

New Deal for Disabled People: Survey of Registrants – Cohort 1 Waves 1 and 2

Summary

The New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) is the major employment programme available to people claiming incapacity benefits. It is a voluntary programme that aims to help people on incapacity benefits move into sustained employment. Around 65 Job Brokers, who are a mix of public, private, and voluntary sector organisations, deliver the programme. People wishing to participate in the programme must register with a Job Broker (and are referred to in the report as registrants).

The evaluation includes a Survey of the Registrants, which aims to obtain information on NDDP participant characteristics, their experiences of, and views on, the programme. The survey involves three cohorts, with the first two having two waves of interviewing and the third one wave. This report is of the first and second waves of the first cohort. The survey entailed face-to-face CAPI interviews with people who registered with Job Brokers in May and June 2002. First interviews were conducted between October and December 2002, that is, about five months after registration. The second interviews took place between July and September 2003, at least one year after registration. Achieved sample sizes are 3,014 and 2,400, respectively. The report of the first interviews has been already been published by the Department of Work and Pensions (Ashworth et al., 2004). This report, which draws upon both waves of interviewing, provides a preliminary indication of registrants' employment and other outcomes during the year following their registration. A detailed report of the data from both cohorts of registrants will follow.

Principal findings from the survey are:

- In the first cohort proportionally more men (63 per cent) than women registered for

NDDP. Whilst registrants were spread across age groups, the majority were aged under 50 years.

- The health conditions and disabilities of the registrants were wide ranging, but 31 per cent had a mental health condition and 30 per cent a musculoskeletal condition. Over the course of the research a majority of registrants judged that their health had improved. However, there were also significant minorities who said their health had declined. Moreover, some registrants had difficulties in correctly predicting whether or not their health status would change over time, and the direction of that change (if their health would improve or deteriorate).
- One year after registration, seven out of ten respondents were still registered with their May-June 2002 Job Broker. Of these half remained in contact with the broker.
- Those in contact with their Job Broker invariably discussed work and training issues with their adviser.
- Whether respondents not in paid work were looking for employment could change over time. Although 72 per cent of those looking for work five months after registration continued to do so at 12 months after registration.
- The respondents' 'bridges' and 'barriers' to employment were similar at waves 1 and 2. The main bridge was knowing that the registrant could return to their benefit if any job did not work out; and the main barrier was the belief that there were not enough jobs available locally.
- One year after registration, 46 per cent of respondents had entered a post-registration job. Of these nearly four out of ten had entered paid work within three months of registering.
- In addition, one year after registration a further 35 per cent of respondents were looking for paid work.

Executive summary

Key characteristics of registrants

The first cohort comprised almost twice as many men as women. It was, though, widely dispersed across age groups; and nine per cent were from minority ethnic groups. The health conditions and disabilities experienced by registrants were very wide-ranging. Just over a third had a mental health condition; physical impairments affecting the neck or back (26 per cent), legs or feet (20 per cent), or arms and hands (12 per cent) were also common.

Most registrants had a qualification of some kind, but a sizeable minority (23 per cent) did not and nearly a fifth reported problems with basic skills in English and/or numbers. As might be expected, the overwhelming majority (95 per cent) were not in paid work prior to their registration, while just over a quarter had been actively looking for work at that time.

The Job Broker service

One year after registration, seven out of ten respondents remained registered with their May-June 2002 Job Broker. However, levels of contact with Job Brokers had declined over time. Only half of those who continued to be registered reported that they were still in contact with their Job Broker, though 88 per cent of this group expected to remain in contact in the future. Nine per cent reported no contact at all following registration.

Three in ten of those of who deregistered did so because the Job Broker was not helpful or could not do anything for the registrant. Two in ten deregistered having found work, though seven out of eight of those who entered employment stayed registered. By no means all who deregistered had disengaged from NDDP: a quarter re-registered with another Job Broker.

The median length of combined face-to-face and telephone contact with Job Brokers (up to the second survey interview) was one and half hours. The median number of meetings and telephone calls among those having each type

of contact was three and four, respectively. Nearly all registrants who had any Job Broker contact discussed work and training issues, especially the work they might do, previous work experience and concerns about working. Six in ten discussed getting a job, notably where to look for vacancies; seven in ten talked about health-related issues, in particular how their health might limit the work they could do and how work might impact upon their health. A similar proportion discussed finances, benefit and/or tax credits. Just over half had talked about in-work support.

Some of those entering employment needed help with travel (13 per cent), adaptations or aids (10 per cent) or a personal assistant (8 per cent). In at least three-quarters of cases these needs were met.

Most of the discussions registrants had with Job Brokers about specific topics were assessed positively. However, the overall helpfulness of contacts with Job Brokers scored less highly, with one half of respondents giving a mark in the range 0 to 5 out of 10.

Employment outcomes

One year after registration, 46 per cent of registrants (or 1,099 people) had entered a post-registration job. Of these three-quarters took six months or less to move into employment, indeed 38 per cent entered paid work in six weeks or less.

Of those registrants entering a first post-registration job, 72 per cent were employees, six per cent were self-employed and 22 per cent were in Permitted Work. Employees were more likely to be lone parents, and said that their health condition did not limit their ability to carry out everyday activities. Those engaged in Permitted Work tended to be women, and to be single with no children. However, their health status at one year after registration was (very) poor. Whilst registrants who were self-employed were more likely to be male, have higher educational qualifications and to have a partner and dependent children.

Those least likely to have entered paid work since registration tended to be registrants who were male, aged 16-49 years, socially and culturally excluded, those whose health had remained (very) bad, those whose health was such that it limited their activities a great deal, those with a negative/neutral attitude to work, those with no educational qualifications or educated to NVQ Level 1 only, those with problems with basic skills and those who were single with no children.

Health and quality of life

Using a self-assessed measure of health status, a majority of registrants said their health had improved over time. Nevertheless, there were significant minorities who reported that their health had declined; for example, 31 per cent stated their health status was 'good' five months after registration, but seven months later said it was 'fair'.

Not only do health conditions change over time, but also some registrants had difficulty in predicting the future state of their health. For example, 50 per cent said at five months after registration their health would change, and of these it actually changed for half (54 per cent; or 27 per cent of all respondents). Moreover, even when change did occur, it was not necessarily in the direction predicted by the respondents, implying that Job Brokers have to be relatively flexible in adapting to people's (uncertain) fluctuating health conditions.

As might be expected the respondents' main type of health condition or disability did not change over time. The most frequently mentioned were mental health conditions (31 per cent) and musculoskeletal conditions (30 per cent).

Possibly reflecting the general improvement in health status over time, the percentages of registrants requiring assistance or support and who were socially and culturally excluded declined (from 24 to 21 per cent and from 21 to 15 per cent, respectively).

Intermediate outcomes

One year after registration, most registrants were economically active – 36 per cent in paid work and 35 per cent looking for employment. However, between five and twelve months after registration, the proportion not expecting to/unsure about working in the future had doubled from six to 12 per cent. Those who moved from economic activity to inactivity between five and 12 months tended to be those who became or remained socially and culturally excluded, and whose health deteriorated or remained poor. However, the direction of causation operating here is unclear, that is, whether the shift to inactivity was due to these factors, whether these factors are a consequence of inactivity or whether some other variable(s) produced both these factors and the inactivity is unknown.

Whether registrants were actively looking for work could change at five and 12 months after registration. Although nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) of those looking for work at five months after registration had continued to do so one year after registration, 28 per cent looking for work at five months were no longer searching for employment seven months later. Similarly, those who applied for jobs could change over time. Those making applications at five months but not later on, tended to have problems with basic skills, no or low educational qualifications and declining health. Whilst those not applying for jobs at five months but doing so at 12 months tended to be socially and culturally included, and their health had improved or remained good and did not limit their activities a great deal. Registrants with educational qualifications at NVQ Level 2 or with 'other qualifications' were also more likely to apply for jobs one year after registration having not do so seven months earlier.

In addition, over time:

- The proportion starting training courses declined from 23 to 15 per cent. Those starting courses tended to have higher educational qualifications, be younger and not socially and culturally excluded.
- The proportion undertaking voluntary work increased from nine to 12 per cent. Those starting voluntary work tended to be

female, not socially and culturally excluded and to have had higher educational levels.

For those not in paid work or employment of under eight hours, the main bridges to work were knowing that they could return to their original benefit if their job did not work out, and that they could decide the hours they worked. The proportion naming these as bridges declined and the proportion reporting no bridges increased between five and twelve months after registration.

In terms of barriers to work, the main barrier was the belief that there were not enough suitable jobs available locally. At 12 months after registration, proportionally more respondents identified more barriers than had done so at five months. This could mean that over time NDDP had made registrants more aware of their barriers to work and how they affected their chances of obtaining employment. In other words, the increase in those reporting more barriers to work could mean that some registrants had become actually closer to, not further away from, the labour market and were more aware of the issues that needed to be addressed if they were to find paid work.

Reference

Ashworth, K., Hartfree, Y., Kazimirski, A., Legge, K., Pires, C., Reyes de Beaman, S., Shaw, A. and Stafford, B. (2004) *New Deal for Disabled People National Extension: First Wave of the First Cohort of the Survey of Registrants*, DWP Research Report 180, Sheffield: DWP.