Research into multiple disadvantaged groups in European Social Fund Objective 3 in England

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A report of research carried out by Cambridge Policy Consultants on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions
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## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CFO</td>
<td>Co-financing organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWP</td>
<td>Department for Work and Pensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESF</td>
<td>European Social Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GO</td>
<td>Government office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILM</td>
<td>Intermediate labour market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSA</td>
<td>Jobseeker’s Allowance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LFS</td>
<td>Labour Force Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSC</td>
<td>Learning and Skills Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Personal Adviser</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

The UK labour market has enjoyed a sustained period of growth that has led to record employment levels. Many people who face multiple disadvantages in the labour market have, however, not fully shared in this improvement. The barriers to participation facing many of these disadvantaged groups are substantial, often overlay each other and frequently cut across non-labour market services such as health and housing.

The European Social Fund (ESF) has been a vital source of support for projects focusing on those clients with multiple disadvantages. The ESF is the European Union’s (EU’s) main instrument for promoting employment, supporting the European Employment Strategy and the EU member states’ National Action Plans for Employment by funding actions in a number of policy fields including, Active Labour Market Policies and Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion for All.

The 2003 mid-term evaluation of the ESF Objective 3 in England recommended that:

• ESF projects should be encouraged to provide a more effective and focused support to help the economically inactive and those with multiple disadvantages;

• projects should be provided with examples of good practice in relation to support/ training to the economically inactive that appears to be successful in helping these beneficiaries obtain employment/positive outcomes.

This research has been undertaken to address these recommendations and to support the ESF policy implementation more generally.

Cambridge Policy Consultants were commissioned to identify good practice in ESF-funded projects working with clients facing multiple disadvantages. Objectives of the research were to:

• collect information on multiple disadvantaged groups supported by the ESF;

• identify innovative and effective approaches developed by some ESF projects to engage with and improve outcomes of the client group, and to assess to what extent these approaches can be applied across other parts of the ESF programme;
• set out how the ESF adds value and could add further value to domestic programmes, in particular under current co-financing arrangements;

• assess whether the findings on practical approaches to multiple disadvantaged groups warrants further analysis or refinement of existing categories of disadvantaged groups;

• assess the implications of focusing the ESF resources on multiple disadvantaged groups assuming that less funding will be available from the EU after 2006.

The research programme was designed in two main phases. The first phase of the study included a literature review and consultations with relevant lead researchers with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) concerning the definition of multiple disadvantaged groups and current evidence on ‘what works’ in delivering labour market outcomes for such groups. Based on these discussions we undertook an analysis of the available monitoring data on the ESF Objective 3 and the 2002 ESF Leavers’ Survey. Together, these elements were used to frame discussions with Government offices (GOs) and their associated co-financing organisations (CFOs).

Who are the multiple disadvantaged?

There is a general consensus that combinations of the following characteristics should broadly be held to denote multiple disadvantage: the over 50s, lone parents, disabled, ethnic minority and/or no, or low, skills.

Other barriers were highlighted as being equally important but many recognised that there was limited data available on these issues: those with a criminal record, homeless people, refugees and speakers of languages other than English, drug and alcohol misusers, and carers and care leavers. In addition, there is particular interest among GOs and CFOs in some ‘recognition’ in assessment criteria of the potential impact of low labour demand on project outcomes.

Berthoud, in his statistical analysis of the impact of multiple disadvantage in the UK, places the emphasis on the number of barriers an individual faces as better reflecting the difficulty of finding employment. Specific barriers do make a difference to an individual’s chances of finding work but having two or more barriers is more of a disadvantage. Most respondents in our interview programme suggested that two or three barriers would make an individual ‘multiple disadvantaged’. We would recommend using three or more barriers as a criteria for identifying ESF clients facing severe barriers to entering work.

There may be some advantage in using the number of disadvantages a client faces as a key criterion in funding and assessing relative performance. However, there will be some practical problems in doing so as few datasets currently contain such detailed information.
One issue that arose in the study is the diversity of the issues facing people defined by the ‘label’ of disabled. There is a wide range of disabilities that goes far beyond the simple distinction between physical and mental disability. A better classification of this target group would provide a better indication of the diversity of problems (and therefore) potential solutions.

Key findings

- Projects funded by Objective 3 ESF do engage successfully with clients facing multiple disadvantages.

- Establishing a complete picture of effective ESF project interventions at the programme level is very difficult because:
  - either the information on individual client characteristics and performance is not collected at project level;
  - other monitoring data provides much of the detail required but is partial in its coverage of the ESF spend.

- The research literature has identified differentials in performance between multiple disadvantaged groups and mainstream clients in general, but it has yet to deliver a detailed appreciation of the scale of these differences across different disadvantages and particularly across different combinations of disadvantages. This has limited current understanding of why such performance differentials arise.

- Because of this, we have no basis to establish objectively that the projects identified in discussions with GOs and CFOs do indeed represent the best practice examples. However, we have used our experience of what constitutes good practice as a guideline.

Are we seeking good practice or good performance?

Good practice is often defined by good performance, particularly at a project level. However, if a project has a client group, of which only a small proportion have multiple disadvantages, it may have good performance but the delivery mechanism might be wholly unsuitable for the minority of those with multiple disadvantages.

Good practice is better defined by what works for a client with a specific set of disadvantages. Good project performance arises when the package of support is adequate to alleviate the barriers of many of its clients. The irony is that good practice in engaging with, recruiting and retaining multiple disadvantaged clients might undermine overall project performance by focusing on more disadvantaged clients. That said, there is some limited evidence in this study that projects which focus on specific core client groups or geographic areas do appear to perform better in engaging, and then helping, their core client groups.
Putting good practice into operational delivery is not straightforward. Who does what best, with whom, and why, remains a very complex judgement and there are limited performance benchmarks to help guide both those designing and funding projects.

Can we specify ideal project types?

Given the discussion above, the answer is probably no, such are the complexities of local delivery combined with the combinations of client disadvantages. However, it is possible to identify a menu of practices which have been observed in many of the better performing case study projects:

• a clear sense of purpose and goal-oriented approach (employment focus) which needs to be shared with clients;

• active outreach involving personal contact in community places or in the premises of other providers;

• awareness-raising to generate word-of-mouth referrals;

• a specific focus either on a core target group or a certain geographic area – this helps promote learning and specialist knowledge but also supports the development of reputation among the client group and wider community;

• cooperation with families and carers where appropriate;

• staff with empathy, good communication skills and able to build trust with their clients;

• an environment which is perceived as being non-threatening by clients but an approach which builds the confidence of vulnerable clients and prepares them for the world of work;

• small caseloads given the intensity of the contacts (around 30-40);

• an early identification of clients’ needs and a willingness to market other provision;

• an in-depth knowledge of the local organisational infrastructure and good networking links;

• practical referral arrangements in order to ensure clients are picked up by other provision and do not drop out;

• the option for clients to choose one-to-one sessions as a complement to group work, so that personal issues can be addressed;

• action plans as living documents, building on clients’ aspirations but evolving towards realistic options by managing clients’ expectations;

• a focus on learning rather than training which has the stigma of ‘back to school’ where many originally failed;
• an open door policy so that the intensity of support can be increased if the client has a life crisis or difficult transition to make;

• good links with employers to find work placements and source vacancies;

• a free job-matching service to help reduce the employer’s risk and cost of recruitment;

• support to employers to help them understand the strengths and weaknesses of the different disadvantaged groups and the value of on-the-job mentoring or job coaching/buddying arrangements;

• an aftercare service, also geared towards employers, to build the basis for a long-term relationship with employers;

• work placements and in-house work experience to help overcome concerns that clients have about leaving behind benefits and their previous lifestyle.

Above all, many of the organisations had nurtured a learning culture. Very few of the higher performing projects had come to their approach by chance – most had built on trial and error and a willingness of their staff to improve and develop practice to do the best that they could. This attitude towards continuous improvement is perhaps what fundamentally underlies good practice.

Do programme funding criteria need to be adjusted to reflect these conclusions?

It would be possible to adjust ESF funding criteria to provide a better assessment of the potential outcomes from project delivery and the target client group. This would, however, need to be evidence-based and as noted above, this is currently limited.

Targets provide an important incentive for effective delivery but they do need to be sensitive to the lower levels of outcomes which would appear to arise when working with multiple disadvantaged clients. Part of this process must be to develop performance benchmarks for specific client groups – lone parents, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, etc.
Introduction

The UK labour market has enjoyed a sustained period of growth that has led to record employment levels. In the last few years, there has been an increasing focus on the inactive and those with multiple disadvantages whose levels of employment and employability have not reflected this improvement. The barriers to participation facing many people in disadvantaged groups are substantial, often overlay each other and frequently cut across non-labour market services such as health and housing.

The European Social Fund (ESF) has been a vital source of support for projects focusing on those with multiple disadvantages. The ESF is the European Union’s (EU’s) main instrument for promoting employment. It is meant principally to support the European Employment Strategy and the EU member states’ National Action Plans for Employment. It does this by providing funding for local and regional projects under a number of wider agreed policy field headings:

- Policy field 1: Active Labour Market Policies;
- Policy field 2: Equal Opportunities and Social Inclusion for All;
- Policy field 3: Lifelong Learning;
- Policy field 4: Adaptability and Entrepreneurship;
- Policy field 5: Promoting the Participation of Women in the Labour Market.

The 2003 mid-term evaluation of ESF Objective 3 in England recommended that:

- ESF projects should be encouraged to provide a more effective and focused support to help the economically inactive and those with multiple disadvantages;
- projects should be provided with examples of good practice in relation to support/training to the economically inactive that appears to be successful in helping these beneficiaries obtain employment/positive outcomes.

This research has been undertaken to address these recommendations and to support the ESF policy implementation more generally.
Cambridge Policy Consultants were commissioned to identify good practice by ESF projects in relation to engaging with and improving the outcomes of groups facing multiple disadvantages. Objectives of the research were to:

- collect information on multiple disadvantaged groups supported by the ESF;
- identify innovative and effective approaches developed by some ESF projects to engage with and improve outcomes of the client group, and to assess to what extent these approaches can be applied across other parts of the ESF programme;
- set out how the ESF adds value and could add further value to domestic programmes, in particular under current co-financing arrangements;
- assess whether the findings on practical approaches to multiple disadvantaged groups warrants further analysis or refinement of existing categories of disadvantaged groups;
- assess the implications of focusing ESF resources on multiple disadvantaged groups assuming that less funding will be available from the EU after 2006.

The research programme was designed in two main phases. The first phase of the study included a literature review and consultations with relevant lead researchers with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) concerning the definition of multiple disadvantaged groups and current evidence on ‘what works’ in delivering labour market outcomes for such groups. Based on these discussions, we undertook an analysis of the available monitoring data on ESF Objective 3 projects (mainly project closure reports) and the 2002 ESF Leavers’ Survey\(^1\) to assess the degree to which multiple disadvantaged people have been engaged by such support and the outcomes arising from such activity. Together, these elements were used to frame discussions with three Government offices (GOs) and their associated co-financing organisations (CFOs), exploring:

- how the current approach supports the participation of multiple disadvantaged clients;
- what criteria or evidence had been used by organisations in judging the appropriateness of activities proposed by projects;
- what performance benchmarks had been used to assess the relative cost-effectiveness of bids from projects working with multiple disadvantaged clients; and
- their perceptions of the performance of projects focusing on multiple disadvantaged clients to help guide our selection of case studies.

We also tested our approach to selecting a small number of case studies in the first phase. The results of phase one were presented in an interim report in January 2005.

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During the second phase this approach was expanded to all the English regions and a total of 52 case study projects were identified. The research team visited the premises of each of the case studies and interviewed the project officer/manager to gain an understanding of their practices and how these helped deliver outcomes for multiple disadvantaged clients. The interviews were semi-structured and on average took about one to 1.5 hours; the topic lists for the interviews is included in Appendix A. In a limited number of cases it was also possible for the research team to speak to some clients and/or additional project staff. The 52 case study visits took place between October 2004 and February 2005.

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** summarises our findings of the literature review on what works in delivering labour market outcomes for multiple disadvantaged groups;

- an overview of case-studies is presented in **Chapter 3** with information about location, target group, funding organisation and level of ESF funding, types of activities; this section includes information about the value added of ESF funding;

- **Chapter 4** draws lessons learnt from discussions with managers and frontline staff in case-study projects to present good practice principles from recruitment to after-care drawn from the case study projects; and finally;

- **Chapter 5** presents our conclusions and the key issues arising for the future development of Objective 3 ESF funding in England with respect to support the effective participation of multiple disadvantaged groups.
2 What works for multiple disadvantaged groups?

2.1 Definition of multiple disadvantaged groups

There is, to our knowledge, no currently accepted definition of multiple disadvantaged groups. Rather than re-invent the wheel, we decided to adopt the group definitions used by Richard Berthoud in his 2003 study\(^2\). This study has two distinct advantages:

- firstly, it is comprehensive (analysing a total of just under 550,000 Labour Force Survey (LFS) records over a nine year period); and
- secondly, it is comparative (in that the influence of each of the factors on the chances of being in employment were assessed both jointly and severally).

The analysis models the relationship between the proportion of people ‘not in employment’ across six key characteristics. Those ‘not in employment’ are defined by those not working at least 16 hours a week or not in full-time education. In addition, this classification determines the economic position of the whole household: people are treated as in employment if they themselves are in work or education or if their partner is in work or education\(^3\). The characteristics which underlie disadvantage are as follows:

- age;
- family structure;
- skill level;


\(^3\) R Berthoud, op cit, p 9.
• impairment (disability);
• ethnic group;
• labour demand.

The Berthoud analysis explores the impact of ‘differing’ degrees of each factor on the chances of an individual being in work. For our research, the model provides a robust definition of specific multiple disadvantaged groups subject to the data on personal characteristics contained in the LFS. The definitions identified by Berthoud as leading to greater levels of disadvantage are:

• older people (over 50s);
• those without partners, particularly those who have caring responsibilities – predominately lone parents;
• people in the ‘unskilled’ LFS socio economic group or those without qualifications;
• people with an ‘impairment’4 (or for our purposes, a disability);
• ethnic minority clients, particularly those from Bangladeshi and Pakistani groups; and
• those who live in ‘low employment demand’ regions of the country.

While the latter condition raises an interesting question on the differential performance that might be considered appropriate between projects operating in high and low demand areas, we have not included this criteria directly in our definition of multiple disadvantaged groups. We have, however, included ‘rural’, partly as this may be a proxy for low demand/high cost delivery in most cases but mainly because this is a readily available European Social Fund (ESF) classification.

There are other personal characteristics which are not covered by the Berthoud analysis (because LFS data is limited or does not exist) but are widely associated with multiple disadvantaged groups:

• those who suffer from drug or alcohol addiction;
• those whose first language is not English; and
• other groups – ex-offenders, refugees, homeless, care leavers, etc.

Such classifications are available within ESF monitoring data, although in many cases the information is often self-reported and may, therefore, not be a true representation of the disadvantages faced by people.

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4 Berthoud used a combination of measures of physical and mental health with the number of conditions reported to model ‘impairment’.
There is a danger that a blanket classification of these groups as ‘multiple disadvantaged’ may stigmatise those who have such characteristics. The Berthoud definitions provide a useful starting point in order to segment the broader client group into those who are in greater danger of being without work. The second element of the Berthoud analysis explored the impact of two or more disadvantages on the employment prospects of people and households – circumstances of multiple disadvantage which tend to better reflect the qualitative feedback on clients’ situation from those working on the frontline.

The analysis was able to identify particular combinations of characteristics which occur more frequently than if they were mutually independent5. These were:

- people with impairments have relatively low skill levels;
- a high proportion of Caribbean and African people are either lone parents or live in high unemployment areas; and
- low skill levels are common among Pakistani and Bangladeshi people.

Other research suggests that factors not included in Berthoud’s analysis also tend to overlap. A recent review of the literature relating to the employment barriers raised by drug and alcohol abuse highlighted the inter-relatedness between addiction problems, mental and physical health, crime, homelessness and low skills6.

Whilst this may tend to suggest that disadvantages tend to overlap in a particularly complex fashion, this was not Berthoud’s finding: just over half of the 38 possible pairs and only eight of the 68 triplets were significant in explaining why people were not in employment. Further combinations did not provide any more accuracy to the model. The eight most important (in terms of explaining variation in employment) were7:

- lone parents with low qualifications and skills are significantly disadvantaged; but
- being over 50 and black is less of a disadvantage than expected given age and ethnic background alone;
- lone parent and black is also a less disadvantaged combination;
- single with no children Pakistani or Bangladeshi people have higher employment probabilities than expected;
- this is also the case for this group even when they also have low qualifications and skills;

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5 R. Berthoud, op cit, p26.
6 L. Sutton et al., Drug and Alcohol Abuse as Barriers to Employment, the DWP Report W193a, March 2003.
7 R. Berthoud, op cit, p29.
• however, single with no children over 50s who have some impairment are more likely to be without work;
• over 50 low qualification and skills Pakistani and Bangladeshi people will also be more likely to be without work; and
• people with an impairment and low qualifications and skills were also more likely to be without work.

The final aspect of Berthoud’s analysis which is relevant to this research relates to the number of barriers each individual faces. According to Berthoud the ‘greater the number of disadvantages, the greater the level of non-employment – from just three per cent of individuals with no problem, up to an appalling 91 per cent of those with six problems’.

Berthoud’s primary finding, therefore, is that the nature of the disadvantages do provide an indication of the depth of problem facing an individual but that the number of barriers give a more direct assessment of their distance from the labour market. So in circumstances where it may be difficult to objectively assess the degree of disadvantage, understanding how many barriers clients may face would provide a quick assessment of the depth of their problem.

The emphasis of Berthoud’s research is on the depth of the problem facing individuals in the labour market. Taking his definitions, it is possible to estimate the scale of the problem. Clearly, there are some significant groups: people without partners, lone parents, those over 50, those with a disability and those with low skills represent substantial groups in aggregate.

The recent analysis of the ESF Objective 3 Leavers’ Survey suggests that ESF Objective 3 projects have been successful in attracting multiple disadvantaged clients. Unfortunately, the results are not directly comparable as the Leavers’ Survey considers a wider range of barriers than are available in the LFS dataset. Table 2.1 includes comparative percentages for those groups where the definitions appear to be similar. In all cases, the results of the Leavers’ Survey suggests that ESF projects are engaging with disadvantaged groups at a rate above that of the general population of the LFS. This appears to be particularly the case for lone parents and people with low skills or no qualifications.

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8 R. Berthoud, op cit, p31.
9 J. Atkinson, op. cit.
Table 2.1  Comparison of percentages of multiple disadvantaged clients in the LFS and the ESF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multiple disadvantaged group</th>
<th>Percentage in LFS</th>
<th>Percentage in the ESF Leavers’ Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single without dependent children</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone parent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impairment</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50s</td>
<td>Not reported (19)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low skill/qualification</td>
<td>Not reported (12)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1 Source: LFS Q1 2004 for proportion of over 50s-State Pension Age and all those working in elementary occupations.

If people were to be classified as disadvantaged solely by their membership of just one of these groups, then the target population would include a wide range of people – almost 70 per cent of the population fall into one category or another. Higher probabilities of non-employment are associated with membership of two or more groups. For practical reasons, therefore, we would suggest that to retain some meaning, multiple disadvantaged groups should have two or more disadvantages. This would suggest a target group of around one in four of the total population.

Compared to Berthoud, the ESF Leavers’ Survey reports that a similar proportion of clients do not have a disadvantage, but that there are more clients with three or more disadvantages and fewer clients with just one disadvantage (see Table 2.2). This would suggest that not only does the ESF engage with higher proportions of multiple disadvantaged groups but that the ESF clients also tend to have more disadvantages. However, the Leavers’ Survey did canvass for a wider range of disadvantages than were analysed by Berthoud so some care should be taken when considering these comparisons.
What works for multiple disadvantaged groups?

Table 2.2  Impact of the number of barriers on employment prospects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of disadvantages</th>
<th>% (of column) in LFS all individuals</th>
<th>Cumulative % all individuals</th>
<th>% (of row) not in employment</th>
<th>% in the ESF Leavers Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>69.32</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>Two</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>Four</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six or more</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Reproduced from Berthoud, op cit, p31 and Atkinson, op cit, Table 2.1 p22.
1 Category is ‘Three or more disadvantages’.

2.2 Interviews with the Department for Work and Pensions research managers

Our discussions with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) research managers were undertaken with two objectives in mind to:

• check that the definitions arising from Berthoud were appropriate and supported by other research on specific multiple disadvantaged groups and refine the definition as appropriate; and

• consult on the available evidence of what works for these particular groups.

Members of research teams dealing with multiple disadvantaged groups, disability, ethnic minorities, lone parents, housing and refugees were consulted. There was a degree of consistency in the perceptions of the researchers across these research areas:

• broadly speaking, the factors identified by Berthoud were accepted by all as being key to understanding multiple disadvantage; however

• consultees recognised that the analysis was unable to include other important factors – drug and alcohol addiction, lack of basic literacy and numeracy skills (as opposed to just low skills), ability to speak English, ex-offenders, homeless, and care leavers were all seen as key factors which were also relatively common across a number of multiple disadvantaged groups;

• these are typically self-reported and, therefore, seen as measures which will suffer from under-reporting in many cases.

Disability is one area where the basic definition of the problem (self-reported health issues) does not conform to the general policy direction – the Department is moving towards a more human rights based approach to maintaining work for people with
disabilities if they so wish. Other research also undertaken by Berthoud\textsuperscript{10} has highlighted that as a group ‘the disabled’ are highly diverse and some sub-division of this catch-all classification is necessary in order to provide a better understanding of the heterogeneity in their circumstances. Moreover, Berthoud highlighted a higher sensitivity of disabled people to the combined impact of multiple disadvantage when their condition is combined with other sources of disadvantage – something which has been identified for homeless people in other qualitative research\textsuperscript{11}.

Previous research has found that self-reporting does lead to under-reporting, particularly with older people – who see their problems as being ‘old age’ rather than a disability per se. Having said this, there is little choice with current datasets but to take self-assessment as a starting point for the analysis.

As with other areas of research (particularly ethnic minorities), some research was in progress which it was expected would shed further light on the issues of multiple disadvantaged. For example, the Social Exclusion Unit’s (SEU’s) report on mental health and social exclusion\textsuperscript{12} and the recent review of the impact of Government policy on social exclusion also published by the SEU\textsuperscript{13}. The latter has identified three main groups for whom policies (across government) seem less effective:

- people with physical or mental health problems;
- those who lack skills or qualifications, both formal qualifications and broader basic and life skills; and
- people from some ethnic minority groups, including asylum seekers and refugees.

In summary then, the key messages from our discussions with research managers on the definition of multiple disadvantaged groups are that Berthoud provides the best available starting point to help refine and segment the market for most groups but with some concern relating to:

- what is already known about the accuracy of self-reported disabled people (although for practical purposes it is recognised there is currently little alternative but to use this measure);
- the need to consider other disadvantaging factors for which there is relatively limited information in official data such as drug and alcohol abuse, ex-offenders, homeless, care leavers, speakers of other languages, etc; and

\textsuperscript{10} R. Berthoud, Disabled People and Jobs, Benefits, No 38, 2003, pp 169-74.
\textsuperscript{12} Mental Health and Social Exclusion, SEU, June 2004.
\textsuperscript{13} Breaking the Cycle: Taking Stock of Priorities, SEU, September 2004.
a danger that adopting such broad categories could lead to stigmatisation. Each group includes a wide variety of clients and it could be dangerous to categorise all as being ‘multiple disadvantaged’. Further refinement would be necessary before such an approach was able to fully inform policy.

We think that a key issue moving forward is to ensure that multiple disadvantage as a concept does not get applied too widely and remains focused. We would suggest that to conform to the classification of multiple disadvantage, people should face at least two (and possibly three) of the barriers identified by Berthoud. Factors such as drug and alcohol abuse, criminal records, speakers of other languages should be included in the count – we cannot estimate what difference they would make on their own but there is plenty of evidence to suggest that it is the multiple disadvantages which challenge service providers to ensure they can respond to a wide range of client needs.

We also asked research managers whether current research allowed any assessment of whether ‘hard to reach’ individuals were also hard to help. The consensus view was that much research to date did not provide sufficient detail to determine how many of those not engaged in mainstream programmes were also hard to help. A number of managers also pointed out that in some cases, the research across a number of programmes had concluded that the most disadvantaged clients had not participated in large numbers in the first place, especially in those parts of the process which were voluntary. So, in some respects, the case is ‘not proven’ in that the most disadvantaged had not participated at all rather than participated and then failed to achieve an outcome.

This has contributed to a broad consensus that we do not yet have the appropriate evidence on what works across a range of multiple disadvantaged groups. Limited participation of such groups is a contributory factor to this but much current research also tends to highlight performance differentials and, therefore, what has not worked for multiple disadvantaged groups.

Available research provides a growing appreciation of the performance differentials between different sub-groups within eligible client populations—with characteristics of client groups which are (more) associated with positive outcomes on the one hand and those of the groups who did less well on the other. In their recent report for the SEU, Green and Hasluck identify the following as being associated with a higher probability of moving from a subsidised to unsubsidised job in New Deal 25 Plus:

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15 Green and Hasluck, Op cit, September 2004, p42.
• qualifications;
• higher skill occupations;
• no personal health or other problems;
• jobs in larger establishment (especially the public sector); and
• jobs in organisations with an expanding activity level.

According to research summarising New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP), lone fathers, teenage lone parents, lone parents with ill health or disability or members of ethnic minorities were less likely to leave to jobs\textsuperscript{16}. Having said this there are some notable exceptions which highlight ‘what works’ or rather ‘what might work’ in more detail than is often the case on the basis of these performance differentials\textsuperscript{17}.

Evidence on the sustainability of outcomes suggests that where multiple disadvantaged clients have secured employment, they find it harder to maintain them. Research published recently has included some evidence from UK Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) experience, alongside other UK and (mainly) US job retention experience\textsuperscript{18}. At least part of the reason behind this is:

• more than half the people who leave Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) to a job with claims greater than six months return within 13 weeks;

• most JSA (and non-JSA) claimants leave jobs of their own volition, most saying the job ‘did not suit them’. Those originally facing more, or deeper, barriers to entering work, also leave work at a faster rate as these issues can be resurrected and lead them to quit or be made redundant.

Other research focusing on the transitions to work of JSA claimants confirms the ‘usual suspects’ in determining the sustainability of any move from JSA into work: previous benefit history, especially length of last claim and number of claims, play a major role in predicting how quickly someone will return to the Register\textsuperscript{19}. More


\textsuperscript{18} From Job Seekers to Job Keepers: Job Retention, Advancement And The Role Of In-Work Support Programmes, Centre for Research Social Policy (CRSP) for Centre for Management and Policy Studies (Cabinet Office) and the DWP, Research Report 170, July 2002.

\textsuperscript{19} Jobseeker’s Allowance: Transitions to Work and Early Returns to JSA, K. Ashworth and W. Chia Liu, the DWP In-house Report No 80, 2001.
aftercare support is seen as a necessary development in many evaluation recommendations, but how best these services might be delivered has not been determined.

Some research has highlighted the issue that the current emphasis on supply-side initiatives may not suit multiple disadvantaged groups in particular\(^{20}\). ILM programmes nevertheless remain popular at a local level and are being tested nationally in the Step Up programme. ILMs have been the subject of a number of local evaluations which suggest that in the main they can offer an alternative approach but research raises three concerns:

- ILMs typically select their employees, leading to a perception that they only select the ‘best’. This leaves policymakers with a residual problem – what do you do with those ‘rejected’ by the ILM? And at the same time this makes some researchers suspicious of the reported good results?
- so far, the ILM evaluations have been relatively small by national standards and, therefore, the results are not considered to be robust. The evaluation of Step Up has been suggested as being the first robust investigation of ILM performance;
- a recent evaluation of Worktrack in Northern Ireland also lends weight to another ‘criticism’ of ILMs: that they are difficult to manage\(^{21}\). At 40 per cent into jobs, the scheme was not considered a success and marginally less effective than its predecessor, Action for Community Employment\(^{22}\). One issue which can be very difficult to assess in an evaluation is the extent to which the management and implementation of the programme has affected performance. The operation of Worktrack appears to be along very traditional mainstream lines – something which may well contribute to a low performance.

However, this appreciation of performance differentials is not yet matched by a qualitative understanding of why these differences have arisen nor what might need to be done to improve delivery. Most DWP researchers cited the Personal Adviser (PA) approach alongside flexible client-centred support as being a platform for good practice delivery (which incidentally, reflects the guiding principles of the ESF support: holistic, client-centred and flexible delivery). How this type of service might need to vary for multiple disadvantaged clients was more difficult to establish from current evidence. There are some isolated examples in the literature: a recent

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\(^{20}\) For example, Green and Hasluck, op cit, September 2004.


analysis of performance variation does highlight the size of the job brokering budget per client as a significant factor in explaining variation in Jobcentre performance\textsuperscript{23}.

On the other hand, other research has suggested that PAs may not be able to accurately judge clients' needs and that referral patterns from PAs are no better than if they were made randomly\textsuperscript{24}. This analysis may not have considered the extent to which multiple disadvantaged clients demand a wider range of service from health to housing. Relating to the earlier findings that few multiple disadvantaged have participated in mainstream programmes to date this could also mean PAs just don’t get sufficient practice to build up their knowledge of such clients. Both these issues challenge provision\textsuperscript{25} and can require both more time and resources.

The Qualitative Evaluation of Employment Zones\textsuperscript{26} reported that although the output-related funding structure made it in the interests of providers to assess all clients, there were a substantial proportion of clients – reported by Employment Zone staff as being between 25-40 per cent who were too difficult to help – because there was too little time in the process to address their needs. Waiting lists and differences in eligibility criteria for other (non-labour market) services can mean that very little can be done in the short-term for those who need this type of assistance.

A wide range of research reports frontline advisers’ views on helping multiple disadvantaged people can be summarised as ‘we can work with any problems, so long as the client is ready’\textsuperscript{27}. However, there is, as yet, very little evidence on what makes people ready in the first place. Projects funded by initiatives such as the New Futures Fund in Scotland do aim to engage with as wide a group as possible but all have strict rules (such as no drug or alcohol use) which mean people must have taken their first steps to stabilising their lives before they enter the project\textsuperscript{28}.

\textsuperscript{23} GHK, Cambridge Econometrics, Bannock Consulting, Understanding Performance Variation, the DWP Research Report 194, April 2004.


\textsuperscript{26} Hirst et al., Employment Zones: A Study of Local Delivery Agents and Case Studies, the DWP WAE139, 2002.


\textsuperscript{28} L. Sutton et al., Drug and Alcohol Use as a Barrier to Employment: A Review of the Literature, the DWP Research Report W193, March 2004.
There have been attempts at a local level to engage directly into deprived areas using community development approaches to build trust and provide information and advice on moving back into work. Qualitative research suggests that this type of community-based approach can take the first step in engaging multiple disadvantaged groups. However, they need time to build trust with clients and challenge their perceptions before it is possible to support people into mainstream services. More generally, the evidence base for increasing community involvement in service delivery is, as yet, very thin. Recent research in Wales suggests that key inactive clients groups – men, those over 45, the long-term sick and those living in the Valleys, demonstrated the lowest levels of awareness of the very programmes aiming to help them to return to work while the highest level was reported by those who expressed a desire to work in the future.

2.3 Summary of key issues

In summary, the general perceptions of research managers were that while research has been able to identify differentials in performance between multiple disadvantaged groups and mainstream clients in general, it had yet to deliver a detailed appreciation of the scale of these differences across different disadvantages and particularly across different combinations of disadvantages. This has limited current understanding of why such performance differentials arise.

The key points arising from the wider review of literature and discussions with lead researchers in the DWP were that:

- the findings of Berthoud’s analysis (of the observable factors which relate to non-employment) were a good starting point for the investigation as: (a) no other significant research contradicted the main findings and (b) any misgivings related to the lack of information on other disadvantages such as drug and alcohol misuse, those with criminal records, those who spoke languages other than English, etc., which was not readily available in any case;

- the number of barriers says more than the particular nature of the disadvantages – Berthoud found a linearly increasing probability of unemployment or inactivity the greater the number of disadvantages;

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30 Paul Burton, Community involvement in neighbourhood regeneration: stairway to heaven or road to nowhere?, Centre for Neighbourhood Research, July 2003.

31 David Blackaby et al., Identifying Barriers to Economic Inactivity in Wales: A Survey of Economically Inactive in Three Areas of Special Interest, Economic Research Unit, Welsh Assembly Government, forthcoming.
• research is beginning to address the issue of differential performance of programmes with different client sub-groups but there is still some way to go in ensuring the right characteristics are monitored (for example, a much more detailed appreciation of physical and psychological barriers to employment rather than ‘disabled’) and that the issue of whether multiple disadvantaged could be identified, as many systems do not allow client level analysis; and similarly

• research is beginning to address the issue of what works for disadvantaged groups in more detail but at present there is something of an information gap with very little robust evidence available on what is required to work with clients with multiple disadvantages.
3 Overview of the case studies

3.1 An operational definition of multiple disadvantage

Who the disadvantaged are is relatively easy to determine at a macro level – black and minority ethnic people, the over 50s, the disabled, substance misusers, lone parents, and ex-offenders have all been categorised as such. Global statistics and much of the research analysed in the previous section can provide a broad scale of the membership of these groups but:

- say little about the overlap between these groups to identify different degrees of multiple disadvantage; and
- do not provide any information on the particular circumstances of clients that might help further to break down their needs and allow a more policy relevant classification into ‘hard-to-reach’ or ‘hard-to-help’.

The general consensus from the research community was that for pragmatic reasons (predominately data availability), combinations of the following characteristics should broadly be held as multiple disadvantages:

- over 50s;
- lone parents;
- disabled;
- ethnic minority;
- low skills.

Other barriers were highlighted as being as important but there was, in aggregate, a problem with the data available on these issues:
• ex-offenders;
• homeless people;
• refugees and speakers of languages other than English;
• drug and alcohol misusers;
• carers and care leavers; and
• living in areas of low labour demand.

There was widespread agreement among Government offices (GOs) and co-financing organisations (CFOs) on these criteria but it was also interesting to note a particular concern with the perceived impact of areas of low labour demand on project outcomes. While there is no basis in European Social Fund (ESF) Objective 3 criteria for assessing the level of local demand, a number of CFOs and GOs felt that projects operating in rural areas not only faced low or limited demand for their clients but also had to contend with relatively high unit costs in delivery. For this reason, we included ‘rural’ in the list of criteria for the selection of case study projects in the second phase of the study.

3.2 Case study selection process

From the start, we recognised that it would be difficult to use robust and consistent performance monitoring information to select projects purely on their ability to deliver positive outcomes to people facing multiple disadvantages. Nationally, ESF Objective 3 collects a wealth of monitoring data from projects at three stages during a funding lifecycle:

• applications data – drawn from the projects’ original application for Objective 3 funding;

• contract monitoring forms - quarterly updates to co-financing organisations on project progress during its lifetime; and

• closure data – drawn from the projects’ final submission once the Objective 3 funding has finished.

However, for various reasons the information is not fit for the purpose of identifying which projects work best with which client groups. The Closure dataset is the most complete source of information but, for the purposes of this study, it has two weaknesses:

• firstly, the data becomes available some time (at least three months) after the project has been completed so there is a considerable time lag in relation to current activity. Data available in May 2004 was drawn up to December 2003 by which time, very few co-financed projects had been completed; and
secondly, while the dataset contains details on the characteristics of clients, these are held at the level of the project. Although it is possible to identify the presence of individual disadvantaged groups in each project, a more detailed exploration of multiple disadvantage or the extent to which clients with disadvantages share in the positive outcomes, is not possible.

Applications data suffers from similar weaknesses, with the further problem that the data are expected activity and outcomes.

We did undertake an initial analysis of project closure data at the outset of the study. Notwithstanding the comments above, it did raise three important issues:

- the range of project performance in placing unemployed people into work is relatively wide – some 21 per cent of previously unemployed or inactive clients find work post-programme, on average, but this varies between just one per cent for the bottom quartile compared to 56 per cent for the top quartile;
- in general, selecting projects in the top quartile significantly improves the average employment outcomes without removing the presence of any disadvantaged group;
- this would suggest that differences in the presence of disadvantaged client groups alone cannot explain differences in performance between projects.

The on-going monitoring of contract progress proved to be a more fruitful source of information although at the start of the research it was not possible to access the two main sources (Jobcentre Plus’ ESF database and the Learning and Skills Councils’ (LSCs) Individual Learner Record dataset). The primary advantage of these datasets is that they do provide a basis for analysing individual clients’ characteristics (allowing the analysis of multiple disadvantages) and outcomes but also allow this to be aggregated at the level of the project to assess the effectiveness of projects’ activities in working with such clients.

Moreover, the fact that there are limits to the usefulness of the available monitoring information for the purpose of identifying good practice is only part of the problem. Essentially, there are no objective standards around good practice or what constitutes good practice. Any choice, by definition, is going to be subjective. Our methodology for case study selection – as set out in the following paragraphs – reflects this.

The initial phase of the research explored the issues in three regions (the South West, Yorkshire and Humberside and London), with interviews with GOs and the CFOs. Five potential case studies were selected from the 2002 Closure dataset by identifying projects with good performance and a high proportion of disadvantaged clients (it was not possible to link outcomes to specific client groups in the Closure dataset) but it was discovered that a number of these had subsequently ceased to operate.
GOs and CFOs were then asked to identify good practice projects, which they did, pointing out to us, however, that they did not have in-depth knowledge of the delivery methods of individual projects. In the event, we based our case study selection on our discussions with GOs and CFOs, our wider experience of what represented good practice across different elements of delivery and the short description of projects. Initial discussions with projects by telephone were used to confirm details where necessary.

In the absence of a comprehensive database of project characteristics, it was not possible to compare the features of the good practice projects with those funded by the ESF more generally. Nevertheless, we aimed to select projects with a broad range of characteristics across:

- target client group (specific multiple disadvantaged groups or area targeting);
- co-financing or other bids;
- type of activity (broadly counselling/training/job search preparation/volunteering, etc);
- the ESF measure;
- size of funding/scale of activity;
- links to other programmes (e.g. New Deals, area regeneration programmes, etc);
- English region.

The final selection of case studies was made to ensure a representative set of case studies across these characteristics. This process was then rolled out across all of nine English regions.

### 3.2.1 Geographical coverage

Cambridge Policy Consultants (CPC) visited one central project (Prison Service Plus); the 51 other projects were regional projects. All regions were included in the research; the number of projects visited per region ranges from four (in Yorkshire and the Humber) to eight (in the North East).
### Table 3.1  Number of case study projects per region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of case study projects</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EM</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LO</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NW</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>SE</td>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WM</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YH</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CPC survey of case study projects.

### 3.2.2 Type of organisation

Two-thirds of ESF projects visited (63 per cent) were run by voluntary sector organisations, 25 per cent of projects were managed by a public sector organisation and 12 per cent by existing providers or the education sector.

### Table 3.2  Number of case study projects per sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Number of case study projects</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary sector</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sector</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education sector</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CPC survey of case study projects.

### 3.2.3 Co-financing organisation

Half of the ESF projects visited (49 per cent) were co-financed by Jobcentre Plus; one-third of the projects (31 per cent) were co-financed by LSCs. Ten per cent were direct bids to the GO and the remaining 10 per cent were co-financed by Councils, Connexions and the Prison Service.
### Table 3.3  Number of case study projects by organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Number of case study projects</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre Plus</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and Skill Council</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Office (direct bids)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local council</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connexions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prison Service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CPC survey of case study projects.

### 3.2.4 Policy field and measure

Almost half of the projects (42 per cent) correspond to policy field and measure 2.2. Almost a quarter of projects (23 per cent) address policy field and measure 1.2. Basic skills (2.1) and lifelong learning (3.1), together with a few providing advice and guidance (1.1) and promoting the participation of women (5), make up the remainder. It is hardly surprising that the majority of projects fall under these two measures, since measures 1.2 and 2.2 are the ESF measures directly aiming to address barriers to employment:

- **Measure 1.2**: To improve the employability of the unemployed, returners and young people of working age through targeted intervention to enhance vocational and other key skills and remove external barriers to labour market entry.

- **Measure 2.2**: To provide help to improve the employability and remove barriers to labour market entry for those groups disadvantaged in the labour market, such as: people with disabilities; 13-17 year olds who have opted out of the educational system; lone parents; older workers; ex-offenders; the homeless; refugees; those recovering from addiction.

### Table 3.4  Number of case study projects by the ESF measure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESF measure</th>
<th>Number of case study projects</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>3.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CPC survey of case study projects.
3.2.5 Project budgets

Almost half of the projects visited (46 per cent) had a budget between £100,000 and £350,000, with only one below £10,000 and three regional projects over £1 million. The central project had a budget of £29 million.

### Table 3.5 Number of case study projects by budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget Range</th>
<th>Number of case study projects</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than £10,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£10,000 – £50,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£50,000 – £100,000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£100,000 – £350,000</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£1,000,000 – £3,000,000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than £25,000,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: CPC survey of case study projects.

3.2.6 Target group

Twelve projects used two barriers to define the target group or targeted two groups, e.g. young people who have a criminal record or lone parent refugees. This does not, however, mean that the number of barriers faced by clients was limited to two. Additional barriers were present in most of the case studies, but were not specified in the description of the target group. Since the prevalence of additional barriers is widespread, the following are typical examples:

- A project targeting ex-offenders reported low basic skills, drugs problems, mental health issues and housing problems as barriers to employment faced by their clients.

- A project targeting young homeless people reported low skills, mental health issues (stress related to the crisis situation at home which led to homelessness) and lone parenthood as additional barriers.

- A project targeting young mothers reported lone parenthood, low skills, drugs and alcohol abuse and domestic violence as additional disadvantages.

Three target groups (Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), people with learning disabilities and young people) were the focus of nearly half of the projects; and six target groups accounted for 80% of projects.
### Table 3.6 Number of case study projects by client group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client Group</th>
<th>Number of case study projects</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning disabilities</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young people</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ex-offenders</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone parents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees/asylum seekers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term unemployed</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with children</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Deal clients</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older people</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deprived neighbourhood</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>58</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Some projects targeted several groups, which explains why the total number of groups targeted (58) is higher than the total number of projects. Percentages are calculated on the basis of the total of 52 projects.

Source: CPC survey of case study projects.

### 3.3 Analysis of project performance

The procedure for selecting case study projects was not designed specifically to produce a representative sample of ESF Objective 3 clients per se. The presumption, given the project monitoring information and the recommendations of the CFOs, is that these projects will pick up relatively similar proportions of clients with certain disadvantages (number of disadvantages and type of disadvantages) compared to the overall ESF Objective 3 population.

We have noted elsewhere in this report that detailed information on the characteristics of individual clients is not readily available in a format that will allow analysis of project performance. However, some data is available in this format for Jobcentre Plus co-funded projects and those projects co-funded by the LSCs. The Jobcentre Plus ESF database provides a range of data on clients’ characteristics as well as information on the project. The dataset went live in April 2002 and is intended for all Jobcentre Plus Objective 3 co-funded projects to record their clients’ characteristics and progress on line. It is intended that projects update the records on a regular basis but there is no stipulation concerning the precise timing this should occur – this suggests that while the data (drawn in March 2005) includes records up to that date, this may not be the case for all projects.
The analysis of the Jobcentre Plus ESF database provides an opportunity to test the hypothesis that the 24 Jobcentre Plus case study projects have a proportion of multiple disadvantaged clients that is roughly comparable to the overall ESF Objective 3 client population.

Details of the analysis can be found in Appendix B. The main conclusions of the analysis are:

- both the 24 case study projects and the other Jobcentre Plus projects have a higher proportion of the more disadvantaged groups as their clients compared to all projects included in the most recent (2002) ESF Leavers’ Survey;

- although the characteristics of the clients of the 24 case study projects are broadly similar, they are not identical to those of clients of other Jobcentre Plus co-financed projects. Some barriers are more prevalent in the case study projects (low qualification and prior duration on Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA)/non-JSA claimants) while others are less frequent (ethnicity and disabled clients);

- the analysis of the Jobcentre Plus data seems to confirm the hypothesis that performance does not simply reflect the client composition of projects. There are differences in the employment performance of clients facing different barriers but these are not sufficient to suggest that any differences between case study and other Jobcentre Plus projects are due to compositional effects;

- with the exception of the over 50s category where there were very few case study projects, the figures suggest that there is a fair degree of similarity of performance between case study and non-case study projects;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.7 Employment performance of projects focusing on key client groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average according to criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability &gt; 95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white &gt; 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-JSA &gt; 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low qualifications &gt; 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50 &gt; 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All clients</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


- Jobcentre Plus clearly deal with significant numbers of disadvantaged clients. Almost half of case study Jobcentre Plus project clients had been either unemployed and claiming JSA for 36 months or more or were not claiming JSA and were unemployed. This compares to 40 per cent of other Jobcentre Plus co-financed clients;
• there is evidence in to suggest that both Jobcentre Plus co-financed projects in general and the case studies in particular, have been relatively more successful at placing people facing multiple disadvantages.

Figure 3.1 Proportion of clients leaving to employment by number of barriers

![Graph showing proportion of clients leaving to employment by number of barriers.]


Note: A fairly high proportion of those with no disadvantages on the Leavers’ Survey would already be in employment before joining ESF projects: 50 per cent of lifelong learning (policy field 3) clients and 90 per cent of adaptability/entrepreneurship (policy field 4) clients were employed on joining the ESF. This explains the disproportionately high number of clients with no barriers leaving to employment according to the Leavers’ survey.

3.4 ESF value added in case studies

The vast majority of project managers indicated that the ESF had been vital to the success of their project, often stating that nothing would have happened without ESF funding and in a small number of cases, the end of ESF funding indeed also meant the end of all project activity.

Two years earlier a social enterprise project had consulted 50 BME women about the then available training provision. The consultation had revealed that the women had had enough of always the same activities (IT, language classes) and wanted more ‘fun’ activities. Moreover, the women complained about teachers coming from outside their communities, about the lack of childcare provision and the lack of short, intensive ESOL courses. The ESF made it possible to develop a training project tailored to the training needs and requirements of local BME women. Without the ESF, the consultation would have remained without result.
The remaining project officers conceded that their project could have taken place without ESF support, but they were all able to identify additional benefits achieved through ESF funding. The perceived added value of ESF funding can be broadly grouped in four categories:

- provision to more clients;
- higher quality of provision;
- provision to a different client group;
- use of ESF money as ‘seed money’ in order to gain additional funding.

Many project officers referred to provision to more clients as added value of ESF funding. ESF funding had enabled the organisations to extend their existing provision to more clients. In these cases, projects would also have taken place without ESF funding, but would have been managed on a smaller scale.

A second perceived added value of ESF funding was higher quality of provision. ESF funding enabled projects to:

- increase the range of services on offer – projects would have happened without ESF funding but certain elements would have disappeared from the range of services provided; thus, the ESF added value by including work placements, additional training, financial support packages (for beneficiaries or employers), etc. to the overall range of activities;
- focus more strongly on individually tailored support;
- intensify the level of support – for example, the ESF enabled some projects to increase the number of contact hours/days between client and support worker in any given week;
- work with better quality equipment – for example, in a number of cases the ESF funded software packages to facilitate job searches or progress assessment.

Most projects identified a direct relationship between the need for higher quality support and the nature of their client group, referring to the fact that provision for multiple disadvantaged clients has higher demands than provision for mainstream clients. At least one project noted that progression of its client would have been slower without the more intensive (ESF-funded) individual support. A number of project officers explicitly interpreted ‘higher demands’ in terms of higher unit costs – with one project estimating unit costs being double those of mainstream provision. In particular, when aiming to place clients in employment, additional efforts and additional costs are needed to overcome the additional barriers (‘the package’) of multiple disadvantaged clients.
A project providing training for BME women estimated that provision to their clients might require twice the price of mainstream provision. There are additional costs:

- leaflets and other information need to be translated;
- explaining things to people whose first language is not English takes longer; and
- Clients need an individually tailored support package to break down barriers, including negative previous experience of learning institutions, family and cultural restrictions, etc.

The most important way in which the ESF enabled both extension of provision to more clients and higher quality of provision was through providing funding for additional and/or better qualified staff and enabling more intensive support through a stronger focus on individual needs. Staffing costs were almost inevitably included by project officers in their list of cost items covered by ESF funding. The ESF enabled projects to hire additional and/or better qualified:

- personal development advisers;
- education advisers;
- employment advisers;
- researchers; and
- project managers and/or officers.

In a number of cases, additional staffing needs were addressed through secondments from other organisations. The specific expertise of the secondees and the opportunities for improved networking secondees offered, provided additional benefits.

A third perceived value added by ESF funding was that the ESF enabled a number of projects to extend provision to a different target group. The new target group was not necessarily always a more disadvantaged target group. For example, in a number of cases, ESF funding simply led projects to service a wider age group.

A project supporting young mothers (under 16 years old) used ESF funding to extend provision to girls aged 16-18 years old. The ESF project used the existing project infrastructure and project staff; funding was only provided for one additional support worker to focus specifically on the older age group.

In one case, the ESF even led a project to target a slightly less disadvantaged group: a project widened, its provision to people with ‘mild to moderate’ learning difficulties whereas before, the organisation had only focused on people with
‘severe’ learning difficulties – the latter being the only group accepted for funding by the project’s main other funding source, but a group unlikely to succeed in achieving sustainable employment outcomes. In most cases, however, ESF funding was appreciated because it enabled support for more disadvantaged people.

A project ran a café managed by people with learning difficulties. The project officer explained that the café would also have existed without ESF funding, but their outlook would necessarily have been more commercial – which would have meant working with less advantaged clients.

Finally, a small number of projects used ESF funding as ‘seed money’ on which to build further provision. A small number of projects indicated that ESF funding had been successfully used to match other funding. Other projects had used ESF money to launch pilots, which could afterwards be sustained through other means. In these cases, set-up costs were considered the main barrier to providing additional services and the ESF removed this barrier by providing funding for these set-up costs. One project described its use of the ESF as ‘a loss leader’ – the ESF did not create any profits for the organisation, but allowed them to build the infrastructure, which enabled them to deliver other products. From a funder’s perspective, this use of ESF money as ‘seed money’ to launch new, but subsequently sustainable, pilots is obviously a very interesting one.

Most of the projects were fully embedded within existing organisations and were also drawing down funding from non-ESF funding sources. Many of these organisations think about their financial resources as one ‘pot of money’ and see ESF funding as just one of several contributions to their total budget. This is not to say that ESF funding has no added value for these organisations; the additional funding enables them, as explained in the previous paragraphs, to extend or improve the quality of provision. However, one cannot escape from the impression that ESF funding more often than not seems to add value indirectly only, by increasing the overall budget available to the organisation. It is the availability of a bigger overall ‘pot of money’ rather than ESF funding in itself that allows for extended or improved provision. Sources of additional non-ESF funding include:

- UK programmes – for example the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF), Lottery funding, the Innovation Fund, etc;
- mainstream providers – Learning and Skill Councils, Jobcentre Plus, the National Health Service, the youth services, social services.

In many cases, co-operation between ESF projects and mainstream providers went beyond mere financial links and included sharing agendas, provision and/or clients. Many projects depended on mainstream providers for referrals (e.g. social services, Action Team, Youth Service) and/or referred their own clients after progression onto mainstream providers (e.g. LearnDirect services). In a number of cases, mainstream institutions provided part of the project services; this often took the shape of projects...
sending clients to training courses offered by local colleges. Because co-operation constitutes a core aspect of the good practice encountered among the case study projects, the section on good vertical and horizontal relationships in the next chapter will further elaborate on this issue.

In a number of cases, project managers were able to describe clearly how the ESF strategically complemented their other projects or funding sources. Those project managers particularly stressed the value of the flexibility of ESF funding compared to their other funding resources: ESF funding enabled projects to spend money on cost categories that other funding sources would not cover.

A project received ESF, NRF and URBAN2 funding and used its overall budget tailored to the needs of individual clients. The perceived advantages of ESF funding were that it has more money per client than most programmes and that the funding can be used flexibly – even when there is a bit of a ‘gamble’. One client found a job after URBAN2 funding helped him get an excavator driver license. When his employer later required him to upgrade his license, ESF funding could be used to support him through training.

Another project likewise appreciated the flexibility of ESF funding, because it enabled them to pay clients £10 per week during their work placements. This might have been a small amount of money but it gave clients back their dignity, which contributed to the process of rebuilding their self-confidence.

Some stakeholders expressed the view that the programme had lost some of its support for innovation through the development of subregional strategies, because the priorities identified were fairly precise about guiding what was eligible, so what you bid for is less your choice and more that of the co-financers. Some project managers, however, indicated that the ESF had provided them with the risk-capital to experiment. One project described itself as ‘a pilot to social services’ with social services recognising the project’s value and building on it; another project compared the regimented and outcome-based structure of New Deal (leading to risk-avoidance, in particular, avoiding multiple disadvantaged groups as target groups) with the more flexible approach of the ESF.

A thread running through all the conversations with project officers was the constant worry about financial sustainability. Few projects seem to already have considered the possibility of ESF funding running out or decreasing substantially or have developed a financial strategy to deal with this eventuality. When asked about the sustainability of the projects, managers just said they were concerned and uncertain about where to go when ESF funding ends. Only in a limited number of cases had projects developed strategies to access or had already accessed alternative funding.
In some cases there was a strong sentiment that the project should be eligible for mainstream funding. Projects sensed that mainstream providers appreciated the project’s provision as a welcome and positive element, but as an ‘add-on’ rather than a core service. Project officers thought that, as they were providing an important service to mainstream organisations, those organisations should show their appreciation by funding the service.

A project working with young disadvantaged people was in the process of putting in a new ESF bid to continue (and expand) the existing work. They were not certain where to go for alternative funding. The area has the highest school exclusion rate in Europe so funding should really be provided by the Department for Education. There is currently a lot of funding for 16+, but very few funding streams are available for younger teenagers.

ESF funding enabled people with learning difficulties to participate once a week (for a period of five weeks) in a workshop, focusing on some scientific or technological project. When the research team visited the project, the clients were in the process of building a footbridge. The expert running the workshop explained that the workshop had done miracles for some of the clients’ self-confidence and that social services were appreciating the workshops as a very welcome add-on to their own services. However, the expert regretted that the workshops were only considered an add-on – he believed they were fundamental and should be able to attract mainstream funding.
4 Good practice principles

4.1 What makes practice good?

Any analysis of practice needs to draw on a reference framework in order to determine what represents ‘good’, ‘standard’ and perhaps less than good. For the reasons explained in the previous chapter, this research has not been able to select case study projects on the grounds that, for example, projects are above average in their performance working with multiple disadvantaged clients. From the partial analysis that has been possible, some are and others are not. There is an inevitable degree of subjectivity in selecting the practice examples which are highlighted in the following paragraphs – they were identified as being interesting and innovative examples of working with disadvantaged clients when compared to the practice of the 52 case studies in this study but also to our knowledge of practice more generally across a wide range of initiatives to help inactive and unemployed clients.

Good practice projects are not necessarily good on all aspects. Lessons could be learnt from the way certain projects engaged with clients whilst others had been better at maintaining the interest and motivation of their clients. Being good at recruiting and working with clients are not sufficient qualities, however, to ensure high outcomes and sustainability of these outcomes. Principles have been extracted from observation and discussion with the managers and staff of case-study projects and are presented for each of these aspects: engagement, retention, outcomes and sustainability of the outcomes. They are also illustrated by best examples found in case-study projects.

We do not think it is possible to design the ‘perfect’ project template that all interventions should follow. Too much depends on local circumstances to be able to provide clear guidance. However, in analysing the case studies in detail, certain common themes arose which may start to provide a context for embedding good practice in project design.
Those projects that provided good practice examples on more than just one dimension had the following characteristics:

- they have a specific focus either on a core target group or a certain geographic area – this helps promote learning and specialist knowledge but also supports the development of reputation among the client group and wider community;
- they tend to adopt three main approaches: they can have a mix of all, but usually tend to focus on one of these three areas:
  - work-focused: job search, vocational training/work experience (often specific sectors or trades);
  - basic skills learning (English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), numeracy and literacy);
  - soft skills/confidence building;
- they have a clear sense of purpose – aim to get people into work/near work – and ensure that their clients are fully aware of this from the outset; and
- they adopt a goal-orientated approach – the goal is to move people on to the next stage as effectively as possible and they will try whatever is required to achieve this. The positive attitude and the developmental and learning culture we found in many projects are perhaps the most difficult aspects of good practice to convey but also probably the most important.

4.2 Engaging with clients

4.2.1 Outreach

Engaging and sustaining the interest of multiple disadvantaged clients is seen as being key to good practice – at one level this may appear a simple tautology but there is a general perception that insufficient attention is given to this core issue. Case study projects worked hard to get their message across to potential clients and other support organisations: they are very aware that the right message needs to go out from their own marketing material and that this is clearly (and regularly) communicated to organisations that could provide referrals to the project. The primary objective is to get as many appropriate referrals as possible.

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32 The focus on a particular group does not contradict Berthoud’s analysis that it is not necessarily the type of disadvantage that counts but the number (or combination) of them: as mentioned before, clients of the core target group (say lone parents) often face additional barriers (for example, low skills or mental health issues).
Successful recruitment of multiple-disadvantaged clients involves developing innovative ways of engaging with them. The following points present some common features found in the case study projects:

- Outreach – case study projects actively search for clients and do not just expect them to be referred by Jobcentre Plus, for example. Outreach is an active search for potential clients involving personal contact in community places or in the premises of other providers. It is important to engage with the clients of the outreach organisations not just market the project’s services to the organisations’ staff.

A project providing vocational work-based training for excluded young people was expecting to get referrals from the Connexions service. However, the project was struggling to get clients referred through this route, so the project decided to do their own additional recruiting with a stand in the local Jobcentre Plus office that proved very successful. A project working with homeless clients undertook some market research with local hostel managers and homeless people themselves to assess the level of interest in a project aiming to help homeless clients back to work before they bid for funding. This meant that when the project started they were able to go back to the hostel managers to look for potential clients.

- Outreach is often supported by marketing through leaflets and posters but this is no substitute for active presentation of the project’s services.

4.2.2 Promoting knowledge and awareness in other agencies

Well-attended projects have established good links with referral agencies, regularly maintain these contacts and give marketing presentations about the service they provide and their target groups. Staff turnover in referral agencies can be high so it is important to reinforce contacts on a regular basis:

- Some projects had arranged for secondments (often from Jobcentre Plus) or job shadowing in order to further embed knowledge of their activities back in the host referral organisations. The use of secondees was observed in projects across different target groups (e.g. a secondee from Mencap in a project for people with learning difficulties, a secondee from an Action Team in a project aimed at Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) clients, a secondee from IAG for a project working with young unemployed people, etc.).

- Many case study projects (in particular projects working with people with learning difficulties, people with health problems and lone parents) got more of their clients from non-employment related organisations – day centres, health visitors and community organisations were all cited as good sources for client referrals once the case study projects had established their reputation with these organisations.
• A general acceptance that recruitment might arise from a wide variety of sources and so projects have to be responsive and promptly change recruitment strategy if existing methods don’t work.

A project organised a road show in a community hall with stands on basic skills, job searching, etc. People received a £5 reward for visiting five stands. One member of staff stood at the entrance of the hall, trying to make people feel welcome and encourage them to participate.

One project prepared clients for a career as a bus driver with a local transport company. A stand at a job fair beside the bus company highlighted that extra support was available for those people who were interested in a job as a bus driver but needed training.

4.2.3 Reputation and word-of-mouth

Word-of-mouth is an important source of referral, first because it may help projects engage with people with whom they may not have been in contact and also because people who have been recommended to a project, tend to be less apprehensive and more likely to trust the staff they meet. Case study projects spoke of establishing a reputation among other organisations working with their target client group as well as having a good reputation locally where they tended to focus their activity on particular geographic areas.

A project working with lone parents set up a ‘Recommend a Friend’ scheme where each client who introduced someone to the project received a £10 gift voucher. The project got ten additional clients through this route.

4.2.4 Working through families, relatives, carers and friends

The holistic nature of the support is a package of measures that staff need to deal with clients. Where appropriate, staff will work with the family, relatives, carers and even friends of the beneficiary to extend the support by:

• overcoming any resistance to change; or

• playing an advocacy role for the individual.

Projects working with people with a physical disability or learning difficulties need to engage with the client’s carer as ultimately, the decision of whether the person can take part in work-focused activities is going to be taken by the carer who is both responsible for the person (and is likely to be protective of the person and, therefore, may resent them leaving a protected environment to go to a work place) and the recipient of the person’s benefit. Benefit issues can be complicated for these client groups and require staff to be knowledgeable about them.
Some projects have multiple or secondary objectives which focus on those in the client’s network of personal support. In particular, this was the case for projects working with young people or ex-offenders. For example, one project had the primary objective of improving young people’s school achievement and a secondary objective of engaging with the client’s parents and carer in order to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

A case-study project provides support for 15-16 year olds who experience so many barriers to learning that they are unable to sustain engagement with mainstream education. The project provides clients with tuition in the project premises or at home to hopefully gain some type of qualification. The project worker provides advocacy and guidance with issues young people are dealing with (e.g. Youth Magistrate Court, as many young people are offenders where the relationships or links with Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and social services are not always working). The project worker aims to act as an intermediate trying to pull all the agencies together to solve issues.

Liaison with parents, relatives or peers of these young people is being formed to find a person who is close to the young person and trusted by them. This ‘trusted friend’ can then be contacted if there are problems with the process. It was felt by the project that getting to know the young person’s ‘circles’ is very important. It was also felt to be important that young people are aware that the project has been designed for them specifically and that the Government cares about them so that they can recognise it and take an ownership of the project.

In some cases, frontline staff may have to work with family and peer groups to enable their clients to achieve successful outcomes. This is particularly the case in projects working with people with learning difficulties, where the ultimate decision on accessing the labour market is often down to carers. This is also important when working with excluded young people.

A project working with clients with mental health problems and/or learning disabilities offers parents/carers counselling to provide extra support and information for the client’s whole family. Many carers are concerned about their benefit entitlement should the client start work and also how to avoid clients just being exploited in the work environment. Continuous counselling support aims to ensure there is a dialogue between the employer and client’s family/carers that works out the best solution for all.

### 4.2.5 Location, environment, staff background and experience

Staffing and the physical environment play an important part in the success of a project. Target groups present such a variety of needs, in nature and intensity, that identifying what works carries the risk of being too prescriptive. Nevertheless, there are messages from the case studies that may be difficult to relate directly to specific
project design choices or activity but were reported by the case studies as being particularly important for setting a context for clients:

- The environment for the project needs to be non-threatening and a suitable location for clients to attend. This will mean different things according to the client group: it is unlikely BME women would take part in a project located in a local pub whilst this location was a starting point for engaging with BME men. On the other hand, excluded young people and some ex-offenders would find a school environment more a symbol of failure and exclusion. In some cases, factors outside the project’s control dictate the location, for example, ex-offenders’ projects need to take place in probation centres when they are mandatory, otherwise attendance cannot be imposed.

- Many projects (across the spectrum of target groups, covering refugees, lone parents, people with mental health problems, etc.) also noted that while they were concerned to be non-threatening, they also felt that the project should introduce some exposure to novelty and challenge. Being in a business environment can change a client’s perception of their abilities and attitude to the activities and the project. It may also broaden clients’ horizons and understanding of the wider world of work by being amongst working people. A common theme was to move clients’ willingness to participate into environments that were similar to where they may end up working.

A project for BME women had the objective of developing a social enterprise. It provided a number of opportunities for participants to broaden their horizons and gain confidence. Classes take place in a variety of premises depending on the subject: art and craft classes are provided in the project’s premises whilst business classes are delivered in a hotel. Participants on one course said they would like to study in the local university and project managers were able to get a free room for their course (the university hoping to get some of the beneficiaries interested in other free courses). The project noticed that clients dress differently, behave more professionally and come to identify more with a work environment.

- Some projects (e.g. projects working with BME clients) have frontline staff from the same community as clients from their target group. Whilst this is not a requirement of being a successful project, clients can relate to them and know they have a similar background. Staff may also meet clients in an environment outside the project, in some cases they may also work through contacts with their friends and relatives and, therefore, have a greater understanding of the client’s circumstances.
One case study project provides support to ex-offenders while in prison and during the first three months after release. Former clients become mentors and are the backbone of the project: they share similar experiences with clients, many also live in the same community and, in most cases, know clients’ the friends or relatives. The close relationship ensures attendance and retention in the project as well as successful client outcomes. A key feature of the project is the provision of alternative social settings to rehabilitate offenders and keep them away from criminal circles. Mentors often intervene outside the project – one went to talk to a client’s drug dealer in order to help the client complete his detoxification programme.

- A key part of the Personal Adviser (PA) role is to be non-judgemental and build genuine trust with the client. This is not to say that projects follow clients’ every whim and forgive all transgressions – their ability to point out what they had done wrong was all the more forceful because they had a good relationship. A number of staff pointed out that if the clients did let themselves down in any way, they were often more determined to do better in future so they would not let down their PA.

Whether frontline staff are from the same community or have had similar experience (homelessness, substance abuse, etc.), it is essential for them to maintain a close contact with clients and stay informed about what is going on in people’s lives in general. As noted above, this close relationship with clients may even be extended to their relatives, in particular, when working with young people or with people with learning difficulties.

A project working with unemployed people in a deprived neighbourhood, aims to engage the client in an open and friendly relationship to develop trust and get the client to feel that the project’s staff are ‘one of us’, do not look down their noses and are aware of what is happening in the area. The project felt it is also important to make clients realise that they need to think about their skills, and that jobs are no longer for life but that often only short-term contracts are available. The frontline staff often say that they too (as an organisation and individuals) are on short-term contracts but have been around for six years already, so it is better to take the first step and then you usually move on from there. This can be especially challenging for clients from ‘older’ occupations who have been in the same trade and with the same employer for decades. Being an example themselves helps clients to identify with the issue.

Such an intensive approach requires time and implies smaller client caseloads for the project staff. The amount of work involved in supporting a group of clients can vary enormously and projects have adopted different ways of calculating the number of active clients per project worker (much depends on the nature of the project’s
activity, the degree to which some functions are outsourced, and at what stage a client is deemed to have left the project – something which can be difficult for some ‘open-door’ projects to define). Nevertheless, from the limited evidence we have drawn from the case study projects, we would suggest that most have caseloads which could be considered to be low – less than 30 clients per frontline worker and in some cases (such as one particular project working with young people), as low as ten. There is no such thing as an ‘industry standard’ caseload but more typical levels are 40-60 clients per frontline worker.

Duration on the projects varied from less than one week to over two years; 26 weeks was the duration mentioned most often. However, some projects (for example projects dealing with learning difficulties) stressed that 26 weeks is not enough to achieve sustainable outcomes; at least one year is needed. The amount of time clients spent on projects in any given week varied as well between an hour per week, to five times a week, to four days (mornings and afternoons) per week. Most projects tend to see clients 1.5 to two days (nine to 16 hours) per week.

It is not possible to include a robust comparison of cost per beneficiary, because very little consistent information was available across the case study projects. Project managers provided information about both their budget and their client numbers, but it is impossible to determine whether the timeframe for which client numbers were given correspond to the timeframe for which the budget was given.

A project working with long-term unemployed people, lone parents and refugees, provided training for a period of 16 hours per week – which was the limit of training that most clients were legally allowed to follow. However, the project made it clear from the start that clients would have to put in training in their own time as well, if they wanted to succeed.

There were no clear indications that projects differentiate the amount of support (time and money) offered to clients to distinguish between those nearer, or further, from the labour market. However, this is not to say that projects did not take into consideration differences in job-readiness. The vast majority of projects stressed the flexibility of their approach, taking individual client needs as the starting point of their support package. This will be dealt with in more detail in Section 4.4.

Projects discussed the importance of the gender of frontline staff. As with the location of premises, in some cases it is perceived as being more appropriate for frontline staff to have similar characteristics to their clients, for example, with some BME group women and for partners of young mothers. For young mothers, this enables sensitive personal issues to be discussed and helps to offset any manipulation coming from the client’s partner.

Finally, frontline staff need to have strong communication skills. In some cases, it will involve speaking clients’ language, but not necessarily, as projects working with foreign clients have been able to communicate in English and encourage clients to
speak English. This issue is part of a wider issue about the project being able to talk ‘at the same level’ with their clients, using clear language that the client understands and can identify with, and avoiding the use of complex phrases or professional terms.

The ability to communicate also means being able to listen to people, learning about their history and their hopes, and, where necessary, being able to negotiate with clients and adjust (in many cases, lower) their expectations or develop a realistic set of objectives with them. Frontline staff tend to stress the importance of listening to people and using their experience and wishes as a basis for building a plan. Listening skills are also essential in identifying people’s abilities of which clients themselves are sometimes unaware.

Run by an organisation providing support to refugees and asylum seekers, one project focuses on employability and includes a lot of one-to-one and guidance work. Part of the work consists of identifying with clients and getting them to realise the skills and experience they already have. One of their clients had been a fisherman for nine years but when asked about his team-working skills in an application form, he did not recognise he had any. Through discussions, this type of information emerged and increased the client’s confidence in his abilities.

Key findings for engaging with clients are:

- outreach is an **active** search for potential clients involving personal contact in community places or in the premises of other providers with the right message;
- promoting awareness of, and knowledge about, the provision and building on reputation to generate word-of-mouth referrals are other ways of reaching disadvantaged clients;
- where appropriate, projects need to work with families and carers;
- staff need to be non-judgemental, have good communication skills and build trust with their clients, and have an empathy with them about their situation. Given the intensity of contact required with a significant proportion of clients, caseloads should be around 30-40.
4.3 Good vertical and horizontal relationships

Successful projects do not need to cater for all needs and provide all services in-house. Key to recruiting and working with hard-to-help clients is partnership working. This can take different forms to achieve specific outcomes:

- good integration in local service provision;
- a wider range of services and support to offer;
- complementary provision;
- cross-referrals;
- service-level integration;
- bureaucracy reduction.

Working with others allows projects to be more flexible and to provide additional specialised support to clients. For example, projects may have an agreement with other providers to use the following facilities: childcare, specialist training and specialist equipment. Partnership may also enable projects to access provision supported via other funding streams such as the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) or Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and offer their clients a provision that would not be eligible for funding under the European Social Fund (ESF).

One case-study organisation provides support for local residents looking to get into work or training. The area suffers from high levels of unemployment and has a high proportion of lone parents and BME residents. The location of the project is accessible: in the local shopping close to the Sure Start offices. They run three other ESF projects for long-term unemployed people, short-term unemployed people and women returners.

One organisation is able to tap into NRF funds and has strong links with council-run sector academies, local training providers and community and voluntary organisations. Project workers do outreach by attending local events or, for example, by participating in pottery classes run by Sure Start to engage with residents. The team has developed a folder to offer to any potential clients with information on what they have to offer through various projects.

Projects work closely with partners to get referrals from them or to refer clients to them. This is not to say that projects can be based solely on referrals from other providers but that a good integration in the organisational infrastructure of the catchment area adds value to a project’s activities. The aim is to offer the most suitable service for clients, in particular when specialist support is needed, and to avoid duplication of provision.
A case-study project working with clients with severe learning disabilities is aimed at clients in residential day centres to encourage them into employability activities. Many of the clients want to work, although they face substantial barriers due to their disability coupled with behavioural issues and have often been institutionalised for decades. Other employability schemes would not take these clients on as they were seen as too challenging and ‘risky’. One project finds out what type of work a client wants to do and then contacts employers in this sector (e.g. through Yellow Pages) and then has a marketing meeting with them. Clients participate in assessment exercises to determine their skill level of work (e.g. in terms of literacy, whether they can recognise alphabets). Once a client has an idea on what they would like to do, the project tries to organise a trial work experience to see whether the client has the correct skills and whether the environment is right.

Another project provides continuous support for as long as it is needed as these clients have a very high level of needs and require long-term support to keep them in employment. Prior to a work trial, the co-ordinator goes to an employer to train for the job for a week before the client joins in (usually one day/week) and, in turn, trains the clients for the job. The project also links with other support services (e.g. day centres) that provide additional support. The employer does not lose out and, although training may take longer, once trained, a client’s retention is high and they usually stick with the job.

Cross-referrals between service providers mean that once engaged, clients are less likely to drop out of the system. Projects have an alternative to turning clients away and can propose appropriate support provided by partner organisations. This is particularly true for the most vulnerable clients.

Projects with strong existing links with other organisations seemed to be in a better position regarding referrals from these other supporting organisations (especially if working with clients with learning difficulties or mental health issues); organisations included local NHS Trusts, day centres, health workers/community health team, social services and Connexions.

Projects can work more efficiently with clients if local agreements between service providers enable them to remove administrative barriers, for example, by fast-tracking clients or being physically present at the point of referral.
Projects overcome bureaucracy problems in signing clients on by having Jobcentre Plus secondees, good links with Action Teams and Jobcentre staff that allowed access to LMS data through them or by having regular drop-ins for staff in their premises when a member of Jobcentre Plus would be present.

One case study organisation has a Jobcentre Plus secondee in post which has improved the delivery greatly due to specialist knowledge through access to the LMS system and closer links with Jobcentre Plus PAs. Good contacts with Jobcentre Plus are maintained by regular visits to the local jobcentre where they have done presentations offered job shadowing and have updates in the Jobcentre Plus newsletter. A Jobcentre Plus PA has a surgery in the organisation’s office once a week to provide client interviews and eligibility checks.

Projects should be well integrated in local service provision and have checked the existence of the client group they target and the need for the service they offer.

As mentioned before, one project did a preliminary survey of its client group (homeless people), to check interest for training and job support. They also contacted hostel owners to review their opinions about what should be included in such provision.

In some cases (in projects across the whole spectrum of target groups from lone parents, to young unemployed people, to homeless people), referrals within the same organisation were efficient when the organisation was running a number of projects. When they have more than one project on offer, frontline staff can identify needs with clients and signpost them to the most suitable project to meet these needs. However, it does not mean that good practice is only found in larger organisations, smaller organisations, well embedded in their local organisational structure, can achieve the same results through close partnership working.

One organisation runs three ESF projects, for long-term unemployed people, short term unemployed people and women returners, as well one for residents interested in work or training. Other resources the organisation has are: NRF funds, strong links with council-run sector academies and networking with local training providers, community and voluntary organisations. For example, project staff do outreach by participating in pottery classes run by Sure Start.
Key findings for good partnership working are:

- within a competitive market, an ability to consider that clients are not the project’s property but to sign-post them to the provision that will meet their needs;
- an early identification of clients’ needs and a willingness to market other provision;
- an in-depth knowledge of the local organisational infrastructure and good networking links;
- practical referral arrangements in order to ensure clients are picked up by other provision and do not drop out, for example making an appointment for the client or having the first meeting in the initial project’s premises.

4.4 Building and sustaining participation

4.4.1 Communicating the project’s objectives

Many of the case study projects had a clear sense of direction and shared this vision with their clients from the outset. For most projects this involved being explicit about their focus on employability throughout the process, starting with the initial assessment to present the aims of the project and find out what the clients’ objectives and needs are. This is to ensure that the project is suitable and provides the best option for them.

Some projects were keen that the clients fully understood the nature of their project and the ways in which they work. Thus, it was necessary to explain their own funding sources and how these placed constraints and demands on the project so that clients would not feel alienated when projects asked them for personal and tracking information.

While the direction of travel was consistent across their clients, there is no sense that all clients have to progress at the same speed. A clear message from the case study projects was that some form of employment was possible for all – this was particularly striking from a number of projects working with clients with (often severe) learning difficulties where projects were keen not to allow general perceptions of the employment prospects of their clients to limit their aspirations of what could be achieved.

A number of case study projects ran ‘gateway’ activities to engage with those clients who would not consider taking part in a job-focused project. Gateway activities can be hobby or personal development courses such as craft and arts, lifestyle (fitness, aromatherapy) or confidence building. For example, a project working with BME women offered taster courses in sewing, beauty and fitness. These courses were popular and encouraged participants to follow additional courses (e.g. ESOL training) and then move onto mainstream training in the local colleges (e.g. IT training).
4.4.2 Initial client assessment procedures

Most projects meet clients for a one-to-one initial assessment and jointly construct an action plan. The following points present detailed lessons learnt by frontline staff from their experience of working with multiple disadvantaged clients:

- Most projects used the same method for undertaking the initial assessment and drawing the action plan. In general, an hour face-to-face discussion with questions about background and qualifications, work experience and expectations. Some projects had innovative extras to make the assessment more entertaining and less intimidating.

One case study project uses a skills-based IT package which involves a set of questions to determine client needs, strengths and weaknesses and produces a list of 20 suggestions from a database of 900 jobs to help clients decide what they would like to do. The IT programme has been an especially helpful tool to demonstrate e.g. the effect of going to college in increasing job options and earnings, and, thus, it also motivates clients to progress.

- Some projects (for example, projects working with ex-offenders or people with mental health problems) undertake a risk assessment as part of their induction process in order to help them decide whether a client is ready for employment and to help provide more detailed information on the strengths and weaknesses the client may have (in some cases, this also serves to assess the potential risk to the client themselves or to others).

- The initial meeting is central to building a relationship with the client. One important, but subtle, distinction is their approach to gaining information through (open) discussions rather than through questioning. Frontline staff stressed the importance of being sensitive about asking personal information from clients, and that anything that had not come up from the conversation could be filed for later discussion, once the relationship had been established.

- During this first encounter some frontline staff try to give something concrete to clients to make them sense it is going to be useful to take part in this project. They may do a job search and download an application form or print a CV, for example.

- When people are involved in a learning project, staff may give them a simple task to complete in order to boost their confidence and make them realise the skills they have.

- Making people aware of the skills they already possess is an important element in supporting multiple disadvantaged clients. This can be done at different moments in the project lifecycle. The initial assessment stage is about getting people to talk about their experiences and highlight what they have gained from them.
A case study project providing NVQ vocational work-based training in a café environment for people with learning difficulties, uses a visual ‘route map’ which is simply a road drawn on A4 paper where clients can draw different milestones they hope to achieve on the way to achieving their NVQ (e.g. a picture of a dish that clients want to learn to make).

- Clients’ aspirations are important. Frontline staff tend to say that they ask people what their wishes and expectations are and start from those to build a realistic action plan with short-term and longer-term goals. They don’t dismiss people’s dreams but manage their expectations and where these are unrealistic, work to reduce these as sensitively as possible.

A project for people with mental health and learning difficulties has designed a game that aims to change clients’ expectations and help clients understand what expectations and career paths they could realistically aim for. A project worker has a pack of cards with a wide range of job titles written on each card and clients need to split these into various categories (e.g. work indoors/outdoors wear, uniform/not high pay/low pay, etc.). Once there are around 20 different categories, clients go slowly through these categories with the project worker to narrow down what they can and want to do by excluding unsuitable categories (e.g. prefer to work indoors, have high pay but wear a uniform).

- An understanding of the benefit system is a requirement for engaging with most clients, and in particular, with people with learning difficulties or disability and lone parents. It is essential for projects to be able to check, as early as possible, if employment is a viable and suitable option for the client. It also gives an indication of the salary level they may need and, therefore, concentrates effort on certain job options.

- Finally, it is important to point out that projects often continue to assess clients beyond the initial assessment.
A project aiming to prepare refugees for a job as a bus driver in a local transport company, attached particular importance to assessment procedures. Becoming a bus driver requires progress in several fields and progress in those fields was mapped on a chart, so clients could spot their weaknesses and focus on them. Computer monitoring allowed staff to see how many hours clients had actually worked. Every Monday there was a test and if no progress was made, there would be a chat about the lack of progress. Every six weeks, a focus group on overall group progress was organised. Assessments were also given after each driving lesson: each client had a card scaling crucial driving requirements from one to five; clients had to reach 2.3 before they could take the driving test.

The vast majority of projects stress that clients simply are not job-ready when they first enter the project. Many projects even explained that they saw their own roles first and foremost as getting clients job-ready rather than putting clients into employment: the projects often have to deal first with the ‘package’ clients are carrying along (e.g. personal hygiene, housing problems, personal crises, etc.). That is why confidence-building activities often take place in the first stage of the project – before more employment-related activities such as support in CV writing, job search, etc.

The prevalence of clients who are not job-ready is linked to the fact that many projects stress their achievements in the field of non-employment outcomes alongside job results. The employment focus present in the case study projects does not imply that projects do not value further training and education, voluntary work outcomes or soft outcomes (e.g. improved confidence and motivation). More than one relatively high performing project pointed out that developing good ‘soft outcomes’ were the key to getting clients into work; but they were a means to an end and not an end in themselves.

4.4.3 Action planning and milestones

Once clients have engaged with the project, frontline staff work with them from then on. The ability of staff to sustain a client’s participation is an indicator of the project’s ability to make a difference for people. Most projects use an action plan process in a variety of ways to structure their work with clients. Good practice projects tend to work with action plans as a living document within a timeframe, using both short term and long-term goals. The level of detail varies and the most efficient use of the action plan tends to be made where more tangible (and achievable) goals are linked to actions and when they are regularly updated.

The timeframe should help both client and staff to progress and should be linked to indications about what actions are to be undertaken and by whom. In one project, actions are shared equally between client and staff, for example the client has to draft a CV while the member of staff has to search for local employers.
Setting milestones along the way to longer-term objectives is important for clients to feel progression and build confidence. Milestones can be of a different nature from relatively simple issues such as turning up to meetings on time, to more long-term objectives such as achieving qualifications. Achievement of set targets can, in some cases, be linked to incentives as an acknowledgment of success.

A case study project working with unemployed clients within a deprived neighbourhood, has developed an action plan for clients which has four elements: client circumstances (e.g. employment history and qualifications); short-term goals for one to three months (e.g. client will draw up their CV, find job advertisements for certain occupations); long-term goals, i.e. where the client would like to be post project; and the actions required to make plans a reality (updated on a weekly basis). In addition, after three or four sessions, the project worker and client review the distance travelled and changes are made to the plan, if necessary.

The action plan should make some considerations for what may happen at the end of the project and beyond. This is for clients to think about an exit strategy and think beyond the protective environment they are in while taking part in the project. For example, it may indicate some possible routes for the client to take at the end of a work placement.

Some projects were also using some other Government programmes to provide continuous and additional support. For example, a project for unemployed people in deprived neighbourhoods providing work-based construction training leading to employment, was also providing places for those clients currently in the New Deal programme.

### 4.4.4 Flexible responses

The action planning process provides a flexible platform on which project staff can respond flexibly to clients’ needs. In many cases, this was mostly about putting together a package of job search, motivation and confidence-building activities with learning, and sometimes training, activity.

One case study project had set up a residents fund of up to £150 to help beneficiaries with their various employability activities, such as renewal of a taxi licence, work wear, a travel pass, etc. However, financial support to remove barriers and smooth transition to work or work-focused activities is not the only way for staff to be flexible about the way they work with clients. Projects have developed services tailored to their clients’ needs such as taking them on an observation trip to learn more about the job they want to get.
A project that had clients interested in working in customer service, proposed observation trips to their clients. They went to a shopping centre to see how shop employees dealt with their customers and commented on what they considered to be good or bad customer service.

Careful preparation allows the project to determine what will make a difference with the client and, in some cases, frontline staff have been able to support a number of unusual activities because they had done preparatory work with clients and were confident the support would move them close to work.

An activity which is typically controversial when publicly funded is driving licences. One of the case study projects has used it as an incentive, because it gives people a positive sense of achievement and also helps them to gain employment. For example, a man in his thirties who had never worked, found a job as a minibus driver working for youth services. Other activities funded through this programme included abselling and diving that led to one client gaining employment as an offshore welder.

### 4.4.5 Intensive support

The intensity of the support is a major factor influencing the chances of success of the intervention. Regular contacts can be in the form of group activities or one-to-one sessions. Both types of contact can be combined, for example with one-to-one sessions complementing group work, to ensure a better attendance rate from clients. Some disadvantaged clients would not consider taking part in group activities either because they lack confidence (because of peer pressure) or for confidentiality reasons, so it is important to also offer one-to-one support as a stand-alone option. This is true, for example, for ex-offenders with basic skills needs. In some cases one-to-one sessions were used to build up clients to the point they could benefit from group work.

A case study project for people with learning difficulties provides one-to-one and group sessions. When people don’t feel able to join the group sessions, their appointments are arranged during the time slot preceding the group session so that clients see the same people attending the class each week up to the point they may feel confident about joining this group with which they are familiar.

Many projects identified the importance of ‘open doors’ policy where clients can drop in any time without the need for official appointments. This is the case for projects across the spectrum of target groups including projects working with mental health problems, long-term unemployed people, BME clients, etc. Many clients in disadvantaged groups may, for example, not own a watch or diary and may
not even be able to tell the time. If a client had set appointments, the day and time was kept the same throughout the support to minimise the problem of missed appointments.

Even when the project is based on group work, it is good practice for frontline staff to develop a close one-to-one relationship with clients to maintain an awareness of the way their lives are evolving. For example, projects targeting BME women tend to be organised in group sessions with tutors providing courses and a project co-ordinator liaising with individual clients. The role of the co-ordinator is crucial as they engage with clients, they have one-to-one contacts with clients when they need to discuss personal issues or need to practice interviews for example, they tell clients about new opportunities and keep informed about their aspirations. This is particularly important when clients drop out: the person who has been involved closely with the client can make contact and find out why they are not attending any longer and whether another form of support could be provided.

When speaking about a project for BME women project, women were not calling the project by its name nor by the name of the organisation but by the project co-ordinator’s name (X’s project). This is a sign of how this person has become a landmark in clients’ lives because of their close and regular contact.

Keeping in touch through life changes, and increasing the level of support when people go through periods of transition or crisis is a feature of good practice projects. Sometimes frontline staff offer an extremely high level of support by befriending people and offering a healthier social environment than the one they were living in.

4.4.6 Learning and training

Training is not a major element in case study projects. There was a general concern among case study projects not to send clients ‘back to school’ as this would only lead to them failing again. Where new skills were required, many projects undertook more learning than training – the lack of basic skills and other barriers meant that many clients would simply not cope with standard course material. No case study offered basic skills training per se but many had devised a range of activities that were intended to help improve clients’ basic skills.

However, for some occupations it was recognised that gaining certain qualifications was necessary to gain entry into any form of employment. In these cases, projects have designed qualifications to suit their clients’ needs, in particular when working with people with learning difficulties.
Two case-study projects have redesigned NVQ level 1 in food hygiene to suit their clients. The use of pictures reduces the need for reading and writing and clients can fill their folder at their own pace. This method enables clients to gain a qualification that is mandatory to work in the community café run by each project.

A project for young people from a deprived estate to help them access jobs in the construction industry has developed more informal ways to assess client progress, as this better suits clients’ needs and abilities (many struggle with literacy and numeracy) clients feel more comfortable with the process. All the clients have their own portfolios, which are filled with photographs showing ‘before’ and ‘after’ pictures used as evidence on the work they had done, which is assessed once a week. Participants are also using their portfolio and other course material to improve their numeracy and literacy skills.

Another project for excluded young people developed computer software specifically designed for this client group with the aim of improving their basic skills in an innovative way. The programme included a music tool to make a record. The clients then act as the band managers and have to decide how to market the record, design a poster and decide at what price to sell the record, determine their profit margins and different methods to distribute the record. This approach to learning was very successful with the target client group as the learning was perceived as ‘fun’ and relevant to their lives.

There were other notable cases where clients were undertaking very effective training across a range of skilled occupations, such as theatre and production skills for clients with learning difficulties. These relied on extensive experience of working with the client group and their carers and intensive support and assistance to help clients find an occupation in which they were interested. The projects were then able to develop a two-year training course which took account of the clients’ abilities and worked at their pace.

Good practice tends to be found in projects which have allocated time and staffing resources for employment-focused activities: CV writing, support in filling application forms, training in interview techniques, job search support and regular information, advice and guidance.

An apprenticeship-type case-study project in construction is designed to ensure that trainees gain units towards a recognised qualification and get the skills and experience to help them succeed in applying for construction-related jobs. All potential clients go through an interview process and are then offered a six months’ temporary employment contract, were given tools to keep and are paid a wage (national minimum wage).
The first month of the contract is spent at the local vocational training centre followed by work experience on various sites owned and managed by the local council. While working on building and maintenance sites, clients are also working towards NVQ level 2. While clients are on the project they are also encouraged to look for a job at the same time. Due to the small group size (six individuals), the Placement and Development Officer is able to form good relationships with all of the trainees and act as a mentor, meeting with clients nearly every day when visiting the sites. The Placement and Development Officer is also well linked with the local construction industry as he has 20 years of previous work experience in the building trade as well as more recent experience working as a local IAG provider.

4.4.7 Handling client expectations

In the same way that many case study projects emphasise the objectives of their project, many have adopted rules on attendance and inform clients about them. For example, some projects (including a project working with long-term unemployed people in a specific geographic area) have a three-strike rule and clients are aware of the consequences of not attending three times. Whilst having clear rules, case study projects are also able to be flexible and to take into account clients’ particular circumstances. For example, a number of projects said that they always follow up the reasons for non-attendance and, if this is justified, explain to the client why they should have informed the project in the first place.

Case study projects manage to strike a balance between giving support to people and getting people to work for the project. They tend to be open about their objectives and their requirement to get outcomes but they also propose an attractive package that maintains people’s interest and commitment to the project. Projects working with young people mix a structured approach to support with interesting activities, such as recreational or fun sessions. This technique was described as using a ‘carrot and stick’ to maintain participation.

A project working with excluded young people provides sporting activities and excursions a few afternoons a week during the first six weeks in order to engage with the client group (e.g. go to a motorbike centre to learn about motorbikes). This is fun and helps clients to form relationships and ‘have a go’. After the initial six weeks a few mornings of basic skills vocational training and careers sessions are added to the weekly timetable. Young people will also start to receive a ‘wage’ (a small incentive in the form of city council pay slips) but only if they attend the morning meetings. Young people can continue to attend afternoon ‘fun’ excursions only if they have participated in the morning sessions. Also, positive peer pressure to attend works well in keeping them to this agreement.
Some projects (in particular projects focusing on local long-term unemployed residents) tapped into external provision for additional support in job search and it was felt by some frontline staff that having an alternative perspective, especially from someone the client is less familiar with, helps get (sometimes uncomfortable) messages through to clients. Having someone external who is not their ‘mentor’ with a more professional relationship with the client, provides an additional ‘push’ and can be beneficial in these situations.

Key findings for building and sustaining participation are:

- Projects need to have a clear sense of direction, with a focus on employability throughout, and this needs to be shared with clients. Gateway activities, such as confidence building, hobbies, crafts and arts and personal development, may be necessary as a platform before introducing employability.

- Clients should be offered options of one-to-one sessions as a complement to group work, so that personal issues can be addressed, but they should also be encouraged to recognise the skills they already have.

- Action plans should be seen as living documents, building on clients’ aspirations but evolving towards realistic options by managing clients’ expectations and balancing support with getting into work. They should be flexible and capable of giving small amounts of financial assistance to overcome barriers.

- Care should be taken to promote learning rather than training which has the stigma of ‘back-to-school’ where many originally failed. Qualifications are linked to a job opportunity.

- Good projects mostly operate an open door policy so that the intensity of support can be increased if the client has a life crisis or difficult transition to make.

4.5 Links with employers

4.5.1 Sourcing appropriate vacancies

It goes without saying that employment projects ought to have good contacts with employers. These links are vital for finding work placements and sourcing vacancies. Nevertheless, experience suggests that some projects are better able to exploit their employer contacts than others. There does not seem to be any direct relation between a project’s target group and its approach to, or success in, working with employers.

Projects can improve their outcomes by:

- offering a job-matching service;
- considering a phased approach to employment;
• basing the design of their project on available opportunities in the local labour market;

• providing adequate support to employers.

Job matching is essential to ensure job retention on the client side and to maintain a positive long-term relationship with employers. The latter is important to better understand the employers’ requirements and to be in a position to take advantage of potential new vacancies. Job matching is one area where projects can make a difference compared to mainstream agencies because they have time to get to know clients, their abilities and ambitions, and to build a relationship with employers. Recruiting is demanding on resources and employers appreciate the availability of a free job-matching service.

Relying on existing contacts is not sufficient. Many of the case study projects used cold calling and searched for the ‘right’ job for the client, irrespective of whether they had contacts with a specific employer in that area. Some projects simply used Yellow Pages and others used internet searches to contact potential employers to provide work placements for their clients, if there was some particular area they were interested in. While not every employer would respond to a project’s approach, many do and project staff report that, gradually, they can build up a picture of how best to engage new employers and ‘sell’ their services.

4.5.2 Engaging and maintaining contacts

Once contact has been established it is vital for projects to maintain good contacts and ensure employers are satisfied with their recruits and the projects’ services. They are, therefore, careful to present good candidates who meet employers’ requirements and offer an aftercare service to the employer. Aftercare tends to be in the form of telephone calls or brief visits at a frequency agreed with the employer, and, in general, when project staff think that more vacancies may become available. Follow-up on past clients then becomes a basis for promoting new clients.

Working with employers who regularly experience difficulties in recruiting and keeping staff is an efficient way of working because in a tight labour market they are more likely to be willing to consider (more) disadvantaged clients as potential recruits. Being able to offer additional investment in the client that will add specific value for the employer is also important – such as sector or job specific training or equipment and guidance on what additional support is available from other sources.
One case study combines ESF funding with NRF and Urban 2 funding. It aims to help all the clients who walk in and uses the different funding streams in a way that would help them most. The ESF is vital as it has relatively more money per client than most programmes and it can be used flexibly.

For example, an excavator driver did not have a proper licence which is now required by employers and the project paid for the certificate using its Urban funding. This client got a job but later on the employer wanted him to upgrade this licence and was able to offer an ESF programme to support him through the training. The ESF makes a difference as it is a big pot of funding (£2,000 per client) so that the project can offer support with most things (even when it is a bit of a ‘gamble’).

In some cases, frontline staff and clients decide it would not be appropriate or helpful for the project to be introduced to the employer, in which case, they let clients go through the recruitment process without the project being mentioned. There is no rule as to whether project staff need to contact employers and attend interviews with clients, it depends on the clients’ ability and on their perception of how prospective employers might react to this knowledge.

### 4.5.3 Support for the transition into work

When project intervention is thought to be appropriate, staff can stress with employers the support they can provide in order to reduce the risk factors of recruiting multiple disadvantaged clients, whether these risks are actual or perceived:

- free matching service based on an understanding of employers’ requirements;
- preparation for the recruitment process and the job (e.g. motivation course);
- promotion of qualities inherent to the client group (e.g. people with learning difficulties tend to be reliable employees, to be on time and to stay with companies);
- access to Government support for equipment and the permitted work scheme;
- mentoring or job coaching service when people need some support during a settling in period. This service is offered across different client groups. However, projects working with people with learning difficulties or mental health problems go further in this regard: either project staff learn the job and then train the employee; or project staff shadow the employee until they are able to work independently. It involves rationalising the work people have to do, building a routine and finding solutions to make their work easier. It is also about going to the canteen with the employee and making contact with co-workers on behalf of the client, eventually asking a responsive employee to be aware of this person’s needs and support them if necessary.
A case study project based in two prisons, one for females and the other an open prison, provides intensive support to offenders and ex-offenders within prison and also in the community by giving motivational support, mentoring and after care to help improve their employability. As one of the activities, the project uses mock interviews, but ones where the inmates are put in the position of the employer panellist conducting the interview. The aim of this exercise is to make clients realise that the criminal record is something that is not usually asked about in an interview. Many offenders are under the impression that they are not able to get any work because of their criminal record. Inmates in the project are advised on how to deal with the issue with the potential employer the right way, maybe once they had secured the job and proved that they can do their job well.

- Some projects had used very simple ways to give clients first hand experience of what the job they are interested in involves and what the employer would expect from them. Simple visits to working environments (in one case, a retail outlet) allowed clients to observe what is involved in the job, consider whether they are still interested but also demystify some aspects of what might be required from them. For example, this approach was used by a project which aimed to help local unemployed residents find a job. Clients included lone parents, refugees and BME beneficiaries.

- It is beneficial to provide ongoing support for the employer too and to help clarify what their rights and the limits of their responsibilities are. In one case, an employer came back to a case study project working with clients with learning difficulties and complained that a client had misbehaved (stolen goods from the store) but the employer was not sure what to do. The project made it clear that clients need to be treated the same as other employees and be disciplined accordingly.

A project for people with learning difficulties uses mentoring to help people learn their job, organise their working day and find their place in the company’s social settings. For example, one client was working restocking vending machines and took too long because he was forgetting what he had to bring back from the van and was doing many trips between the machines and the van. Project staff then printed a spreadsheet with a list of all the products and columns for the employee to write the number of each item they had to bring back from the van so that he did not have to remember.

A project working with lone parents provided additional support for clients entering work to help resolve any barriers arising such as help in finding suitable childcare debt counselling and help with the transfer from benefit payments to wages.
Aftercare support, for employee and for employer, if there are any issues following on from the settling in period.

A case study project works with clients with severe learning disabilities. Many of their clients want to work although they have substantial barriers, with some having been institutionalised for many years. The project establishes the type of work the client wants to do and then contacts employers in this sector (through local directories) and sets up a marketing meeting with them. They offer continuous support for as long as required and the co-ordinator trains on the job for a week before the client starts (usually a day a week initially) and in turn, trains the client by adapting the work tasks to suit the clients with the agreement of the employer. Costs (and risk) faced by the employer are low and, although training may take longer, once trained, client retention is high.

A dilemma for project staff working with disadvantaged clients is whether they should disclose personal information to employers. This is not an issue of Data Protection per se. Projects are clear that they have a legal and moral obligation to keep confidential all information passed by clients to them (e.g. projects working with ex-offenders or people with mental health issues). Nevertheless, they feel a certain responsibility towards the employers they work with and many have developed approaches to encourage clients to discuss issues in their background with employers where this is appropriate and relevant. In the case of a client’s criminal record, staff tend to inform their clients that they should disclose any unspent sentence, if asked. However, there are jobs for which such information is not required during the recruitment process.

Educating employers about the disadvantaged is a way of helping them to recruit disadvantaged applicants that has been proven to be effective because it:

- may remove any misconceptions concerning the client group;
- give employers practical information about recruiting from the client group such as employers’ legal obligations – this is particularly relevant for refugees and asylum seekers because employers need to be sure they are not breaching the law by employing from this client group;
- may present qualities inherent to the client group employers may not have known about – for example, turnover is lower with employees with learning difficulties who also tend to be punctual and less likely to take time off work;
- raises employers’ awareness of the needs in their community and their potential ability to make a difference in disadvantaged people’s lives;
- highlight the fact that the labour market is tight and that employers need to give multiple disadvantaged clients a chance in order to meet their workforce requirements.
Further to a positive experience, employers may even be interested in piloting a scheme and in becoming models for other employers.

A project working with refugees worked with the local Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) who offered six-month training posts in administration and archiving to three project clients. The project identified candidates and the FRS interviewed them. Induction took more time and the FRS allocated a supervisor to the three recruits. This positive experience led to a better understanding of how best to help people from this client group into work and the FRS produced a ‘Protocol for Recruiting Refugees’ for use in other locations.

Many case study projects suggested that employers’ knowledge of recruiting and employing from disadvantaged groups was very limited. Where they were able to engage with companies, they did find that many were very interested in what they had to say either on legal issues or about the client group in general (not on individuals) relating to what the employer can expect from the group in the workplace and practical suggestions relating to any concerns over how the client might fit into the workforce, what special equipment they might require, etc. This was particularly the case for disabled people in general, clients with learning difficulties, refugees and asylum seekers.

A project working with clients with learning disabilities provided an information pack for employers and a series of presentations to companies on their legal obligations and the potential advantage of recruiting disabled people that had been successful in getting them to recruit such people.

Another project working with clients with mental health issues, aims to sit down with employers to see how they can work together to provide the client with a more suitable way of doing their job (e.g. adjustments such as working alone, providing a ‘sit down’ job, etc.)

### 4.5.4 Use of work placement and in-house work experience

Some projects, mainly those working with disabled clients, have a variety of employment opportunities in-house, where clients can undertake work placements in the project premises. However, it is important to ensure that the options for work placements are not conditioned just by what type of work is available within the organisations, but that clients are challenged to explore their real aspirations and look for work opportunities elsewhere, if necessary.

When people are not ready to go to full-time permanent work, an efficient way for them to build confidence and skills is to be in the workplace with a lower level of involvement. For example, people can be in a work placement for eight to 12 weeks or they may be willing to do voluntary work before moving to permitted employment
for people with health issues. This can then progress to permanent employment if and when the client is ready. Most case study projects emphasised that this was not just about the positive attraction of a new job but also a way of overcoming any concerns the clients may have about leaving behind benefits and their previous lifestyle.

Some case study projects have been designed around the needs of specific industries. The starting point in this case is not the clients, their experience, goals and needs, but the local labour market and its demands. This requires that clients are fully aware of what they commit to when starting the project and are willing to work in this particular sector.

A project was set up using information given by a local company about difficulties experienced in hiring and retaining bus drivers. It consisted in skills identification, interview of potential candidates and training, followed by a guaranteed job interview for participants who successfully completed the programme. A local transport company was involved throughout the project from skills identification to delivery of parts of the training.

Wage subsidy and other financial incentives are elements that require careful consideration. The rationale behind this approach is the defrayment of costs and risks involved in recruiting disadvantaged clients because they may need longer to learn the job and require more supervision and support. Many case study projects viewed wage subsidies with some suspicion and felt that they would only be justified when they felt that employers were genuine. They would not want the sole reason for employers to recruit disadvantaged clients to be a wage subsidy as this was not seen as being sustainable, with companies not seeing the true value of their recruit and being ‘in it for the wrong reasons’.

A construction project working with unemployed clients living in a deprived neighbourhood, had identified skills shortages across the construction industry and developed a programme providing vocational training in specific trades and waged work placements with local employers. Participants received a toolkit and protective clothing to keep. Employers were offered a £60 a week subsidy over the first 26 weeks as an incentive to recruit and keep these trainees in work.

An organisation working with people with learning difficulties runs a project providing work placements for its clients. A substantial part of project staff’s work consists of marketing their clients with employers. Their role is not only to find placements but also to develop a relationship to ensure the employer is an appropriate environment for their clients and a potential long-term source of vacancies for the project. They discuss incentives only if they feel the employers genuinely want to offer placements and eventually employment.
4.5.5 Aftercare

Sustaining employment involves two key elements: that the original job matching process was appropriate and the job lives up to the client’s expectations and that appropriate aftercare is provided. Few case study projects provided aftercare although most had mentioned it in their application for ESF funding. This appears to be something of a weak spot in provision, although the understanding of what aftercare means varies across projects: some staff said that clients could come back to see them any time they wanted; in other case study projects aftercare was conflated with ‘tracking’ clients in order to establish their employment status at 13 weeks and what they had been doing since they left the project.

Aftercare can be focused on both employers and clients. Sometimes projects prefer contacting employers, usually on a regular basis (often agreed at the time the client is placed) or when they know there may be more vacancies becoming available. Some case study project staff prefer maintaining contact with clients, either by telephone or when people come to their organisation.

A case study project working with clients with learning disabilities provides regular aftercare support to the client and to the employer. Aftercare is available indefinitely: at first project, staff work alongside the client during the induction and training period with their new employer. Then they check that the client has settled with their employer and co-workers and that they are happy with the client. They initially make regular visits to the company but these become less frequent up to the point they can provide support just over the telephone.

An issue for a number of projects is that their mode of operation does not, in itself, provide a clear end date, limiting the opportunities to have a systematic aftercare service. A number of projects operated open-access or drop-in services which almost, by definition, have no clear end point. In these cases, many clients who have not attended the project recently remain on the caseload just in case they return.

The main reason given for limited provision of aftercare was lack of funding. Whilst it is assumed that aftercare would help job retention, case studies in this research have not provided any strong evidence that this is the case. The general position was that aftercare was a ‘good’ addition to the services provided to clients but that in itself, it would not ‘pay for itself’ in terms of increased retention. Some projects were reluctant to propose significantly higher outcomes (or were uncertain as to the potential impact of offering a dedicated aftercare service) and as a result the increased costs of aftercare would make their funding bids look ‘even more expensive’.

Some frontline staff have engaged with employers to play an advocacy role for the client. This is particularly important for vulnerable clients to protect them from unscrupulous employers or simply from the limited experience the employer and co-workers may have of working with disadvantaged clients. For example, one
employer reacted badly to the lack of eye contact the client was making and the project staff had to explain this was not due to rudeness but to the client’s learning difficulty.

There appears to be a difference between helping clients once they have left the project as issues arise and providing a specific service by dedicating a staff member to provide aftercare. Many projects mentioned their ‘open doors approach’ where clients know they can always come back if any need arises, even just for a chat. Others had concerns over the level of demand that might exist for an aftercare service. This is not to say that aftercare has no effect on outcomes – case study projects were able to cite cases where more support or encouragement had helped clients ‘stick at it’. In some cases, their intervention with the employer or client had made the difference to them retaining their job but only a few felt they were equipped for crisis management or acting as a full intermediation service between clients and employers.

Key findings for linking with employers are:

• Good links with employers are vital for finding work placements and sourcing vacancies. They can be strengthened by offering a job-matching service, using a phased entry into employment, basing their project on available opportunities and providing adequate support to employers.

• A free job-matching service helps to reduce the employer’s risk and cost of recruitment, and access to other funding streams to provide support for the client after starting with the employer also helps to build the relationship.

• Employers need to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the different disadvantaged groups and the value of on-the-job mentoring or job coaching/buddying arrangements.

• An aftercare service is valuable in building the basis for a long-term relationship with employers, even to a point where they become willing to pilot new models. However, there is a lack of funding for this activity.

• Work placements and in-house work experience help to overcome concerns that clients have about leaving behind benefits and their previous lifestyle. Wage subsidies do not encourage sustainable employer attitudes towards the employment of disadvantaged clients.
5 Conclusions and issues arising

The research into multiple disadvantaged groups we have undertaken in this assignment has produced a number of key findings:

• projects funded by Objective 3 European Social Fund (ESF) do engage successfully with clients facing multiple disadvantages;

• establishing a complete picture of effective ESF project interventions at the programme level is very difficult because:
  – either the information on individual client characteristics and performance is not collected at project level (e.g. the follow-up survey); or
  – other monitoring data, such as Jobcentre Plus’, provide much of the detail required but are partial in coverage of ESF spend;

• while the research literature has identified differentials in performance between multiple disadvantaged groups and mainstream clients in general, it has yet to deliver a detailed appreciation of the scale of these differences across different disadvantages and particularly across different combinations of disadvantages. This has limited current understanding of why such performance differentials arise;

• because of this, we have no basis to establish objectively that the projects identified in discussions with Government offices (GOs) and co-financing organisations (CFOs) do indeed represent the best practice examples. However, as mentioned before, we used our experience of what constitutes good practice as a guideline.

We do believe that the process issues presented in the preceding chapter provide a range of approaches which demonstrate good practice principles. However, the study has raised a number of issues about the identification of good practice and/or performance that are discussed in more depth in this chapter.
5.1 Who are the multiple disadvantaged?

The general consensus from the research community and many of the GOs and CFOs was that combinations of the following characteristics should broadly be held as multiple disadvantage:

- over 50s;
- lone parents;
- disabled;
- ethnic minority;
- low skills.

Other barriers were highlighted as being equally important but many recognised that only very limited data were available on these issues:

- ex-offenders;
- homeless people;
- refugees and speakers of languages other than English;
- drug and alcohol misusers;
- carers and care leavers; and
- living in areas of low labour demand.

There is particular interest among GOs and CFOs in some ‘recognition’, in assessment criteria, of the potential impact of low labour demand on project outcomes. Many reported that there is no basis in ESF Objective 3 criteria for assessing the effect a low level of local demand for labour might have on project performance.

Berthoud’s findings place the emphasis on the number of barriers, that is multiple disadvantage, as better reflecting the difficulty of being in or finding employment. This does not mean that specific barriers do not make more or less of a difference in an individual’s chances of finding work but that having two or more barriers dominates. Most respondents in our interview programme suggested that two or three barriers would make an individual multiple disadvantaged. We would recommend using three or more barriers as a criteria for identifying ESF clients facing severe barriers to entering work.

There may be some advantage in using the number of disadvantages a client faces as a key criterion in funding and assessing relative performance. However, there will be some practical problems in doing so:

- some assessment process is required to fully determine the scale, nature and implications of the barriers that clients face, typically something that can only happen after a client has entered a project or a gateway;
• few datasets currently contain information on the full range of barriers clients may face – disability is one glaring example but criminal records, drug and alcohol abuse are all not often recorded;

• pre-selecting clients with three or more barriers is not practical unless there are procedures in place to screen clients to find those best suited to their delivery mechanisms (mostly governed by the intensity of support) or have the flexibility and support networks to provide an outcome for all clients.

One issue that arose in the study is the diversity of the issues facing people defined by the ‘label’ of disabled. There is a wide range of disabilities that goes far beyond the simple distinction between physical and mental disability. A better classification of this target group would provide a better indication of the diversity of problems and, therefore, potential solutions.

In a sense, targeting projects on the more common sets of multiple disadvantage, where good practice/performance can be identified, should lead to increased effectiveness, leaving less common combinations of multiple disadvantage to be addressed by pilot interventions.

5.2 Monitoring data

Through our research, we became familiar with the different ESF monitoring datasets available: the Closure Database, the Leavers’ Survey, the Jobcentre Plus ESF dataset and the Learning and Skills Council’s (LSC’s) equivalent dataset. The availability of data is impressive, but, unfortunately, the data had severe limits with regard to the purposes of our research:

• the Closure database does not allow linking outcomes with individual disadvantaged groups so it is not possible to identify their success in terms of assisting the different groups;

• the Jobcentre Plus ESF dataset, together with the LSC’s equivalent dataset, do allow this analysis but some information is lacking (there is no information on lone parent status in the Jobcentre Plus dataset, for example). Moreover, these datasets aggregate their data (often at measure level) in such a way that it is not possible to undertake a more detailed interrogation at the project level, which would be necessary to support an effective performance management process.

This has been a major obstacle for this study because it has limited the ability to identify good performance projects for closer examination of the reasons for their achievements.

On the basis of our experience of the datasets, we believe to be able to formulate some recommendations for future monitoring efforts:
• the ESF, in common with other active labour market policies, focuses on a set of positive outcomes, key among which are the achievement of full- or part-time employment and self-employment. Qualifications, and associated training, are also seen as a positive outcome, being a platform from which clients are likely to progress into employment. However, we suggest that it would be sensible to adapt the monitoring system to also allow for the capture of ‘near employment’ outcomes (including in-house work experience, supported short-term placements, work experience and jobs for eight hours or less) as they are essential progress measures for many multiple disadvantaged clients.

• Project level assessment of performance tends to assess achievements against targets, whereas what is required is an assessment against absolute performance benchmarks – actual numbers of disadvantaged groups into jobs rather than a percentage of the target set by the project in their funding bid. The fact that there is very limited information on project outcomes at the level of detail required to assess performance with multiple disadvantaged clients means that there is no information to update funders’ expectations of what a good project can achieve. What is required, therefore, is more project level information and a process which aims to draw out the performance information and compare and contrast performance of different approaches which would involve co-financing organisations and the projects themselves.

5.3 Are we seeking good practice or good performance?

Good practice is often defined by good performance, particularly at a project level. For example, if we find a project with high employment entry rates, we infer that the delivery mechanism(s) must be good practice, look at what this is and try to replicate it. However, that is only likely to be appropriate of the client group is homogeneous and the labour market conditions (i.e. scale and range of job opportunities) are similar. If a project has a client group, of which only a small proportion have multiple disadvantages, a project may have good performance but the delivery mechanism might be wholly unsuitable for the minority of those with multiple disadvantages.

Good practice is better defined at the level of a barrier, not at the client or the project level. That is, what works for a client with a specific set of disadvantages? The key elements of practice set out in the boxes in the previous section are examples of what appears to work to overcome a specific barrier. Good project performance will happen when the package of support is adequate to alleviate the barriers of enough of its clients.

One issue is whether we should expect a project to take a diverse client group with multiple barriers to provide a route to employment for all or a substantial majority of its clients (say, 50 per cent or more). The irony is that good practice in engaging with, recruiting and retaining multiple disadvantaged clients, might undermine overall project performance by focusing on more disadvantaged clients. The case studies described in this report combine good practice with decent performance outcomes,
but it is important to keep the distinction between both concepts in mind. That said, there is some limited evidence in this study that projects which focus on specific core client groups or geographic areas do appear to perform better in engaging, and then helping, their core client groups.

Putting good practice into operational delivery is not straightforward. Who does what best, with whom, and why, remains a very complex judgement and there are limited performance benchmarks to help guide both those designing and funding projects. CFOs are looking to build on their experience into future rounds of ESF Objective 3 funding to improve project performance. There are, however, a number of practical issues that would make it difficult to develop this at the sub-regional level, despite the sub-regional strategies being developed by the principal co-financers (Jobcentre Plus and the LSCs):

- there are no evidence-based benchmarks available at present (most use subjective judgements to set standards);
- the scale and cost of any assessment of existing provision;
- the diversity of funding sources with different objectives and target groups;
- implementing this in the context of repeat bidding rounds.

5.4 Can we specify ideal project types?

Given the discussion above, the answer is probably no, such are the complexities of local delivery combined with the combinations of client disadvantages. However, it is possible to identify a menu of practice which has been observed in many of the better performing case study projects:

- a clear sense of purpose and goal-oriented approach (employment focus) – this needs to be shared with clients. Gateway activities, such as confidence building, hobbies, crafts and arts and personal development, may be necessary as a platform before introducing employability;

- active outreach involving personal contact in community places or in the premises of other providers;

- awareness-raising to generate word-of-mouth referrals;

- a specific focus either on a core target group or a certain geographic area – this helps promote learning and specialist knowledge but also supports the development of reputation among the client group and wider community;

- cooperation with families and carers, where appropriate;

- staff with empathy, good communication skills and the ability to build trust with their clients;

- an environment which is perceived as being non-threatening by clients but an approach which builds the confidence of vulnerable clients and prepares them for the world of work;
• small caseloads given the intensity of the contacts (around 30-40);
• an early identification of clients’ needs and a willingness to market other provision;
• an in-depth knowledge of the local organisational infrastructure and good networking links;
• practical referral arrangements in order to ensure clients are picked up by other provision and do not drop out;
• the option for clients to choose one-to-one sessions as a complement to group work, so that personal issues can be addressed;
• action plans as living documents, building on clients’ aspirations but evolving towards realistic options by managing clients’ expectations;
• a focus on learning rather than training which has the stigma of ‘back-to-school’ where many originally failed;
• an open door policy so that the intensity of support can be increased if the client has a life crisis or difficult transition to make;
• good links with employers to find work placements and source vacancies;
• a free job-matching service to help reduce the employer’s risk and cost of recruitment;
• support to employers to help them understand the strengths and weaknesses of the different disadvantaged groups and the value of on-the-job mentoring or job coaching/buddying arrangements;
• an aftercare service, also towards employers, to build the basis for a long-term relationship with employers;
• work placements and in-house work experience to help overcome concerns that clients have about leaving behind benefits and their previous lifestyle.

Above all, many of the organisations had nurtured a learning culture. Very few of the higher performing projects had come to their approach by chance – most had built on trial and error and a willingness of their staff to improve and develop practice to do the best that they could. This attitude towards continuous improvement is perhaps what fundamentally underlies good practice.

The emphasis on employment in the case study projects does not imply that these projects do not value further training and education, voluntary work outcomes or soft outcomes (e.g. improved confidence and motivation). Employment was seen as a positive outcome for all those who could achieve and sustain it. Other outcomes were seen as being important stepping-stones for those clients who were still not ready to start work. More than one relatively high performing project pointed out that developing good ‘soft outcomes’ was the key to getting clients into work but was a means to an end and not an end in itself.
5.5 Do programme funding criteria need to be adjusted to reflect these conclusions?

Given a toolkit of good practice against barriers, the selection criteria would change to assess the fit between delivery and the expected client group, which would need to be evidence-based. There would also need to be a balance between promoting good practice and piloting inventive approaches where there were gaps in the toolkit.

There is an issue about the extent to which ESF funding is tied to the delivery of national targets. Targets provide an important incentive for effective delivery but they do need to be sensitive to the lower levels of outcomes which would appear to arise when working with multiple disadvantaged clients. To provide more ‘space’ for projects working with multiple disadvantaged clients, it would be worth considering the extent to which different targets could be introduced for specific client groups – lone parents, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, etc. which reflect best available evidence on what performance might be expected for these groups.

5.6 What is the added value of the ESF Objective 3 programme?

The ESF appears to have been vital to the success of the case studies the research team visited, either because nothing would have happened without ESF funding (full additionality) or because ESF funding allowed for additional benefits. The perceived additional benefits of ESF funding can be broadly grouped in four categories:

- provision to more clients;
- higher quality of provision, including:
  - an increased range of services on offer;
  - a stronger focus on individually tailored support;
  - more intensive support (more days/week);
  - better quality equipment;
- provision to a different client group;
- use of ESF money as ‘seed money’ in order to gain additional funding.

The ESF enabled both more and higher quality provision mainly because it offered funding for additional or better qualified staff. When working with multiple disadvantaged groups and, in particular, when aiming to place multiple disadvantaged clients in employment, more staff are needed to overcome the additional barriers.
ESF funding has been used as ‘seed money’ on which to build further provision, either through match funding or by removing the barrier of high set-up costs. From a funder’s perspective, this use of ESF money as ‘seed money’ to launch new but subsequently sustainable, pilots is obviously a very interesting one.

Most ESF projects are fully embedded within existing organisations and draw down funding from non-ESF funding sources, including:

- UK programmes – for example, Big Lottery Fund, the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, etc;

- mainstream providers – LSC, Jobcentre Plus, the National Health Service (NHS), the Youth Services, social services, etc.

In some cases, co-operation between ESF projects and mainstream providers goes beyond mere financial links and includes the sharing of agendas and clients. In a number of cases, the ESF has strategically complemented other projects and/or funding sources. Complementarity is greatly facilitated by the flexibility of ESF funding compared to their other funding resources: the ESF allows projects to spend money on cost categories that other funding sources do not cover. Importantly, in some cases the ESF has provided projects with the risk-capital to experiment.

Financial sustainability will become a major issue in the near future as few projects seem to have considered the possibility of ESF funding running out or substantially decreasing. Even fewer projects have developed a strategy for future funding but there is a sense that, as projects are providing a valuable service to mainstream providers, they should be eligible for mainstream funding.
Appendix A
Topic list case study interviews

A.1 Background information about the project

• What are the project’s objectives and target groups?

• What is the project’s timescale? What are the geographical boundaries and area characteristics?

• How many staff work on this project?

• What does the project seek to do with clients? What is the activity (outreach, motivation/confidence building, training, job search, job placement, supported employment, aftercare)?

• What are their geographical boundaries and what are the characteristics of their area: rural, urban and main labour market characteristics (ethnic businesses, industrial area, travel to work restrictions…)?

A.2 Engaging with the client group

• How do they source their clients – are multiple disadvantaged people a specific target group or do they focus on other criteria in recruitment? What methods of engagement have they developed?

• Are clients recruited from labour market-focused organisations (JC+…) or from organisations with remits further away from labour market (IAG, counselling…)?

• Is participation compulsory (part of a court Order, for example, or part of a school curriculum)?

• What has been their success at working with clients with multiple disadvantages and to what is it due? Are there any types of clients they have been less successful in attracting or working with?
A.3 Process

- What methods of intervention have they put in place (different stages of intervention, formal process with fixed duration or flexible approach)?

- Nature and form of the support (for example, material such as equipment or advice and guidance, intensity)?

- How important is trust and developing a relationship with clients?

- What makes a difference: flexibility of the funding, trust and soft support, qualifications…?

- Do they work with other agencies at any stage during the process, either to outreach for them, to refer for specialised support or aftercare support?

A.4 Aftercare

- Do you offer any aftercare provision?

- For what clients is there aftercare (all, those in employment, those in education/training)?

- What service do you provide (transport cost, childcare cost, telephone call, sign-posting to other services, in-work visit…)?

- How useful/efficient do you feel this after-care has been (how has it helped clients sustain their outcomes)?

- Would more after-care be required; for what clients, how long, in what form?

A.5 Assessing the intervention

- What has been their success in engaging and working with the client group and to what is it due? Are there any types of clients they have been less successful in attracting or working with?

- What types of activities have been successful with what types of clients? Are there factors that are outside the projects’ ability to intervene, for example, the intervention may not be timely for a client whose child is under school-age but would become needed a few months later once the child starts going to school?

- Is there any type of activity they know is effective or they would like to pilot but cannot implement because of funding restrictions? Are they limited in terms of duration in the project or repeat intervention?

- Are there any groups of clients who have not been engaged with or supported because of the requirement to produce positive outcomes? Are resource limitations and output targets encouraging projects to work with clients who are ‘less hard-to-help’ rather than with all the clients?
• Have they observed and measured benefits that are not typically captured in the monitoring information required by the European Social Fund (ESF): for example, increased confidence, improved parenting and family relationships, reduction of crime linked support, people with substance abuse issues?

• Which of the successful methods of intervention would be transferable to other client groups and other areas?

A.6 Added value of ESF measures

• Have they used the ESF and other programmes in a complementary way? What mainstream programmes are linked to their ESF activities?

• Would they have undertaken similar types of activities without the ESF? Would they have undertaken activities to a similar level (number of people, intensity of support) without the ESF?

• Would they have worked with the same groups of clients? Have they worked with more/less groups of clients because of the ESF support?

• Have they assessed value added and in what way?

A.7 Future provision

• Do they have information about the cost to deliver a service to their multiple disadvantaged client group compared to other clients?

• How will they fund multiple disadvantaged provision from 2006? What level of funding would they require to continue providing for the multiple disadvantaged? What other potential sources of funding could they draw down?

• Could there be any displacement effect due to changes in funding priorities?
Appendix B
Case study performance

We have analysed the characteristics of the clients of the Jobcentre Plus case study projects both against other clients in the Jobcentre Plus dataset and against the characteristics of European Social Fund (ESF) beneficiaries reported in the most recent Leavers’ Survey. A key issue is whether the client group of the case study projects faced more than the average number of disadvantages in the labour market (to the extent that the dataset had information on client characteristics). Using the Jobcentre Plus ESF dataset it is possible to analyse:

- the age of clients – categorical data is available which does identify the over 50s in the client group;
- the prior duration of a Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) claim or whether clients were not claiming JSA but were not employed. It is not clear whether this latter group are all claiming a non-JSA benefit but we understand that many would be classified as ‘inactive’. However, no information is available on the duration of claims;
- whether a client has a disability or not;
- the ethnic origin of the client; and
- the reported skill level prior to participating in the ESF project, specifically those clients who have no qualifications or only qualifications below NVQ Level 1 or equivalent.

However:

- it is not possible to identify lone parents or other clients with caring responsibilities in the Jobcentre Plus ESF dataset. These groups represent ten per cent and 25 per cent, respectively, of the Learners’ Survey sample; and

33 J. Atkinson, op. cit.
• in keeping with many other datasets, other disadvantages are not recorded – drug or alcohol abuse, ex-offenders, homeless, speakers of other languages, etc.

The five barriers have been used to analyse the number of disadvantages faced by clients in order to proxy Berthoud’s analysis and explore the extent of multiple disadvantage in case study and non-case study projects. They are broadly equivalent but by no means identical. At a minimum, the dataset does allow the analysis of both individual case study projects and the wider Jobcentre Plus ESF dataset. We were able to identify all 24 Jobcentre Plus co-financed case study projects which had a total of 2,972 client starts. The remaining clients amount to 44,428 starts.

The survey of leavers interviewed 3,431 clients of ESF Objective 3 projects in England who left during the latter part of 2002. This sample is drawn from all beneficiaries of Objective 3 funding.

The Learning and Skills Council has an equivalent dataset. However, identification of case study projects has proved more problematic. The following analysis focuses just on Jobcentre Plus data.

B.1 Client characteristics

Overall, the characteristics of the clients of the 24 case study projects are broadly similar to those of clients of other Jobcentre Plus co-financed projects. There are some differences:

• there is a higher proportion of female clients among case study projects when compared to other Jobcentre Plus co-financed clients but a similar proportion to that reported by the Leavers’ Survey (Table B.1);

• there are fewer disabled clients among case study Jobcentre Plus co-financed projects than in other Jobcentre Plus projects but a higher proportion than reported by the Leavers’ Survey (Table B.1);

• the age structure is similar between case study projects and other clients but with slightly fewer over 50 clients (nine per cent in case study projects and 12 per cent among other clients). The Leavers’ Survey age structure is somewhat different with more clients in the youngest and oldest age categories (Figure B.1);

• three-quarters of the case study project clients are white compared to two-thirds of other Jobcentre Plus co-financed clients (Figure B.2). Proportionately, more clients with ethnic backgrounds are supported by Jobcentre Plus co-funded projects than were reported in the Leavers’ Survey (17 per cent). The most significant differences between the Leavers’ Survey and Jobcentre Plus co-financed datasets are in the proportions of clients from black ethnic groups and those who prefer not to say;
information on the prior qualifications of clients is much more limited (fewer than ten per cent of clients have any data recorded) and this means the comparisons have to be considered more carefully. Case study project clients have proportionately fewer formal qualifications and a much higher proportion of ‘other’ qualifications (see Figure B.3). More than half of these ‘other’ qualifications arise from just one case study project and if these are excluded from the comparison, some 53 per cent of case study clients have no qualifications;

almost half of case study project clients had been either unemployed or claiming JSA for 36 months or more or were not claiming JSA and were unemployed. We have no direct information on whether this group of clients was claiming other non-JSA benefits or was not claiming any benefits. This compares to 40 per cent of other Jobcentre Plus co-financed clients (see Figure B.4). Unfortunately, the results from the Leavers’ survey are not directly comparable. There is no information on the types of benefits (unemployed) clients were claiming but it does report how long since clients last worked: 32 per cent reported that this was two or more years and a further 23 per cent said that they had never worked previously.

Table B.1  ESF Objective 3 client characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female %</th>
<th>Male %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case study clients</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other clients</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leavers’ survey</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not disabled</th>
<th>Disabled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case study clients</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other clients</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leavers’ survey</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure B.1  Age structure of Jobcentre Plus co-financed project clients


Figure B.2  Ethnicity of ESF clients

N.B. Figures for the Leavers' Survey are approximate as smaller ethnic groups under 0.5% are not reported. Source: Jobcentre Plus ESF Objective 3 Database, March 2005 and ESF Leavers' Survey 2002 Objective 3: England, 2004.
Figure B.3  Prior qualifications of clients

![Bar chart showing prior qualifications of clients](chart1.png)


Figure B.4  Prior activity of ESF clients

![Bar chart showing prior activity of ESF clients](chart2.png)

In summary, the characteristics of case study project clients as a group are broadly similar to those of all other Jobcentre Plus co-financed clients. However, in keeping with the findings from the qualitative discussions with case study projects, there is evidence that many projects do specialise and at the project level characteristics do vary significantly:

- four case study projects have client groups which are over 95 per cent disabled;
- just under 80 per cent of clients of one case study project were over 50, while two other projects worked exclusively with young people under 24;
- six case study projects drew more than 75 per cent of their clients from non-white ethnic backgrounds;
- over half the clients of nine case study projects are non-JSA and unemployed and more than 20 per cent of the clients of four other case study projects have been claiming JSA for 36 months or more;
- measurement of the number of barriers faced by clients has been restricted by the data available – amongst the client group of one project who were all leaving the prison population, many had drug-related problems in addition to other barriers to employment.

Figure B.5  Number of barriers faced by ESF Objective 3 clients

N.B. Barriers reported in the Leavers’ Survey are not equivalent.
B.2 Project performance

A key issue in exploring the performance of the individual case study projects is the extent to which their performance is due to the particular nature of their delivery or whether it arises simply from the composition of their client group. The previous section did identify that, as a group, the case study projects have a similar but not identical client profile and it is worth considering whether this has itself led to differences in performance. We have analysed the performance of the case study projects relative to clients of other Jobcentre Plus co-financed projects across the key characteristics to investigate any differences in performance.

Below are the complete tables.

Table B.2 Client participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>End reason for referral</th>
<th>Clients of other JCP funded projects %</th>
<th>Clients in case study projects %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have left project, of which:</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>left early</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision completed – found work</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision completed – other reason</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left provision early – found work</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left provision early – other reason</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transferred to other provision</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table B.3 Qualifications achieved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of qualifications</th>
<th>Clients of other Jobcentre Plus funded projects</th>
<th>Clients in case study projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualification obtained</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved credit towards (not full qualification)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waiting to see if qualification has been awarded</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worked towards a qualification</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Source

### Table B.4 Client destination by gender and disability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clients in case study projects</th>
<th>Female %</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>Not disabled %</th>
<th>Disabled %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time employment</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education, training, other government programme</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clients of other Jobcentre Plus funded projects</th>
<th>Female %</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>Not disabled %</th>
<th>Disabled %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time employment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education, training, other government programme</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
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<td>41</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>41</td>
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</table>

#### Source
### Table B.5  Client destination by age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>18-30 years</th>
<th>30-50 years</th>
<th>50-75 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clients in case study projects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time employment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education, training, other Government programme</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clients of other Jobcentre Plus funded project</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time employment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education, training, other Government programme</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results for 16-18 and over 75 age groups have not been included because of the small number of cases in each.


### Table B.6  Client destinations by ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White %</th>
<th>Asian %</th>
<th>Black %</th>
<th>Other %</th>
<th>Prefer not to say %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clients in case study projects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time employment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education, training, other Government programme</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All employment</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
### Table B.6  Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clients of other Jobcentre Plus funded projects</th>
<th>White %</th>
<th>Asian %</th>
<th>Black %</th>
<th>Other %</th>
<th>Prefer not to say %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education, training, other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government programme</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All employment</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table B.7  Client destinations by qualification level prior to starting the project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clients of other Jobcentre Plus funded projects</th>
<th>None, below VQ1 %</th>
<th>VQ Level 1 %</th>
<th>VQ Level 2 %</th>
<th>VQ Level 3+ %</th>
<th>Other %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time employment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education, training, other government programme</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table B.8 Client destinations by prior duration of unemployment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Up to six months JSA %</th>
<th>Six-36 months JSA %</th>
<th>Over 36 months JSA %</th>
<th>Non-JSA %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clients in case study projects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time employment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education, training, other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government programme</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>47</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clients of other Jobcentre Plus funded projects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time employment</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary work</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education, training, other government programme</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not known</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The following focuses on the key differences.

**Participation:**

- there are two variables which report whether a client has left provision which are not quite consistent: both suggest between 60-66 per cent of clients have left early with little difference between case study and other clients. However, according to one variable, over a third of non-case study clients have left early compared with just over a quarter of case study clients. The other variable (drawn from Juvos) suggests that just over half those who have left case study projects have left early compared to 43 per cent of other clients – all of the difference arises in the proportion leaving early to other destinations;

- looking at the participation of clients who face differing numbers of barriers, the data suggests that for completers, the proportions entering work by number of barriers are similar. However, for early leavers, case study clients facing more barriers are more likely to enter work. The number of case study clients in the 3+ category are somewhat low (32 clients) and so this finding needs to be treated with some caution.
Qualifications:
- twelve per cent of case study clients have been working towards a qualification compared to nine per cent of other Jobcentre Plus co-financed clients;
- the proportion of case study clients achieving a qualification is also slightly higher at 71 per cent compared to 60 per cent of other clients;
- however, much of the difference in qualification is in the ‘other’ qualification category.

Destinations:
- case study project men and women leave to take up employment in similar proportions but women are more likely to take up part-time employment;
- disabled people are significantly less likely to find work in non-case study projects whereas the difference is more marginal for clients of case study projects;
- case study project over 50s are more likely to enter employment but also more likely to enter unemployment than their counterparts in other Jobcentre Plus co-financed projects (the proportion with unknown destinations are particularly small and may explain some of the difference);
- the employment destinations of ethnic clients show clear prima facie evidence of ethnic penalties for all non-white groups across clients of other Jobcentre Plus co-financed projects but the position is more mixed for case study projects – Asian and other ethnic groups are more likely but black clients are less likely to enter work;
• there are too few case study clients to provide an analysis of destinations by level of qualifications held prior to starting their ESF project. We have included an analysis of other clients which suggests (as might be expected) that employment outcomes are significantly better for those clients starting with a VQ Level 2 or above;

• looking at prior length of unemployment, there is a degree of similarity between case study and non-case study client employment outcomes except for the six-36 months and over 36 months JSA groups where case study clients have lower employment outcomes and much higher unknown destinations;

• across the groups, case study clients are less likely to leave for education/further training or unemployment but the proportion of clients with unknown destinations is significantly higher.

There is no evidence in this relatively simple bivariate analysis of the data to suggest that case study project performance is solely due to the composition of clients in these projects. Some criteria, (prior duration on JSA and prior level of qualifications) suggest that the case study clients appear to be more disadvantaged as a group than the remaining Jobcentre Plus co-financed clients. However, according to other characteristics (ethnicity and disabled people) there are proportionately fewer disadvantaged clients. On average there is very little to choose between the number of barriers faced by clients: case study clients average 0.97 barriers compared to 1.07 for other clients. As noted earlier, we are aware of the many other problems case study project clients face which are not included in this dataset but we cannot say that these are (or are not) present among other clients as well.

We have attempted a more detailed analysis of performance at project level. There appears to be no consistent relationship between individual project performance, (measured in terms of the proportion of clients leaving to enter employment) and the average number of barriers faced by the clients. However, it is the case that for both individual clients and projects as the number of barriers increase, the proportion of clients entering work falls. This would suggest that there are issues in the delivery of assistance (many of which we have highlighted in the previous section), which get in between individual and project level outcomes.

An average of 25 per cent of clients enter work from those projects where the average number of barriers faced by clients is less than one. This falls to 15 per cent where the average number of barriers is between one and two and is nine per cent for those projects where the average number of barriers per client is over two.
Figure B.7  Proportion of clients leaving to employment by number of barriers

![Bar chart showing proportion of clients leaving to employment by number of barriers]


Note: A fairly high proportion of those with no disadvantages on the Leavers’ Survey would already be in employment before joining ESF projects: 50 per cent of lifelong learning (policy field 3) clients and 90 per cent of adaptability/entrepreneurship (policy field 4) clients were employed on joining the ESF. This explains the disproportionately high number of clients with no barriers leaving to employment according to the Leavers’ survey.

Figure B.7 compares the employment outcomes (full-time, part-time and self-employment) by the number of barriers faced by each client for the case study clients, other Jobcentre Plus co-financed clients and the beneficiaries interviewed in the most recent Leavers’ survey. The Leavers’ survey figures have been recalculated from the responses in order to match both the number and the definitions of the barriers faced by beneficiaries to those available in the Jobcentre Plus dataset. The results suggest that the different groups face a similar pattern of outcomes – the higher the number of barriers the fewer clients enter employment. However, while the Leavers’ survey employment outcomes decline relatively rapidly – 72 per cent for beneficiaries with no barriers compared to ten per cent for those with three or more – this is not the case for Jobcentre Plus co-financed clients. Employment outcomes for other clients of Jobcentre Plus co-financed projects are around half that reported by the leavers’ survey for clients with no barriers but the position is reversed for clients with three or more barriers. Case study projects are relatively most effective working with clients with three or more barriers.

Table B.9 shows the average performance of Jobcentre Plus projects in placing people into all forms of employment. The case study and other projects were selected according to the degree of concentration on particular client groups. So the first row presents the average performance of all projects where more than 95 per cent of the clients have a disability, etc. The average is a weighted average (all employment divided by all clients) not an average for each project.
### Table B.9  Employment performance of projects focusing on key client groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average according to criteria</th>
<th>Case study projects %</th>
<th>Other JCP projects %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disability &gt; 95%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white &gt; 75%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-JSA &gt; 75%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low qualifications &gt; 50%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50 &gt; 50%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All clients</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Although the number of projects is limited (a total of 360), the averages do provide a further set of performance benchmarks. With the exception of the over 50s category where there were very few case study projects, the figures also suggest that there is a fair degree of consistency between case study and non case study projects.

#### B.3  Summary

This review of the quantitative characteristics of case study projects and their clients has, inevitably, been partial. It has focused only on Jobcentre Plus co-financed projects and has a limited range of data and has emphasised more tangible outcomes such as employment. Nevertheless, it has provided sufficient information to establish that:

- the case study projects (and other Jobcentre Plus projects) draw their clients from more deprived groups when compared to all clients interviewed as part of the most recent Leavers’ survey;

- the evidence is mixed on the extent to which case study clients are more deprived than other clients in the Jobcentre Plus dataset – some barriers are more prevalent (low qualifications and prior duration on JSA/non-JSA claimants) while others are less frequent (ethnicity and disabled clients). We are aware of the other barriers facing clients which case study projects reported but have no means of comparing this anecdotal evidence with the remaining clients in the dataset;

- the analysis of the Jobcentre Plus data seems to confirm the hypothesis that performance does not simply reflect the client composition of projects. There are differences in the employment performance of clients facing different barriers but these are not sufficient to suggest that any differences between case study and other Jobcentre Plus projects are due to compositional effects;
• there is evidence that there is a high degree of specialisation at project level. This echoes one of the key points of the good practice findings;

• there is evidence to suggest that both Jobcentre Plus co-financed projects in general and the case studies in particular, have been relatively more successful at placing people facing multiple disadvantages.