants engaged voluntarily. Those who took part in the programme were approximately 18 percentage points more likely to progress into employment, relative to the control groups after 3 to 6 months (Whelan et al., 2020).

In the UK, increasing the requirements attached to benefits for lone parents (by requiring them to return to work when their children are younger) did lead to some parents finding work. However, the data also showed that **conditionality first approaches may have increased benefit off-flows or changes in claims (to health benefits) without resulting in an increase in employment, unless support for job search is also provided** (Avram et al., 2018). This echoed the analysis of Arni et al. (2022), which reviewed both ‘carrot’ and ‘stick’ approaches and surmised that **programmes work most effectively when the ‘carrot’ and ‘stick’ drivers are complementary.**

4.3.5 Understanding local needs and the needs of specific client groups

While the features identified are common across a number of programmes, benefit structures, cohorts, and geographies, the evidence also highlights the value of understanding the characteristics of those accessing support and designing programmes that are responsive to their needs.

This was the case for both SIPAC and Garantie Jeunes, where the nature of the support was specifically designed to meet the needs of the client groups accessing them. It has already been noted how the nature of the delivery and adviser/participant relationships in Ireland engaged people from very marginalised groups including Travellers, built their self-confidence and motivated people to remain in touch with their advisers beyond the lifetime of the programme. In France, this meant providing a monetary stipend to young people taking part, to enable those in precarious financial situations to take some time

and invest in their own professional development and training. **The impact of the stipend was to give the young people accessing them more time to find good quality jobs.** This impact was greater for those young people who had been unemployed for some time, a key demographic targeted by the programme.

Beyond the design of the programme itself, there are also lessons from the benefits of the structural context of some of the examples. In Germany, the **decentralised delivery model** for Perspective 50plus was supported from the centre by a platform **that facilitated the sharing of practice and experience.** There are no doubt lessons to be learned from this for the UK as we move to a more devolved model of delivering support to economically inactive groups.

5 Conclusion and policy implications

There is clear divergence between 'supportive' and 'punitive' interventions, both in their underlying objectives and the outcomes they seek to measure. Assisting programmes aim to enhance employment quality and wellbeing, by emphasising job search skills and personalised vocational profiling. As a result, these interventions tend to measure success through long-term, positive integration into the labour market. These interventions often track outcomes related to wage levels, employment duration, employment characteristics and wellbeing, indicating a comprehensive understanding of sustainable employment.

Assisting interventions are consistently most likely to yield positive outcomes across several measures. This includes employment likelihood, employment duration and wage, as well as secondary outcomes such as the reduction on subsidies, employment characteristics and wellbeing. Moreover, their impact tends to be positive across the general population but is particularly pronounced for individuals with limited capacity to work, or those who are neither working nor claiming benefits. Notably, these supportive interventions are also effective in the long term, delivering positive and significant outcomes that persist for more than one year after the intervention ends. Evidence suggests that supportive, assisting interventions, such as those focused on personalised guidance and skills development, can be especially effective for people who are long-term unemployed (Whelan et al., 2020). Although a relatively small sample of studies in our review focus on individuals with disability, we find that personalised assisting interventions are likely to lead to positive labour market outcomes.

In contrast to supportive measures, sanctioning interventions tend to prioritise the reduction of unemployment duration, focusing heavily on compliance and rapid employment attachment (Hohenleitner & Hillmann, 2019). We find that evaluations of sanctioning interventions, particularly monitoring with sanctions, focus on short-term outcomes such as unemployment duration, employment status and intermediate outcomes measuring compliance.

The findings suggest that punitive interventions are least likely to be effective in improving employment likelihood or wage levels.

The effectiveness of punitive 'work first' approaches is often limited to short-term gains and are less likely to deliver sustainable outcomes. Sanctions are associated with a heightened risk of having no significant impact – or even negative effects – on outcomes such as wage, wellbeing, and job quality. These adverse effects can ultimately undermine individuals' long-term integration into the labour market.

Wider evidence shows that employment advisers play a pivotal role in fostering trust and sustained engagement, particularly when support is empathetic, personalised, and practical. Assisting approaches that combine mentoring with job search guidance consistently improve outcomes, especially for the newly unemployed, when contact is

frequent and purposeful. Effective job search support includes clear action plans, help accessing vacancies, application assistance, soft skills development, and work experience opportunities. Crucially, decentralising support to reflect local contexts and individual needs enhances relevance and impact. These findings reinforce the importance of designing employment support systems that prioritise trust-based relationships, tailored assistance, and long-term integration into the labour market.

The findings highlight the importance of **prioritising personalised employment support**. ‘Work-first’ interventions are more effective when they prioritise personalised, supportive measures over punitive approaches. Personalised support is particularly effective for people with disabilities and health conditions. The government should ensure that Pathways to Work offers are co-designed with disabled people and include personalised, non-punitive support. As previously recommended, government should introduce an Employment Support Guarantee for priority groups with a commitment of access to specialist, regular and consistent adviser support, alongside additional services based on an individuals’ need.

The evidence also points to the need to **reform the approach to conditionality and sanctions to support sustainable employment**. Sanctions alone tend to be ineffective and can be counterproductive, particularly for older adults, disabled people, and those with complex needs. The Department for Work and Pensions should end the 35-hour job search rule, which may be contributing to increased transitions on to health-related benefits. There also should be stronger checks and balances in how decisions regarding sanctions are made, including a statutory definition of ‘good cause’, and the government should legislate to reduce the severity of sanctions, ensuring that they are proportionate and fair.

The overarching purpose of employment services should be to enable and empower people, not to monitor or penalise them. A system that prioritises support, rather than punitive measures, would foster more meaningful engagement, better meet the needs of diverse groups and lead to more sustainable employment outcomes.

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Annex 1: Inclusion criteria

Population

The population of interest consists of individuals who engage with ‘work-first’ Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs), either voluntarily or as a condition for claiming social welfare benefits. Therefore, these individuals fall into one of the following categories:

- **Recipients of unemployment benefits.** People who are actively seeking employment while receiving unemployment benefits. They are typically subject to conditional welfare regimes, such as the Universal Credit (UC) system, which requires them prioritize job searching and secure employment as quickly as possible.
- **Individuals with limited capacity to work.** People of working age who have disabilities, health conditions, or socio-economic conditions that restrict their ability to engage in employment. These individuals typically receive social assistance, incapacity benefits and are assessed on their work capacity (the Work Capability Assessment), with some placed in the Limited Capability for Work and Work-related Activity (LCWRA) group.
- **Individuals who are neither working nor claiming benefits.** People of working age who are economically inactive and do not receive means-tested benefits. This group includes non-student inactive individuals, early retirees, high-not-worth individuals, as well as those with below average wealth who are not claiming benefits.

In addition to these classifications, we have collected the following demographic characteristics of the target population:

- **Age range of participants.** We categorise the target population into our main age groups, recognising that different interventions may be more effective at various life stages:
 - Young: Individuals under 25 years old.
 - Adults: Individuals aged 25 to 45 years old.
 - Older adults: Individuals over 45 years old.
 - All: Interventions that include participants from all age groups.
- **Gender of participants.** We identify cases where the intervention or analysis differentiates results by gender. Based on existing literature, we classify gender into two main categories: male and female.
- **Unemployment status.** The target population is classified based on the duration of unemployment.
 - Short-term unemployment: Individuals unemployed for less than 12 months.

- Long-term unemployment: Individuals unemployed for more than 12 months. This group presents significant challenges, not only for policymakers addressing structural economic issues but also for the individuals themselves. Prolonged joblessness can lead to financial difficulties and emotional distress, often requiring different interventions from those suited to short-term unemployed individuals.
 - All: Used when the intervention does not specify the required duration of unemployment for participants.
- **Work-limiting characteristics.** We include an additional variable to identify whether the target population (or at least 50% of it) experiences any work-limiting conditions. These may include mental health issues, disabilities, low family income, risk factors for social exclusion, refugee status, low education or low skill levels, lack of prior work experience, single parenthood and reliance on social assistance.

Intervention

The interventions evaluated in this review are those primarily aimed at implementing Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) equivalent to 'work-first' policies. We classify these interventions based on the approach the programmes provide to participants:

- **Assistance interventions:** These interventions aim to support job seekers through proactive measures. They include:
- **Job search assistance:** This type of intervention provides support to individuals in their job search efforts. It includes activities such as action planning, where individuals set specific employment goals and strategies, vacancy matching to identify job opportunities that align with their skills and preferences, and brokerage services to connect job seekers with potential employers.
 - **Job search/employability training:** This intervention focuses on improving individuals' job search skills and overall employability. It typically includes training in job search techniques, such as using job platform and networking, interview training to enhance performance in job interviews, and CV writing workshops.
 - **Vocational profiling:** This intervention assesses job seeker's skills, interests, and career goals to identify suitable employment opportunities. For example, skills assessments help determine individual's strengths and areas for development, while career guidance activities assist individuals in exploring potential career paths. Additionally, job identification and support services help match job seekers with appropriate employment opportunities based on their search profiles.
- **Monitoring interventions:** These interventions ensure individuals follow required steps and attend caseworker interviews but are not directly tied to benefit receipt or sanctions. Examples include interventions that provide monitoring systems under unconditional benefits, granting more autonomy to claimants; for long-term unemployed individuals who no longer receive benefits mobile messages reminding individuals for

upcoming caseworker interviews; interventions where job search assistance and obligations are removed.

- **Monitoring with sanctions:** These interventions involve monitoring an individual's adherence to the conditions for receiving unemployment benefits, such as engaging in job search activities, attending appointments with employment advisors, or accepting the first available job offer, regardless of professional preferences. Non-compliance may result in the threat or application of benefit sanctions to encourage programme participation and active job seeking.
- **Assistance with sanctions:** These interventions combine job search assistance with enforcement of benefit sanctions for non-compliance.

Comparison group

This systematic review includes primary studies that utilize a comparison group (Quasi-Experimental Design), a control group (Randomised Control Trial), or another form of comparator between participants and non-participants. For this analysis, there are no restrictions regarding demographic similarities between target individuals and those who do not take part in any of the proposed interventions.

Outcomes

This systematic review includes both primary and secondary employment outcomes.

Primary outcomes

We classify employment related outcomes as primary outcomes.

- **Employment duration:** The length of time an individual has been employed at their current workplace, as well as their previous employment history. Employment duration can be measured in various ways, including the cumulative number of days or months employed or the total count of days in employment over a specific period.
- **Employment likelihood:** The probability of working at least one paid hour per week. In this analysis, employment likelihood includes various indicators such as the probability of obtaining either subsidised or unsubsidised employment, transitioning from unemployment to employment, working with or without benefits, and the likelihood of re-employment.
- **Wage:** For this analysis we consider the earnings an individual receives regularly from work. This category includes different terminologies such as earnings and wages, and various measurement forms, including daily, monthly, annual cumulative earnings, or log wages.
- **Unemployment/Inactivity likelihood:** The probability of remaining unemployed or inactive after the intervention. This variable is measure among participants who did not

achieve the expected employment status following the intervention. It can be assessed based on transitions or exits to unemployment, inactivity, or leaving the labour force.

- **Unemployment duration:** The length of time an individual remains unemployed before securing a job. Common measurements found in the literature include the number of days or months spent unemployed.

Secondary outcomes

- **Employment characteristics:** Outcomes that capture the different employment attributes that help to assess job quality. It includes factors such as working hours, type of contract, high-earning vs regular employment, job stability, occupational mobility, and whether the employment is short-term or long-term.
- **Intermediary outcomes:** These outcomes are characterised by occurring before achieving primary employment outcomes. It includes vacancy rates, interview invitations, training registrations, employer contacts, probability of signing an apprenticeship contract, job search knowledge, job search behaviour, suspension or sanction rates, as well as ALMP participations, the duration of intervention participation and the behaviours towards those programmes.
- **Other exits from unemployment:** This category accounts for cases where individuals exit unemployment but not through employment or inactivity specifically. It could be either transitions to education or not properly defined in the study.
- **Receiving subsidies:** This category includes outcomes measuring whether individuals continue to receive subsidies, particularly unemployment benefits, or the transition in or out of those subsidies. This category also includes social assistance, disability and housing benefits.
- **Socio-economic status:** Variables in this category measure levels of deprivation, household income, and savings.
- **Wellbeing and social wellbeing:** This category includes health-related and personal wellbeing indicators such as healthcare expenditure, drug prescriptions, sickness absence, self-sufficiency, depression, life satisfaction, and career self-efficacy, as well as social related wellbeing such as crime, delinquency, arrest rates, social participation and social support.

Study design

The studies included in the analysis had a single requirement: an economic design. This means they employed either a randomised or non-randomised process but included an analytical evaluation that allowed for the assessment of the causal effect or association between the intervention and outcomes.

Setting

We included studies that were undertaken in OECD and high-income countries: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and the United States.

Moreover, to maintain the relevance and applicability to the current context, we restricted the selection to studies published between 2018 and 2024. This ensured that our findings reflected the most recent developments and insights in the field.

Annex 2: Methodology

To ensure rigour, efficiency, and quality assurance, the research process was structured into multiple stages, incorporating AI and machine learning (ML) tools to enhance productivity and accuracy.

The search stage involved a comprehensive search for relevant studies, drawing on existing systematic reviews and grey literature sources, including Google Scholar (e.g., government and organisational reports). This process focused on Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) in high-income OECD countries from 2018 to 2024.

The selection stage centred on screening and identifying relevant studies based on the PICOSS criteria. This process was supported by ASReview, a machine-learning-assisted systematic review tool. To ensure a rigorous and unbiased selection process, each study was reviewed by two to three researchers, with any discrepancies resolved through discussion with an additional researcher.

Following this, the data extraction stage was conducted using Elicit, an AI-powered tool designed for evidence synthesis. This step ensured the systematic extraction of relevant information for further evaluation based on PICOSS criteria. Simultaneously, this stage involved a manual quality assessment of the shortlisted studies, again using the PICOSS framework to validate AI-assisted selections. The final set of studies were then coded and synthesised in Excel to generate key insights.

Throughout the process, the integration of AI/ML tools such as ASReview and Elicit significantly improved efficiency at each stage. While automation streamlined literature screening and data extraction, rigorous manual oversight ensured quality control. The multi-researcher approach further enhanced consistency, reliability, and robustness in study selection and final synthesis.

Search strategy

The first stage of the search strategy involved collecting studies evaluated in four previously published systematic reviews: Card et al. (2018), Puerto et al. (2022), White and Apunyo's (2021) Evidence Gap Map (EGM), and Orfao and Malo (2023). These reviews examine the impact of ALMPs on employment outcomes, each with a distinct population focus. Card et al. (2018) provides a broad analysis across all populations, while Puerto et al (2022) concentrates on younger individuals, and Orfao and Malo (2021) focus on labour policies targeting older populations. From the EGM, studies were selected based on their alignment with the PICOSS criteria. In total, 1,002 studies were gathered from these reviews, including 205 from Card et al (2028), 6 from Orfao and Malo (2021), 228 from Puerto et al (2022), and 563 from the EGM.

Although three of the systematic reviews were published between 2021 and 2022, the most comprehensive review covering all relevant populations was Card et al. published in 2018. Given its publication date, an additional search was refined through testing and selecting two Boolean search strategies for maximum effectiveness. The approach utilised these Boolean operations to identify studies across sources such as Google Scholar and grey literature from government and organisational websites.

For Google Scholar searches, the tool Publish and Perish was employed to facilitate the efficient selection and organisation of relevant papers. For grey literature, researchers systematically reviewed sources including the World Bank, OECD, IZA, IDEAS RePEc, UK Government, and the Pathways to Work from Evidence Clearinghouse. These sources were selected based on their credibility and relevance to the research topic. As a result, an additional 1,568 studies were collected, bringing the total dataset to 2,570 studies.

Search keywords

Table A2.1: Boolean search keywords

Source	Boolean keyword	Studies collected
Google Scholar	<i>(unemploy* OR disability OR inactive) AND (ALMP OR active labour market programme OR unemployment benefits OR work first OR job search OR assistance OR career guidance OR monitoring OR vocation OR training OR monitoring OR compliance OR benefit sanctions) AND (employ* OR earnings OR sustained work)</i>	200
World Bank	<i>employment OR unemploy* OR employab* AND active labor market program</i>	7
OECD	<i>(All Fields 'employment') (Language 'en') OR (All Fields 'unemploy*') OR (All Fields 'employab*') OR (All Fields 'disability') OR (All Fields 'inactive') AND (' ') AND (Theme 'Employment') AND (All Fields "active labor market" program) AND (Language "en") OR (All Fields "unemployment benefits") OR (All Fields "work first") published between 2018 and 2024</i>	268
IDEAS RePEc	<i>"active labor market programme or employment" published between 2018 and 2024</i>	80
IZA	<i>"active (labor labour) market programme employment"</i>	9
Pathways to Work, Evidence Clearinghouse	<i>"active labor market"</i>	2

Screening and selection stage

Storage and duplicate deletion

A two-stage process was employed to remove duplicate studies. The 1,568 collected studies were first stored in Zotero, a free, open-source reference management tool that facilitates the organisation and sharing of research materials. Using Zotero's automated duplicate detection feature, 50 duplicate studies were identified and removed. However, as Zotero does not capture all duplicates – particularly those with variations in titles or author order – a second manual screening was conducted. This additional step identified and removed 143 further duplicates, resulting in a final dataset of 1,375 unique studies.

Title and abstract review

A primary shortlisting of studies was conducted based on title and abstract screening. The organised PDFs stored in Zotero were uploaded to ASReview, an open-source AI tool designed to support the screening and organisation of studies for systematic reviews. ASReview facilitated the manual screening process using the PICOSS criteria, enabling real-time discussion among researchers and the systematic documentation of disagreements regarding study inclusion.

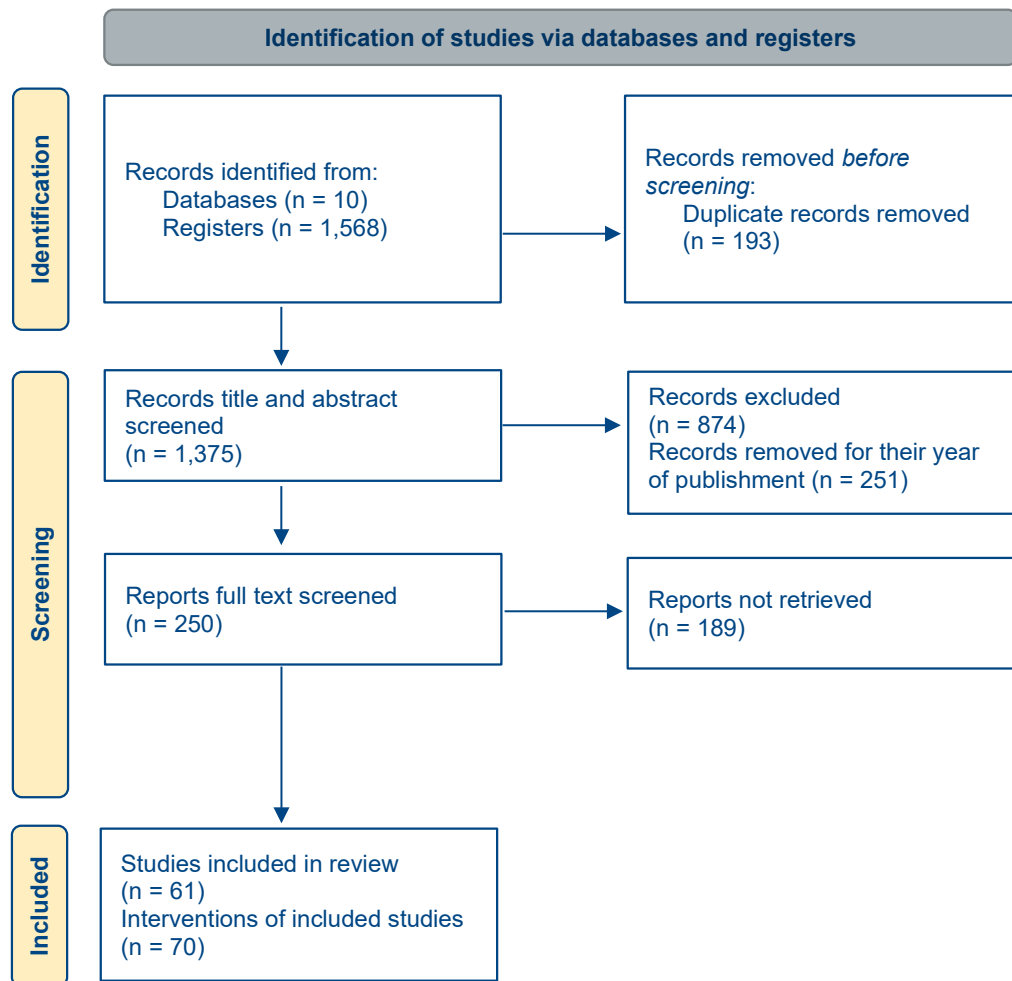
Each study abstract was reviewed, and any disagreements among researchers were recorded as notes within ASReview. These discrepancies were later discussed and resolved in consultation with a third party to ensure consistency and minimise bias. Following this screening process, a final shortlist of 250 studies was selected.

Full-text review

Following the initial screening process in ASReview, the 250 shortlisted studies proceeded to a full-text review. For this stage, we utilised Elicit, an AI-powered tool designed to facilitate literature review, information extraction, and synthesis. Elicit was employed to extract key information from the shortlisted studies, adhering strictly to the PICOSS criteria – Population, Intervention, Control, Outcome, Study Design, and Setting.

To ensure accuracy and consistency, reviewers designed and tested extraction criteria within Elicit, providing clear definitions and examples for each indicator of interest. Elicit was instructed to strictly follow the predefined PICOSS framework, ensuring that all extracted data met the research requirements. To enhance efficiency, the extracted data was coded to identify studies falling outside the research scope.

A complementary manual screening was conducted to further validate the AI-assisted selection process, ensuring robustness in the final study set. Following this thorough screening, 189 studies were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria – whether due to study setting, intervention type, or study design. This process resulted in a final selection of 61 relevant studies for analysis.

Figure A2.1: PRISMA flowchart

Source: Page MJ, McKenzie JE, Bossuyt PM, Boutron I, Hoffmann TC, Mulrow CD, et al. The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ* 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71

Data extraction and coding

The data extraction process began with collecting key information, including outcome measures, standardized effects sizes, result significance, sample size, attrition rates, and study bias. This approach aimed to enhance precision, ensuring that no relevant studies were erroneously excluded. By integrating these additional criteria into the data extraction phase in Elicit, we ensured that the extracted data was accurate, consistent, and of high quality, strengthening the reliability of the final analysis. This step was essential in guaranteeing that all critical information was gathered before the final review. The complete list of extracted variables is provided in Annex 5.

Annex 3: Nature of the evidence

Population

Table A3.1 presents a breakdown of the 61 studies included in the systematic review, categorising them based on three target population groups: unemployed individuals receiving unemployment benefits; individuals with limited capacity to work; and those who are not working but not claiming benefits. The first thing to notice is the nature of the interventions targeting those with formal unemployment support (49 studies, 80% of the studies target this type of population), contrasting with the small number of studies which examined individuals with limited capacity to work (7 studies, 11%) and those not working but not claiming benefits (5 studies, 9%).

In terms of gender representation, most studies (57) included both men and women as their target population, while only four studies focused exclusively on unemployed men. There was no indication of studies solely addressing women, highlighting a potential gap in research concerning gender-specific unemployment interventions. However, we cannot discern whether those interventions were implemented during a time when only men were active in the labour market.

Regarding age representation, the studies varied in their coverage. 27 studies (44%) included individuals from all age groups, while the rest focused on specific age ranges. A total of 15 studies (almost 25%) examined young populations under 25, being the only age interval that is evaluated for those not working and not claiming benefits (5 studies). Moreover, 11 studies specified that the target population (either unemployed or with limited capacity to work) should be aged over 25 years old. Finally, eight of the 61 studies were addressed specifically to populations over 45 years old, all of them unemployed with unemployment benefits.

The duration of unemployment was also a relevant variable to analyse. 64% of the studies (39 studies) included individuals across all durations of unemployment. Not surprisingly, those which made a distinction are concentrated on unemployment benefit receivers, with nine (15% of the studies) focused on short-term unemployment and 12 (20% of the studies) on long-term unemployment.

The analysis includes additional working limitations besides disabilities such as low levels of education or skills, refugees, individuals with challenging social environment, or with any other condition that restricts smooth transition to labour market². We find that 24 of

² These individuals could be receiving unemployment benefits, therefore, not all of them will fall under the category of limited capacity to work.

the 61 studies (almost 40%) included at 50% of the target individuals with such limitations. This means that not only individuals with limited capacity to work are included in this category, but also individuals from the other two groups. Notably, four of the five studies targeting individuals not working and not claiming benefits also present one of these employment barriers.

Table A3.1: Study characteristics

	Unemployed with UB	Limited capacity to work	Not working not claiming benefits	Total
Gender				
All	45	7	5	57
Men only	4			4
Age				
All	23	4		27
Under 25	9	1	5	15
Over 25	9	2		11
Over 45	8			8
Unemployment duration				
All	29	6	4	39
Short-term unemployment	9		1	10
Long-term unemployment	12	1		13
Other working limitations				
No	36		1	37
Yes	13	7	4	24
Total	49	7	5	61

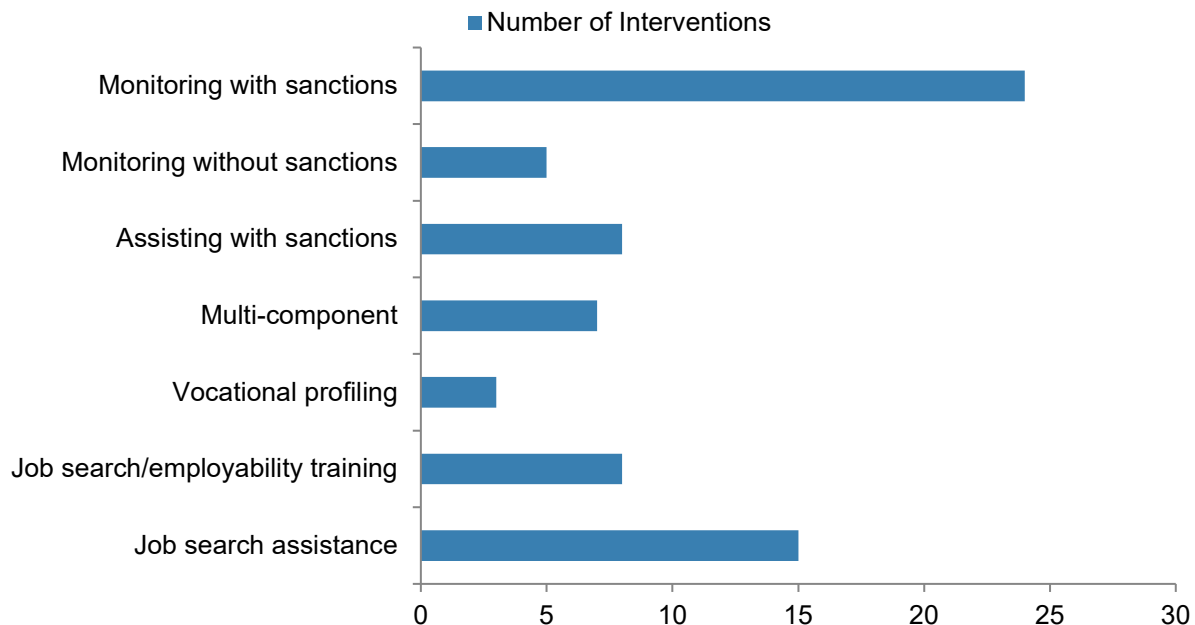
Source: Data generated by IES from the studies included in the review

Interventions

The review has gathered a total of 70 interventions included in the 61 studies being evaluated. Figure A3.1 provides an overview of the different interventions covered in this systematic review. The interventions are categorised in the four main types: Assisting, Assisting & Sanctions, Monitoring and Monitoring & Sanctions. These categories reflect different policy approaches, ranging from supportive measures to stricter enforcement strategies. Assisting interventions are the most employed in the different studies (33 interventions include job search assistance, training, vocational profiling or a multi-component of the above) followed by the 24 interventions which monitor individuals and penalise them economically when they are not compliant with the job seeking activities. A total of 8 of the interventions combine both supportive actions with monetary penalties,

while 5 interventions focus only on monitoring individuals with no relevance to assisting measures or sanctions.

Figure A3.2: Interventions



Source: Data generated by IES from the studies included in the review

Table A3.2 offers a detailed breakdown of the four main intervention groups based on key factors such as target population, age group, unemployment duration, and work limiting conditions. When analysing the interventions by target population type, all target groups have observations in assisting interventions and in monitoring and sanctioning. In contrast, monitoring interventions are only targeted to unemployed individuals receiving unemployment benefits.

Looking at the age distribution, the data shows that sanctioning interventions are more prominent for those under 25 where 11 of the interventions have a punitive component, in contrast to the rest of the groups where assisting interventions have higher frequency. Moreover, the youngest group is also the one mostly targeted for the combined interventions of assisting and sanctioning.

Regarding unemployment duration, the numbers indicate that long-term unemployed individuals receive more support-based measures as an indication of re-integration of individuals into the labour market after an extended period of unemployment. A further point to notice from this group is that those individuals who have a short experience of unemployment are not targeted for assisting and sanctioning interventions.

Finally, by examining work-limiting conditions, individuals without such conditions are more prone to receive sanctioning components in their interventions (22 interventions with a sanctioning component), than those with work-limiting conditions.

Table A3.2: Intervention characteristics

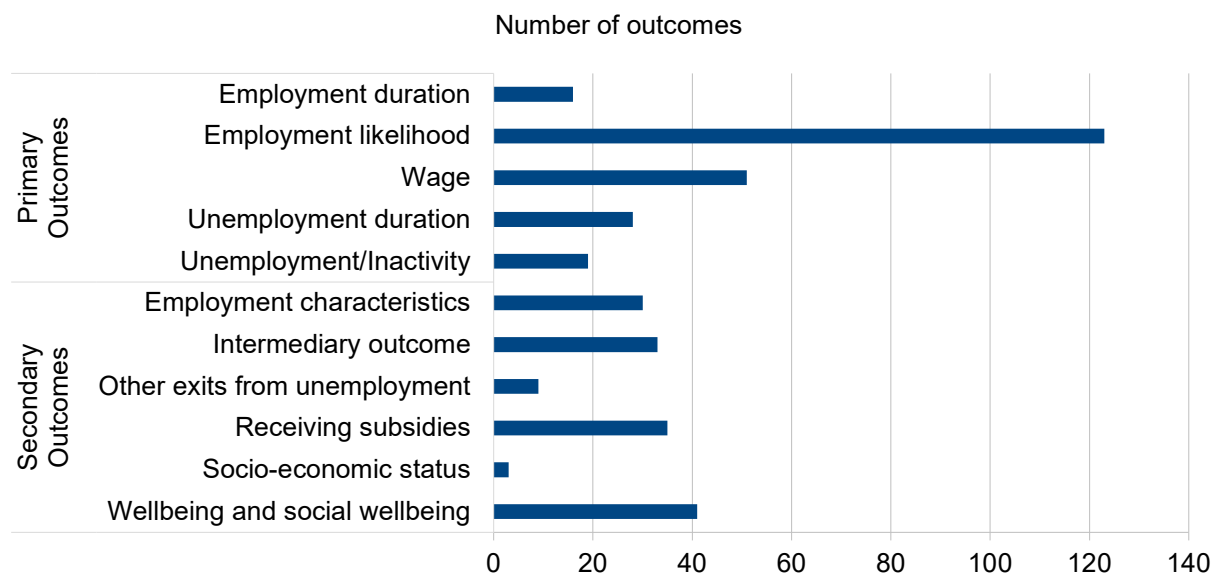
	Assisting	Assisting & Sanctions	Monitoring	Monitoring & Sanctions
Target population				
Unemployed (with UI benefit)	25	7	5	21
People with limited capacity to work	5	1		1
People not working and not claiming benefits	3			2
Age				
All	17	3	1	10
Under 25	6	4		7
Over 25	6		3	4
Over 45	4	1	1	3
Unemployment duration				
All	22	6	1	16
Short-term	5		2	3
Long-term	7	2	2	5
Working limiting conditions				
Yes	13	2	1	8
No	20	6	4	16
Total	33	8	5	24

Source: Data generated by IES from the studies included in the review

Outcomes

The systematic review evaluated a total of 388 outcomes, which are classified into 237 primary outcomes and 151 secondary outcomes. Primary outcomes, representing 61% of all reported outcomes, focus only on employment status measures, while secondary outcomes encompass broader effects such as wellbeing, social integration, and economic stability.

Figure A3.2 illustrates the frequencies of these outcomes found in the analysis. The predominance of primary employment outcomes suggests that most interventions are assessed based on their immediate labour market effects, such as job attainments and wage changes. There is a higher number of outcomes that evaluate unemployment duration than employment duration. Regarding the secondary outcomes, there is a predominance of wellbeing and social wellbeing outcomes, followed by the receipt of subsidies and benefits.

Figure A3.2: Outcome classification

Source: Data generated by IES from the studies included in the review

Primary outcomes – Employment outcomes

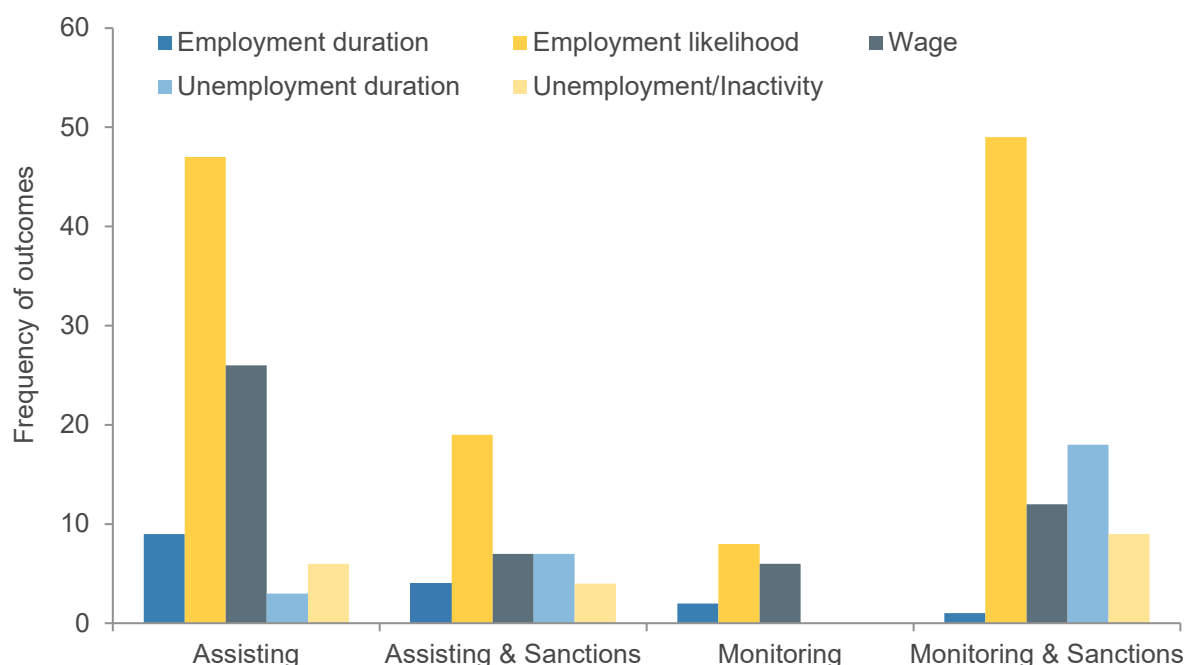
Figure A3.3 analyses how different types of unemployment interventions collected primary employment outcomes. Assisting type interventions focussed on improving the employment and wage level variables, where 52 (51%) of outcomes correspond to employment likelihood, 31 (31%) to wage and 9 to employment duration indicators out of the 101 primary outcomes included in this group. In contrast, monitoring and sanction interventions, despite high employment likelihood (49 observations, totalling approximately 55% of the outcomes of this category) it also presents a higher number of measurements related to unemployment duration (18 outcomes) and the likelihood of being unemployed or inactive after the intervention (9 observations).

This suggests that assisting interventions target a broader set of outcomes, encompassing individuals' working conditions alongside job placement. This indicates that the underlying aim of assisting interventions is not merely to place individuals in jobs, but to support their long-term integration into the labour market. In contrast, monitoring and sanctioning interventions tend to mainly focus on an individual's allocation (whether employed or not), indicating that these interventions are largely centred on assessing employment outcomes in a binary sense rather than focussing on quality or sustainability of the employment attained.

Interventions that combine both assisting and sanctioning elements reflect their combination in the type of outcomes they measure. As in sanctioning interventions, they place a significant focus on tracking employment likelihood and unemployment duration, but they also include a relatively substantial number of outcomes related to job quality such as wage and employment duration. This suggests dual focus of encouraging quick entry into the labour market and supporting long-term integration. In contrast, monitoring

interventions do not measure any of the unemployment status or duration, only employment likelihood, duration and wage.

Figure A3.3: Primary outcomes per intervention



Source: Data generated by IES from the studies included in the review

Secondary outcomes – Beyond employment status

Figure A3.4 presents the frequencies of secondary outcomes within the different intervention groups. Notably, assisting interventions predominates the number of secondary outcomes (with a total of 76 outcomes gathered), suggesting that this intervention may mainly affect wellbeing, social wellbeing, and employment characteristics. This further reinforces our previous observation that the evaluation of assisting interventions is closely aligned with a broader interest in measuring not just employment status, but also the quality of employment and individuals' overall wellbeing. Monitoring and sanctioning interventions tend to focus on fewer secondary outcomes. While 13 evaluations do consider wellbeing and social wellbeing outcomes, they are mostly followed by intermediary outcomes (12 cases). Intermediary outcomes include participation in ALMPs and compliance with job-seeking activities, and receipt of employment-related subsidies (noted in 9 out of 45 observations). This pattern suggests that the primary interest of these evaluations lies in capturing short-term behavioural changes and immediate policy compliance, rather than assessing the long-term impacts on individuals' employment quality, stability, or overall life outcomes.

Figure A3.4: Secondary outcomes per intervention

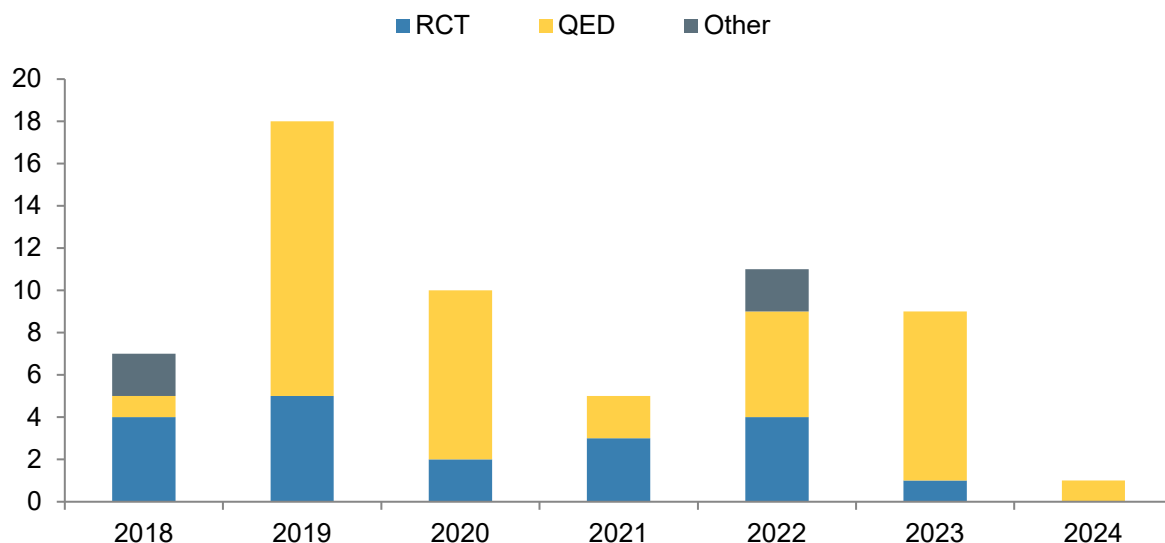


Source: Data generated by IES from the studies included in the review

Study design and year

Figure A3.5 provides an overview of the different types of study designs collected over the years. The distribution of RCTs and QEDs fluctuates differently over the years without any relevant tendency. However, there is an overall predominance of QEDs in 2019, 2020 and 2023 and a higher frequency of RCTs in 2018 and 2021 compared to other study designs.

Figure A3.5: Study design per year



Source: Data generated by IES from the studies included in the review

Annex 4: Results tables

Results of primary outcomes

Table A4.1: Primary outcomes

	Assisting	Assisting & Sanctions	Monitoring	Monitoring & Sanctions	Total
Employment likelihood	47	19	8	49	123
Positive and significant	30	11	4	18	63
Not significant	10	8	4	23	45
Negative and significant	7			8	15
Wage	26	7	6	12	51
Positive and significant	13	2	2	4	21
Not significant	13	5	4	4	26
Negative and significant				4	4
Employment duration	9	4	2	1	16
Positive and significant	4	3	1		8
Not significant	4	1	1	1	7
Negative and significant	1				1
Unemployment duration	3	7		18	28
Positive and significant	2	5		7	14
Not significant	1	2		10	13
Negative and significant				1	1
Unemployment/inactivity likelihood	6	4		9	19
Positive and significant	1	1		1	3
Not significant	3	1		5	9
Negative and significant	2	2		3	7

Source: Data generated by IES from the studies included in the review

Results of secondary outcomes

Table A4.2: Secondary outcomes

	Assisting	Assisting & Sanctions	Monitoring	Monitoring & Sanctions	Total
Receiving subsidies	15	7	4	9	35
Positive and significant	5	6	3	2	16
Not significant	9	1	1	5	16
Negative and significant	1			2	3
Employment characteristics	18	3	5	4	30
Positive and significant	8	2	1	3	14
Not significant	9	1	4	1	15
Negative and significant	1				1
Other exits from unemployment	4	1		4	9
Positive and significant	1			2	3
Not significant	1				1
Negative and significant	2	1		2	5
Intermediary outcomes	15	5	1	12	33
Positive and significant	7			7	14
Not significant	8		1	2	11
Negative and significant		5		3	8
Wellbeing and social wellbeing	24		4	13	41
Positive and significant	12		2	1	15
Not significant	10		2	9	21
Negative and significant	2			3	5
Socio-economic status				3	3
Positive and significant				1	1
Not significant				2	2
Negative and significant					

Source: Data generated by IES from the studies included in the review

Results of additional analysis

Table A4.3: Additional analysis

	Assisting	Assisting & Sanctions	Monitoring	Monitoring & Sanctions	Total
Population Type					
Unemployed with UI benefits	115	54	30	121	320
Positive and significant	55	28	13	37	133
Not significant	46	18	17	62	143
Negative and significant	14	8		22	44
People with limited capacity to work	30	3		22	55
Positive and significant	19	2		9	30
Not significant	11	1		11	23
Negative and significant				2	2
People not working and not claiming benefits	22			10	32
Positive and significant	9			6	15
Not significant	11			2	13
Negative and significant	2			2	4
Outcome time					
Short term	44	12	6	74	136
Positive and significant	22	5	2	26	55
Not significant	14	6	4	34	58
Negative and significant	8	1		14	23
Mid term	38	34	9	39	120
Positive and significant	23	16	3	13	55
Not significant	12	13	6	20	51
Negative and significant	3	5		6	14
Long term	85	11	15	21	132
Positive and significant	38	9	8	5	60
Not significant	42		7	10	59
Negative and significant	5	2		6	13
Age group differences					
Under 25	35	28		41	104
Positive and significant	12	11		15	38
Not significant	16	17		20	53
Negative and significant	7			6	13
Over 25	50		15	13	78

Positive and significant	26		9	4	39
Not significant	22		6	4	32
Negative and significant	2			5	7
Over 45	13	5	11	16	45
Positive and significant	3		7	4	14
Not significant	10		3	7	20
Negative and significant		5		5	10
All	69	24	8	64	165
Positive and significant	42	19		21	82
Not significant	20	2	8	33	63
Negative and significant	7	3		10	20
Individuals with long-term unemployment					
Long-term unemployment	23	19	10	24	76
Positive and significant	13	14	6	5	38
Not significant	9	2	4	11	26
Negative and significant	1	3		8	12

Source: Data generated by IES from the studies included in the review

Annex 5

List of Variables

Table 5.1: Colour table, left aligned

Variable name	Description	Possible answer
Study ID	Number that represents the study	Type: Alphanumeric
Filename	Name that identifies the study	Type: Alphanumeric
Population type	Intervention's target population	Type: Alphanumeric 1: Unemployed (with UI benefit) 2: People with limited capacity to work 3: People not working and not claiming benefits
Gender	Intervention's target population: gender	Type: Alphanumeric 1: Male 2: Female 3: All
Age classification	Intervention's target population: age classification	Type: Alphanumeric 1: Under 25 2: Over 25 3: Over 45 4: All
Unemployment duration	Intervention's target population: unemployment duration. The threshold between short- and long-term unemployment is 12 months.	Type: Alphanumeric 1: Short 2: Long 3: All
Work limitation classification	Intervention's target population: disability insurance, low education, low-skill workers, dependency, economic disadvantage	Type: Alphanumeric 1: No 2: Yes
Study design	Empirical strategy employed for the analysis	Type: Alphanumeric 1: Randomised Control Trial 2: Quasi-Experimental Design 3: Other
Country	Country where the intervention was applied	Type: Alphanumeric
Year of publication	Year of study publication	Type: Alphanumeric

Intervention ID	Number that identifies the intervention	Type: Alphanumeric
Intervention name	Original name of the intervention	Type: Alphanumeric
Intervention classification	Classification of the intervention regarding their main programme activities	Type: Alphanumeric 1: Assisting 2: Assisting and Sanctioning 3: Monitoring 4: Monitoring and Sanctioning
Outcome ID	Number that identifies the outcome extracted	Type: Alphanumeric
Outcome name	Name of the outcome defined by the authors	Type: Alphanumeric
Outcome classification	Classification of the outcome: primary outcome, secondary outcome	Type: Alphanumeric 1: Primary outcome 2: Secondary outcome
Outcome domain	Outcome category	Type: Alphanumeric 1: Employment characteristics 2: Employment duration 3: Employment likelihood 4: Wage 5: Intermediary outcome 6: Other exits from Unemployment 7: Receiving subsidies 8: Socio-economic status 9: Unemployment duration 10: Unemployment/Inactivity likelihood 11: Wellbeing and social wellbeing
Effect size	Effect size measure, including the sign of the effect	Type: Alphanumeric
Effect (harmonised)	Classification of the effect by its significance and sign. All sign are harmonized to positive outcomes and negative outcomes	Type: Alphanumeric 1: Positive and significant 2: Negative and significant 3: Not significant
Outcome time	Time in which the outcome was recorded	Type: Alphanumeric
Outcome time classification	Classification of the outcome time record: short term (6 months or less), mid-term (from 6 to 12 months), long term (12 months or more)	Type: Alphanumeric 1: Short term 2: Mid term 3: Long term

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. 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.

Accessibility

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