Lone parents and work: developing new survey measures of the choices and constraints

Debbie Collins, Michelle Gray, Susan Purdon and Alice McGee

A report of research carried out by the National Centre for Social Research on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

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Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the efforts, knowledge and experience of the following people. Alan Marsh (Policy Studies Institute); Anne Green (University of Warwick); Simon Duncan (University of Bradford); Alan Duncan (University of Nottingham); Jane Millar (University of Bath); Diane Houston (University of Kent); Robert Walker (University of Nottingham); Susan Himmelweit (Open University); Glenn Williams (Nottingham Trent University). At the Department for Work and Pensions, Emily Cattell, Bairbre Kelly and Claire Murphy. At the National Centre for Social Research: Alice Bell, Clare Tate, Jon Hales, Miranda Phillips, Katarina Thomson and Martin Wood.

Thanks to the interviewers: Julie Foster, Colin Tuck and Robert Bridgett; to Pauline Stow for organising fieldwork; and to Chris Massett and her team in the Telephone Unit for their assistance with respondent recruitment. Finally, and most importantly, we would like to say a very big thank you to the lone parents who gave so freely of their valuable time, and without whom this study would not have been possible.
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Summary

Background

Understanding lone parents’ employment is crucial to two key governmental policies; that of eradicating child poverty and reducing the number of children in workless households. However, equally important is the need to accurately measure the reasons why lone parents do not work to ensure policies can be tailored to support lone parents in the most effective way, irrespective of whether this relates to increasing their employment rate.

Currently, government-funded surveys attempt to capture respondents’ concerns about moving off benefits and into work, and the reasons why they are not currently working, using a ‘barriers to work’ approach. The underpinning assumption has been that these ‘barriers’ to gaining employment can be overcome with the right government policies. However, evidence from recent qualitative studies and from comparing surveys’ findings indicate that the existing concept and measurement of barriers to work on surveys is in need of change. For example, qualitative data indicate that the decision-making process for lone parents in thinking about paid work is not a linear one: a barrier is not overcome forever, rather its importance may wax and wane reflecting other changes that may be occurring in the respondent’s life, such as re-partnering, moving home or children growing older. Comparisons across surveys such as the Families and Children Study (FACS), New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) evaluation and ONE evaluation of answers to questions about reasons for not working at the moment are hindered by significant differences in how the questions are asked. However, where comparison is possible it indicates significant differences in the reporting of the same barrier (refer to Chapter 1).

Aims of this study

This study was concerned with developing a new set of survey questions that better measure the complexities of lone parents’ decision-making around (returning to) work that could be adopted as a standard approach, making cross-survey comparisons easier. The study was also concerned with proposing ‘new’ ways of analysing, such
survey data, to allow researchers to quantitatively explore decision-making processes and any potential relationships with respondents’ characteristics, attitudes, values, beliefs and future behaviour.

As well as developing the question set, the study provides recommendations on the implementation of these new questions. For example, providing guidance on how the questions should be administered (mode of data collection), where they should be sited (considering question order effects) and any special advice or training that should be given to interviewers, if they are to be involved in question administration.

Overview of study design

To achieve the study’s aims, a five-stage research program was developed. This involved:

1. reviewing current methods for collecting data on barriers to work;
2. conducting secondary analysis of survey data to evaluate the performance of existing survey questions;
3. developing new questions based on the findings of stages (1) and (2) above;
4. testing some of the new questions using cognitive interviewing techniques; and
5. identifying analysis options.

In developing new questions, experts were consulted and the literature reviewed. Further details of the question development process are described in Chapters 2 and 3.

Key recommendations

The existing approach of asking about ‘barriers to work’ should be replaced with one that seeks to understand the choices and constraints facing lone parents when thinking about work and childcare.

This new approach would comprise of asking respondents about their attitudes to work and parenting, then establishing an intention to work, and finally conducting a card sort exercise to establish the relative importance of a range of factors that make work difficult/not an option at this time.

The attitude questions should be asked in a self-completion format, and come immediately before the intention to work and card sort exercise. The card sort exercise would need to be carried out as part of a face-to-face interview.

Whilst this study was concerned principally with developing questions for non-working lone parents it is recommended that a similar set of questions be asked of non-working mothers in couple families, and of mothers who have recently returned to work (say in the past 12 months).
Asking these questions as part of a longitudinal study would be highly desirable, so that the relationship between intentions and actual behaviour, and intentions, attitudes and behaviour can be explored.

Attitudinal questions

Measuring attitudes is important in understanding decision-making around work, childcare and parenting and any survey wishing to examine these issues should include attitudinal questions. Asking attitudinal questions about work, parenting and childcare, prior to asking about intentions to work and factors affecting the decision to work, would provide a context for people to consider such factors, providing parents who have no intention of working an opportunity to express their views on parental care and childcare. This would overcome a criticism with the current ‘barriers to work’ approach.

Two possible approaches, one based on operationalising the work/parental care orientation typology proposed by Bell et al (2005), the other based on theory of planned behaviour offer frameworks for developing and analysing such attitudinal questions. Both have potential value to policy makers, as they can identify groups of lone parents with different needs, values, beliefs and attitudes that may make them more susceptible to certain interventions than others, which might allow them to work if they so wish. Further details of these approaches are contained in Chapter 3.

Importance of factors that inform decisions about work

An important aim of this study was to move away from a one-dimensional notion of barriers to work and instead develop a questioning approach that captured the range of different factors that shape lone parents’ decision-making about work and parenting.

The new approach proposed seeks to collect quantitative data on the choices and constraints facing lone parents, and mothers more generally, when thinking about going (back) to work. It places more emphasis than survey questions have hitherto done, on understanding the factors that shape this decision, and exploring any interconnections between them. In particular, the new approach builds on empirical evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, in a way that has not been possible to date.

A key feature of the proposed new approach is a card sort exercise. This involves respondents considering a series of statements, each contained on a small card, which they are asked to put into one of three piles: those that are big factors, smaller factors or not a factor in them not working at this time. The rationale for this approach is that it encourages respondents to think more deeply about each ‘barrier’ and therefore, it was hoped, collect more accurate information than listing barriers on a single card that respondents review. Evidence from the cognitive interviews carried out on this study support this rationale. Findings from the
cognitive testing are contained in Chapter 4. Recommended questions are contained in Appendix E.

Analysis options

The new set of questions proposed is designed specifically to allow for interrelationships between those factors to be better understood. If the design is to be capitalised on, the analysis of the data has to take this complexity into account. This report contains suggestions as to how data yielded from this new questioning approach might be analysed in a descriptive sense. Latent class analysis is proposed as one possible approach that might be useful, but further work would be needed using data obtained from the new proposed approach to explore its potential.
1 Background

Understanding lone parents’ employment is crucial to two key governmental policies; that of eradicating child poverty and reducing the number of children in workless households. However, equally important is the need to accurately measure the reasons why lone parents do not work to ensure policies can be tailored to support lone parents in the most effective way, irrespective of whether this relates to increasing their employment rate.

1.1 Overview of current survey practice

Over the past ten years or so, survey questions have tried to capture respondents’ concerns about moving off benefits and into work, and the reasons why they are not currently working. Such questions have collectively been seen as measuring the concept ‘barriers to work’. Although different, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) surveys have asked about ‘barriers to work’ in slightly different ways the questions have the following common features:

- They are closed questions, with pre-specified answer options.
- There is usually only one question asked about reasons for not currently working/things that make work difficult.
- Respondents can give more than one answer.
- The answer options, although differing across surveys, all cover the following dimensions:
  - lack of (suitable/affordable) childcare;
  - respondent’s health/disability;
  - lack of (suitable) work; and
  - work not being financially worthwhile (being better off on benefits).

The underpinning assumption has been that these ‘barriers’ or hurdles to gaining employment can be overcome with the right government policies. Analysis of such data has, therefore, tended to be limited to counts of the number of people
reporting a particular barrier, or the number of barriers reported by particular types of respondent.

1.2 Problems with current practice and the need for change

However, the existing concept of barriers to work, and its implementation on surveys is problematic and in need of change. Evidence for this comes from two main sources:

- qualitative research findings; and
- inconsistencies in existing DWP survey findings.

1.2.1 Qualitative findings

Qualitative studies have ‘unpacked’ lone parents’ decision-making around leaving benefits and moving into paid employment, exploring the complexities of this decision-making process. Respondents’ ‘moral’ frameworks on parenting, work and sense of self have also been found to play an important role in shaping decision-making. Most importantly, qualitative data indicate that the decision-making process is not a linear one: a ‘barrier’ is not overcome forever, rather its importance may wax and wane reflecting other changes that may be occurring in the respondent’s life. For example, re-partnering, moving home, changing job or children growing older may all affect the respondent’s need for childcare and the kind of childcare she is looking for. Thus the current concept of ‘barriers’ to work may not be a useful one.

1.2.2 Inconsistent survey findings

DWP-funded surveys that ask lone parents why they are not currently working, or what makes it difficult, have some shared characteristics (described in Section 1.1 above). However, there are several key differences that mean that comparing results across surveys is difficult. These are that the:

- questions are worded differently;
- question task is different (asking respondents to provide reasons unprompted compared to giving respondents a list or series of lists of reasons from which they select those that are relevant to them);
- answer options provided (either to the respondent or to which the interviewer is instructed to code the respondent’s unprompted answer) are not consistent. Lists typically contain 12 or more answer options yet, as mentioned in Section 1.1, only four categories are shared across all surveys;

---

1 Whether self-completion or face-to-face interviewer administered, the lists provided to respondents are a visual stimulus that aims to assist the task of recall.
• wording of shared categories is not consistent;
• survey context is different, that is to say what the respondent is told about the purpose of the research differs from survey to survey, reflecting the respective aims and objectives of each; and
• question order varies, meaning the context in which the question is asked is not consistent.

Table 1.1 illustrates the impact of these differences, comparing findings for the barriers to work questions asked on three DWP surveys: the Families and Children Survey (FACS), the ONE Evaluation, and the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) Postal Survey. Note that in each survey, multiple responses for barriers to work are provided – ratings or rankings of the most important barrier(s) are not reported. It should be noted that the target populations for these three surveys differed, reflecting their different research aims and objectives. FACS was designed to provide a nationally representative sample of all lone parents, irrespective of work status. ONE was an evaluation of a new method of delivery of support and advice to lone parents, and the target population for the survey reflected the rules governing who was eligible for the support, that is lone parents on Income Support (IS) who were either living in one of four pilot areas or control areas. NDLP, like ONE, was a survey designed to evaluate a particular initiative, and so its target population reflected the eligibility criteria for the programme. NDLP therefore provided a nationally representative sample of lone parents on IS who were eligible to participate in the programme. The ONE and NDLP samples were not designed to be representative of all lone parents, rather they were samples of specific sub-groups. These differences in sample coverage are likely to explain some of the differences we see when comparing findings, above and beyond those resulting from differences in question wording, described above.

Table 1.1 shows a systematic pattern across the three studies: where the available data make comparisons possible, the same barrier is reported least often in FACS, most often in NDLP, with ONE somewhere in between. The one exception to this pattern concerns the respondent’s own health/disability status, which has less than ten percentage points variation between studies. For other barriers there are much larger differences – as much as a 46-percentage point difference in the case of lack of skills/experience.

The three studies also differ in terms of which barriers to work are reported most often within each study. In FACS, the most widely cited barrier is ‘not wanting to spend any more time away from the child(ren)’ – closely followed by childcare issues and then health/disability. In the case of the ONE evaluation, financial concerns and ‘work readiness’ are closely followed by availability of work. Whereas for NDLP, there is little to separate childcare, ‘work readiness’, financial concerns and the belief that employers will not offer work because of childcare responsibilities.
### Table 1.1 Results on ‘barriers to work’ for selected DWP surveys during 2000/01

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>FACS&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt; Pilot areas % respondents citing barrier</th>
<th>ONE&lt;sup&gt;2&lt;/sup&gt; Control areas % respondents citing barrier</th>
<th>NDLP&lt;sup&gt;3&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parent’s wish to be with child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t want to spend more time away from child(ren)</td>
<td>33 **</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot afford childcare</td>
<td>19 **</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>52*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childcare availability</td>
<td>15 **</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t want to leave child with anyone else</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health/disability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own illness/health problems/disability</td>
<td>14 8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s illness/disability</td>
<td>6 –</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other family illness</td>
<td>1 –</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care for someone with health or behaviour problems</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studying/training</td>
<td>9 –</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial concerns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better off (financially) not working</td>
<td>6 23</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would not be able to pay/worried about paying rent/mortgage</td>
<td>3 23</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about managing financially in work</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about finances until first pay day</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couldn’t afford transport costs</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about leaving benefit</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work readiness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of skills/experience</td>
<td>5 –</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of qualifications/experience for right work</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low confidence</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of work/training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of work</td>
<td>1 26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Difficult to find work that would suit me’</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of training opportunities</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others’ prejudices</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlikely to get job due to age</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers won’t offer work because of childcare responsibilities</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Table 1.1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FACS(^1)</th>
<th>ONE(^2)</th>
<th>NDLP(^3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barrier</td>
<td>Pilot areas</td>
<td>Control areas</td>
<td>% respondents citing barrier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty travelling to work</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the reasons set out</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unweighted n =

1,133 482 568 33,742

\(^1\) Data reported were collected in Autumn 2001.

\(^2\) Data reported were collected in two waves: October 2000 and April 2001.

\(^3\) Data reported were collected between January and March 2000.

1.3 Aims of this study

This study was concerned with developing a new set of survey questions that better measures the complexities of lone parents’ decision – making around (returning to) work that could be adopted as a standard approach, making cross-survey comparisons easier. The study was also concerned with proposing ‘new’ ways of analysing such survey data, to allow researchers to quantitatively explore decision-making processes and any potential relationships with respondents’ characteristics, attitudes, values, beliefs and future behaviour.

As well as developing the question set, the study was to provide recommendations on the implementation of these new questions. For example, providing guidance on how the questions should be administered (mode of data collection), where they should be sited (considering question order effects) and any special advice or training that should be given to interviewers, if they are to be involved in question administration.

1.4 Overview of study design and methodology

To achieve the study’s aims a five-stage research program was developed. This involved:

1. reviewing current methods for collecting data on barriers to work;
2. conducting secondary analysis of survey data to evaluate the performance of existing survey questions;
3. developing new questions based on the findings of stages (1) and (2) above;
4. testing some of the new questions using cognitive interviewing techniques; and
5. identifying analysis options.
Below we describe in more detail what each stage entailed. Stages 1-4 were sequential, stage 5 happened concurrently with stage 4.

1.4.1 Stage 1: reviewing current methods

This first stage had four components:

• reviewing existing survey questions on ‘barriers to work’;

• reviewing the literature in this area, particularly that using empirical data (both qualitative and quantitative);

• interviews with external experts, identified by DWP, who had previously contributed to discussions with the Department on this topic; and

• a meeting (expert panel) with National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) researchers who had experience of working on studies looking at labour market participation, lone parents, decision-making processes and other areas of relevance to this study.

The aim of this stage of the research was to identify the key factors that can influence lone parents’ decision-making about work.

1.4.2 Stage 2: secondary analysis

The initial proposals for the study included options for small-scale analysis of existing questionnaire data as a means of testing the validity and sensitivity of questions used on recent surveys. However, the consultation with experts suggested that a wholly new approach to the questions would be needed. As a consequence, this stage of the work was restricted to checks on pilot data on a similar question module approach to the one adopted by this study, which had been developed for the 2006 Incapacity Benefit (IB) Pilot survey. This included checks on the:

• nature of data that would be generated;

• degree to which complexity in the responses suggested that respondents took the task seriously; and

• extent of missing data.

This analysis suggested that the questionnaire approach worked well with disabled people, and could probably be adapted for lone parents.

1.4.3 Stage 3: developing new questions

Information gleaned from stages 1 and 2 was then used to develop a new set of questions that specifically sought to measure lone parents’ decision-making around work and parenting. This question set was then reviewed by:

• some of the external experts who had been involved in stage 1,

• researchers at DWP; and

• NatCen researchers who had been involved in the expert panel at stage 1.
In light of comments received, the question set was amended, and tested at stage 4. Further details on this development process are provided in Chapter 2.

In parallel with stage 4, development work on a set of attitude questions was carried out. This involved reviewing existing attitudinal questions concerned with parenting, work and self-confidence and coming up with recommendations (see Chapter 3 for further details). The inclusion of attitude questions was felt to be important, as they would provide a context in which to understand parents’ choices and constraints. Due to timetable and resource constraints these attitudinal questions were not subject to cognitive testing.

1.4.4 Stage 4: question testing

The question set was then tested using cognitive interviewing methods, to evaluate the face validity and acceptability of the questions to respondents. Cognitive interviewing methods provide an insight into the mental processes respondents use when answering survey questions and completing questionnaires, helping researchers to identify problems with question wording and questionnaire design. Specifically, these methods focus on four stages: how respondents understand and interpret survey questions, how they recall information that applies to the question, the judgements they make as to what information to use when formulating their answers, and how they respond to the questions.

Cognitive interviews were conducted with 29 lone parents of children aged 0-15 years. Interviews took place in five areas: London, Portsmouth, South Essex, South West Lancashire, and Teeside. Lone parents were identified from Personal Adviser (PA) contact records and were contacted by NatCen’s telephone unit. The telephone recruiter carried out a short screening interview to identify eligible lone parents and fill specified quotas. Further details on the recruitment process are contained in Appendix B. Table 1.2 provides details on the characteristics of respondents interviewed as part of this study.

Cognitive interviews were conducted with lone parents in their own homes. Interviews lasted about an hour and were tape recorded with respondent consent. After the interview detailed notes were made and these were analysed using a content analysis approach, described in Appendix A.
Table 1.2  Summary of characteristic of interviewed respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>No. with characteristic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender of respondent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of respondent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-24</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35+</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of youngest child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11+</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age left continuous full-time education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 or under</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17+</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever worked before</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent with long standing illnesses or health problem(s)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.4.5  Stage 5: analysis options

The final stage of the study was a consideration of how the data that will arise from the new questions can be analysed descriptively: that is, in a way that explains the patterns and relationships in the data, but not driven by particular hypotheses.

In addition, two papers were commissioned from external researchers. The first, by Glenn Williams of Nottingham Trent University and Robert Walker of Nottingham University considers how Structural Equation Modelling could improve understanding of the decisions lone parents make around work (Appendix C). The second, by Diane Houston of the University of Kent looks at how psychological variables can be used as predictors of lone parents’ work intentions and behaviours (Appendix D).

1.5  Structure of this report

There are two main parts to this report: Part 1 focuses on the development of survey questions concerned with understanding the factors lone parents consider when thinking about (returning to) work. Part 2 focuses on analysis issues and making better use of survey data.

Within Part 1 there are five chapters. Chapter 2 sets out the rationale for the approach taken in this study to identify lone parents’ choices and constraints around work and parenting, discussing the need for moving away from the old ‘barriers to work’ concept and outlining the structure of the new approach.
Chapter 3 examines the importance of collecting attitudinal data on lone parents’ views about work and parenting, what information should be collected and how it should be obtained. Chapter 4 focuses on the questions about choices and constraints that were cognitively tested, setting out key findings and implications. Recommendations for the wording of the final question-set are also made.

Chapter 5 discusses the implementation of the new question approach (including both the attitudinal questions and those on choices and constraints). Specifically it makes recommendations on the mode of data collection, question order, and training points for interviewers. Finally, Chapter 6 pulls together the recommendations contained in Chapters 3 to 5, providing an overview of all those made.

Part 2 contains Chapter 7, which looks at the analysis of both the attitudinal and choices and constraints data and makes suggestions for how these data might be analysed in a way that maximises their utility.

It should be stressed that the purpose of cognitive interviews is to explore, understand and explain the range and diversity of ways in which people go about answering survey questions. The sampling methods used are purposive and are designed to ensure diversity of coverage across certain key variables rather than to compile a sample that is statistically representative of the wider population. Thus it is not possible to extrapolate about the size or extent of problems or errors identified in this report to the general population.
Part 1
Question development
2 Getting away from ‘barriers to work’: developing a new questioning approach

2.1 Overview

As mentioned in Section 1.2, current survey practice has tended to view factors that shape lone parents’ decision-making around moving off benefits and into work as being ‘barriers’ that have to be crossed. These have been thought of, to some extent, as ‘once in a lifetime’ hurdles that need to be overcome. Yet, in reality, these ‘barriers’, such as childcare, are omni-present, fluctuating in importance depending on respondents’ circumstances at any one point in time.

An important aim of this study was to move away from this one-dimensional notion of barriers to work and instead develop a questioning approach that captured the range of different factors that shape lone parents’ decision-making about work and parenting.

The new approach seeks to collect quantitative data on the choices and constraints facing lone parents, and mothers more generally, when thinking about going (back) to work. It places more emphasis than survey questions have hitherto done, on understanding the factors that shape this decision, and exploring any interconnections between them. In particular, the new approach builds on empirical evidence, both quantitative and qualitative, in a way that has not been possible to date. Below, we illustrate how this evidence has been incorporated into our proposed new questions.

Discussions with experts and a review of the literature in this area indicated that it was important to measure individuals’ underlying attitudes and beliefs about how best to combine parenting and paid work, and their perceptions about how best to
meet the needs and wellbeing of children, as well as collecting information on intentions to work. Existing surveys, whilst incorporating some attitudinal questions, had not sought to embed these questions into the task of thinking about ‘barriers to work’.

The review of current survey practice indicated that respondents were often presented with a list of potential ‘barriers’ and asked to indicate which ones applied to them. As discussed in Section 1.2, this approach had a number of problems, one being that the survey data were inconsistent. The most striking evidence that the existing ‘barriers to work’ approach was not working came from analysis of New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) data.

NDDP respondents were interviewed at two points in time and a comparison of their answers to these questions at waves one and two indicated significant ‘potential’ changes in the barriers individuals mentioned. However researchers felt that these apparent changes were, in part, an artefact of the questioning approach rather than representing real change. The magnitude of the differences found in the barriers reported between waves could not be solely explained by real changes in respondents’ circumstances. Rather it was felt that the question-approach used did not encourage respondents to spend sufficient time thinking about each barrier, and therefore they did not give complete and accurate answers.

An alternative approach to capturing information on the factors that influence respondents’ decisions about work involved a card sort (or shuffle pack) exercise. Respondents consider a series of statements, each contained on a small card, which they are asked to put into one of three piles: those that are big factors, smaller factors or not a factor in them not working at this time. This approach was being used on the 2006 IB Pilot Survey and had been adopted as a way of encouraging respondents to think more deeply about each ‘barrier’ and therefore, it was hoped, collect more accurate information. Evidence from cognitive interviews and pilot data from the IB Survey supported this hypothesis.

Our proposed questioning strategy includes a card sort exercise and consists of the following elements.

**All:**
- Attitudinal questions asked in a self-completion format.

**Those not in work:**
- Future (or recent) intentions to work.
- Card sort exercise with those who expressed an intention to work, identifying important factors for not working at this time.
- Priorities for the future (for those who expressed no intention to work)
Those recently joining the workforce:

- Identification of things that had changed that made work possible;
- Card sort exercise, identifying important factors that make remaining in work difficult.

The attitudinal questions (a) would be asked first, so as to provide a context in which respondents should consider the later questions (b to d, or e and f above), a feature that our ‘experts’ felt was very important. Further details on the rationale for collecting attitudinal data and the positioning of such questions in relation to the rest of the interview, is contained in Chapter 3.

The task was then to develop a set of questions for elements (b) to (f), with priority being given to developing questions and identifying the issues that the card sort exercise should focus on for non-working lone parents.  

2.2 Identification of card sort statements

As mention in Section 1.4, stage one of this study involved a review of the literature in this area, covering both qualitative and quantitative research studies. This review identified a range of factors that have been found to influence lone parents’ decisions around whether to work or not. These can be grouped under the following broad headings.

- Characteristics of lone parent, including:
  - age of lone parent;
  - number of children;
  - health of lone parent;
  - highest educational qualification;
  - previous work experience;
  - possession of a driving licence;
  - access to own transport; and
  - receipt of benefits or IS.
- Characteristics of child/ren, including:
  - age of child/children and of youngest child;
  - child’s personality (parent’s perception); and
  - child’s health.

---

2 Questions were developed for those recently joining the labour market, including the card sort statements but these were not cognitively tested, as there were insufficient resources to do so as part of this study.
• Attitudes/knowledge of lone parent:
  – attitudes to self;
  – attitudes to work;
  – attitudes to parenting;
  – attitudes to childcare;
  – attitudes to (extended) family; and
  – knowledge of benefit entitlements, understanding of ‘better-off-calculation’ etc.

• Lone parent’s social capital:
  – proximity of family to lone parent;
  – ‘closeness’ of family;
  – role of lone parent in their extended family (e.g. providing care for others);
  – role of friends, support networks; and
  – involvement in community groups etc.

• External factors:
  – state of local labour market: e.g. types of jobs available, location of jobs, working hours available, rates of pay available, lone parent’s perception of family-friendly employers;
  – transport: e.g. availability, frequency and cost of local transport, proximity of local transport routes to work and childcare providers, reliability of local transport; and
  – childcare: e.g. availability, access, location and types and childcare cost.

Stage one also included interviews with a number of ‘experts’ identified by DWP, and an expert panel involving NatCen researchers, who had experience in working on studies exploring labour market participation and use of childcare, particularly though not exclusively, for lone parents. These interviews, alongside the findings of the literature review, described above, helped us to identify the core dimensions that should be measured, and informed the design of the questioning approach proposed.

The following summarises the key themes to emerge from consultation with both internal (NatCen) and external experts:

• Social capital and social networks

  The importance of lone parents’ social networks (or capital) was seen to be very important in understanding decisions around work and was seen as a big gap in current surveys.
• Lone parents moral attitudes towards work

A universal theme that emerged from both the literature and through consultations with experts was the need to ‘tap into’ the motivations and attitudes of lone parents. Evidence suggests decision-making about whether to go (back to) work is usually done in conjunction with family rather than alone. The views of friends and family members (including mothers, sisters and the children of the lone parent) can be very important in determining whether or not a job is taken. Lone parents may think about work in terms of whether it is the ‘right thing to do’ and then if everyone they consult (parents, sisters, friends, children) agree it is, they will then deal with the barriers they might face in being able to work, such as childcare, transport etc. Any new question-set should therefore attempt to capture lone parents’ moral frameworks (refer to Chapter 3 for a further discussion of this point).

• Lone parents’ moral attitudes towards parenting

Experts were concerned that the ‘barriers to work’ questions contained in FACS, NDLP and similar surveys focus too much on work and pay little attention to parenting. This ‘barriers’ questioning approach assumes that everyone is or should be looking for work and was not viewed as a very effective way of collecting information. Evidence indicates that some lone parents do not want to enter the labour market, rather they want to stay at home and look after their children. For this group it is questionable what the value of asking them to identify barriers to work would be, particularly when they have not thought about going (back to) work.

• Importance of childcare in lone parents’ decision-making

Lone mothers’ views about employment are closely connected to the ways in which they think about motherhood. This affects attitudes to childcare and lone mothers, in particular, hold quite complex and sometimes ambivalent attitudes towards the use of childcare. There is a preference for informal care (which is seen as the closest substitution for parental care) and/or for work that enables the parent to continue to provide most of the care. Furthermore, qualitative research evidence indicates that the extent to which a lone parent feels comfortable asking for informal childcare can play a big part in deciding whether to work or not. Moreover attitudes towards parenting and decisions about childcare differ among different ethnic groups. There was a feeling among those experts consulted that currently survey data do not adequately capture these factors.

• Future work prospects

There was a view among experts that there needs to be a move away from and beyond a ‘barriers to work’ focus and towards a ‘life-course’ approach, encouraging lone parents to talk about the future, not just the ‘right now’. The use of projective techniques, such as lone parents considering what type of job they would like to do and what would need to change for them to do it was suggested.
Having reviewed the literature and consulted with experts we then compared the ‘barriers to work’ statements asked on a number of DWP-funded surveys against a list of dimensions identified from the literature, and from the consultation with experts, as being important in lone parents’ decision-making about going (back) to work. This allowed us to identify gaps in current practice. One significant gap was in relation to social capital, where virtually nothing was captured on this domain. Next, we developed statements to capture dimensions that the existing survey questions did not cover, and selected existing statements to map the remaining dimensions. Finally, the wording of these statements was refined in light of comments from internal and external experts.

In total, 17 dimensions were identified and these are listed below:

1. Health of lone parent.
2. Financial issues/making work pay.
3. Transport availability/affordability.
5. Qualifications needed for job (what employers are looking for).
6. Hours available/flexibility/perceived ‘lone parent friendliness’ of employers.
7. Lone parent’s need for flexible/part-time working.
8. Caring responsibilities/looking after sick child/adult/family member.
9. Attitudes of family and children towards lone parent working.
10. Lone parent wanting to look after child(ren) herself.
11. Lack of affordable/available childcare.
12. Lack of informal childcare.
13. Lone parent’s preparedness to leave child/children with anyone except family.
14. Availability of suitable work.
15. Personal or family troubles in lone parents’ life that make it difficult for them to work.
17. Concern about not having enough time with children.

Statements were then developed (if covering new areas) or identified from existing surveys for each of these 17 dimensions, as shown in Table 2.1, taking into account the comments received from the experts we consulted.
Table 2.1 Statements relating to each dimension

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Difficulties due to my health condition/disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I am not sure I would be better off financially in work than I am on benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I would have problems with transport to and from work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>My confidence is low at the moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>I haven’t got the qualifications or experience to get the kind of job I would want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Employers aren’t very family-friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I need to be very flexible about the hours I work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>I care for someone who has a health condition, disability or behavioural difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>My family wouldn’t like it if I worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I want to look after my child(ren)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>There isn’t enough suitable, affordable childcare around here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>My family or close friends are not able/live too far away to provide childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>I don’t want to leave my child or children with anyone except family or close friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>There are few suitable job opportunities in the local area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>I have personal or family troubles that need to be sorted out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>I am concerned about leaving the security of Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I am worried I will not have enough time with my children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9A</td>
<td>My child/children wouldn’t like me to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11A</td>
<td>It’s hard to find appropriate childcare I can afford</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note that for two of the dimensions – (9) ‘Attitudes of family and children towards lone parent working’ and (11) ‘Lack of affordable/available childcare’ – two statements were included. In the case of the former (attitudes of family and children towards lone parent working) this dimension was felt to consist of two separate issues. The first was the views of lone parents’ children on their working, the second related to other family members’ views, particularly those of lone parents’ mothers, which the literature indicated could be influential.

In terms of (11) ‘Lack of affordable/available childcare’, our review of existing survey questions revealed that this dimension was captured by one of two statements. Different surveys used one or other (or variant) of these two statements (Shown in Table 2.1). We were interested in seeing whether they were measuring the same concept, so both were included.
2.3 Outline of new card sort approach

Figure 2.1 shows a flow diagram representing the different routes lone parents could go through the new question set. All lone parents would be asked the initial attitude questions and then a question would be asked to establish whether the lone parent is currently working or not. The question set initially developed by the research team was to be asked of lone parents not in work. A similar set of questions were developed for working lone parents, which aimed to identify reasons that can make it difficult to remain in paid employment.

The development of this new question set involved a number of steps. Firstly, those with an intention or desire to work are identified. This could be a desire to work in the future (over the next three years) or having thought about work in the recent past (last 12 months). Secondly, those with a desire (recent or future) to work are asked whether they had a particular job or type of work in mind. Finally respondents are asked to complete the card sort exercise, either thinking about the job or type of work they had in mind, or if they did not have anything in mind thinking about returning to do the kind of work they did previously (if they had worked before). For those who had no previous work experience, they were asked to think about work in general when completing the card sort. The rationale for this approach was that respondents might find it easier to engage in the card sort exercise if they could focus on a particular job or type of work.

If the lone parent did not express any desire to work (either in the future or in the recent past) they would not be asked to do the card sort exercise but rather they would be asked about their priorities for the future. It did not seem sensible to ask lone parents who were not thinking about work to engage in the hypothetical task of trying to imagine that they were thinking about it and what the potential problems might be for them in doing that, as the data are likely to be unreliable.

Chapter 4 reports on how successful this approach was, presenting findings from the cognitive testing of these questions.
Getting away from ‘barriers to work’: developing a new questioning approach

Figure 2.1  New questioning approach – question structure diagram

- **Current economic activity**
  - status Multi-coded
  - **In work**
    - Details of current job title etc, hours work, date started
  - **Not in work**
    - All not in work
      - What like/expect to do over next three years?

- **Mentions work**
  - Thought about type of work/particular job?
    - **If yes**
      - Job title, type of work
    - **If no and ever worked**
      - Details of last main job
    - **If no and never worked**
      - Reasons that can make work difficult
        - Card sort exercise

- **Not mentioned work**
  - Thought about going (back) to work in last 12 months?
    - **If yes**
      - Thought about type of work/particular job?
    - **If no**
      - Priorities for the future
      - **If yes**
        - Job title, type of work
      - **If no and ever worked**
        - Details of last main job
      - **If no and never worked**
        - Reasons that can make work difficult
          - Card sort exercise
        - Thinking about last main job
          - Reasons that can make work difficult
            - Card sort exercise

- **Reasons that can make work difficult**
  - Card sort exercise
  - Thinking about last main job
    - Reasons that can make work difficult
      - Card sort exercise
3 Understanding lone parents’ attitudes to work and parenting

Whilst attitudinal data have been collected on a number of surveys, analysis and reporting of these data have tended to be limited (refer to Section 3.1). There are potential issues, therefore, about the perceived usefulness of such data, and how best these can be utilised. This chapter discusses the importance of understanding lone parents’ attitudes to work and parenting and how this information could contribute to a broader understanding of the factors that influence lone parents’ decisions about going (back) to work. We go on to suggest possible frameworks that could be used to develop such questions, and provide an indication of the attitudinal dimensions these should contain.

The extent of attitudinal questioning that is possible will be influenced by whether the questions are to be asked as part of a survey that is specifically designed to explore lone parents’ or parents’ choices and constraints regarding parenting, work and childcare, or whether these issues are to be explored within an existing survey. The former would provide greater scope for exploring parents attitudes in more detail than the latter, as there would be more interview time available to do so.

During the course of this study we were asked to develop attitude statements to be included in the 2006 Families and Children Survey (FACS). The development of these questions is described in Section 3.6.

3.1 Why measure attitudes

Attitudinal questions seek to measure respondents’ opinions, beliefs, norms, values and feelings. Measuring attitudes to work and parenting are important in the context of this study. Research evidence, both qualitative and quantitative, indicates that lone mothers’ beliefs, norms, values, feelings and attitudes are important in shaping their decisions about whether to go (back) to work. This research evidence
supports social psychology theories that suggest that people's behaviour (such as working) can be explained or understood, at least in part, by their attitudes, beliefs, subjective and moral norms. Some of these theories are described in more detail in Appendix D. Moreover such theories have underpinned the building of statistical models that use attitudinal data to predict behaviour, which could be useful in developing government policy. If we want to better understand the factors that shape lone parents' (and one could argue mothers in general) decisions about whether to work or not, then we need to include questions that capture their attitudes, beliefs, values and norms.

Let us consider these points in a little more detail.

3.1.1 Research evidence for the importance of attitudes

The FACS asked a series of attitudinal questions of parents (both lone parents and those living in couple families) up until 2003. Findings from the 2001 survey showed lone mothers who worked fewer than 16 hours per week, or did not work at all, were more likely to hold ‘traditional’ views on the role of women in the family and the workplace than lone mothers who worked 16 or more hours a week (Kasparova et al., 2003).

Moreover, qualitative research evidence indicates the importance of attitudes, values and norms in shaping lone parents’ decisions about whether to work or not. For example, studies by Bell et al. (2005), Himmelweit and Sigala (2004) and Duncan and Edwards (1999) have all indicated that attitudes play a key role in decisions about work, parenting and use of childcare.

In particular, Duncan and Edwards (1999) argue that decisions about whether to take up paid work are primarily driven by what lone mothers think is best and ‘morally right’ for them and their children. For these authors, economic barriers are secondary: the decision to work is primarily seen as being a moral/ethical one which is shaped by institutions (such as the media and the family) and structures (such as neighbourhoods).

Bell et al. (2005) identified two crosscutting dimensions that they argue influence lone parents’ decisions about work and parenting:

- work orientation; and
- attitudes to parental care.

Using these dimensions they developed the following typology:
Figure 3.1 Typology of work/parental care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type 1</th>
<th>Type 2</th>
<th>Type 3</th>
<th>Type 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High work and high parental care orientation</td>
<td>High work and low parental care orientation</td>
<td>Lower work and high parental care orientation</td>
<td>Lower work and lower parental care orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Aspire to work</td>
<td>• More likely to use non-parental care in order to be able to work</td>
<td>• View motherhood as a full-time job in its own right, although it didn’t impinge on their desire to care for children</td>
<td>• Not motivated to work and although staying at home to look after children, not necessarily because of a belief that they should provide full time childcare themselves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The division of lone parents into these four groups has important policy implications because they are likely to require different types of employment and childcare interventions to tempt them (back) into work (Bell et al., 2005: 10). However, since this report was based on a qualitative study, it was unable to quantify the size of these groups.

3.1.2 Links between behaviour and attitudes

Social psychologists contend that there is a relationship between an individual’s attitudes and behaviour. This is based on the premise that individuals’ values, opinions and beliefs shape what they do and how they respond to events in their lives. However, it is difficult to show causality, that is to say that person x did y because they thought z. This is because human beings and the reasons for their actions are complex, which makes it difficult for people to identify clearly what made them act the way they did, in turn making these things difficult to measure. At best what we can hope for is that we might be able to identify attitudes that may be likely to predict behaviour.

Appendix D of this report describes the theory of planned behaviour, and the various refinements that have been suggested to it. The theory of planned behaviour has been very influential, particularly among economists and clinicians, who want to be able to predict how people might respond to particular stimuli or interventions, for example what impact would putting up the price of cigarettes have on the number of people who smoke. In the context of lone parents and employment, it potentially
provides a useful tool in identifying what types of interventions might be appropriate for particular types of lone parent and in evaluating their success.

3.2 Current survey practice

Several of the surveys we looked at in stage one of this study, the FACS, the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) Evaluation postal survey, the Personal Advisor Meetings (PAM) Survey, and the ONE evaluation surveys, asked similar attitudinal questions (see Table 3.1), although some included more statements than others. What differed was how these questions were used for analysis purposes. For example, in the case of NDLP, the nine attitude statements were used to form a commitment-to-work scale. Each statement was given a score, a negative one being given to those statements that were empirically found to be likely to be disagreed with by people closer to the labour market. Scores were summed across all statements and divided by the number of questions in the scale to give an overall score. The range of overall scores was then divided into five groups of similar size (Lessof et al, 2001).

FACS included 20 attitude statements that made up two scales: general attitudes to work and attitudes towards families’ work and benefits. These statements were asked in a self-completion format, like NDLP. Each statement was given a score, either positive or negative, and the total score was calculated by summing all the scores for statements in the scale. In 2001 total scores were compared over time to produce an assessment of whether respondents were more or less positive or whether there was no change in their attitudes. This change in attitude towards work and families’ work and benefits was then compared with changes in levels of activity (Kasparova et al, 2003).

Table 3.1 Comparison of attitude statements asked on DWP surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Attitude statement</th>
<th>FACS</th>
<th>NDLP</th>
<th>PAM</th>
<th>ONE1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statement included on survey (✔)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A person must have a job to feel a full member of society*</td>
<td>✔✔✔✔✔</td>
<td>✔✔ ✔</td>
<td>✔✔</td>
<td>✔✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A woman and her family will all benefit if she has a paid job*</td>
<td>✔✔✔</td>
<td>✔✔ ✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People with jobs should not get social security benefits#</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If their child is ill and both parents work, the mother should take time off work*</td>
<td>✔✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My job is to look after the home and family#</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Even though she will be financially better off, it is sometimes alright for a lone parent on benefits to start living with her boyfriend without telling the benefits office#</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Having almost any job is better than being unemployed*</td>
<td>✔✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is less important for a woman to go out to work than it is for a man#</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
### Table 3.1  Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Attitude statement</th>
<th>FACS</th>
<th>NDLP</th>
<th>PAM</th>
<th>ONE(^1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If I didn’t like a job, I’d pack it in, even if there were no other job to go to*</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No one should ever feel badly about claiming Social Security benefit(^2)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children can be better off living with just one parent(^3)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People living on Social Security benefits are not really part of society(^4)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women with school aged children should never work full-time(^6)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>There is never any point in worrying about debts</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working for pay is more fulfilling than looking after the home*</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once you’ve got a job, it’s important to hang onto it, even if you don’t really like it*</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you live on Social Security benefits, everyone looks down at you</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People with mortgages should not get Social Security benefits</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A job is alright, but I really want to be with my children at home*</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People claiming benefits should always tell the benefits office about any paid work that they do</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women have the right to choose to be supported by the state at home with their children, even if they have no husband or partner</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔(^2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you live on Social Security you have to try and hide it from the rest of your family</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is just wrong for a woman with children under five years old to go out to work</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Only the poorest families should be allowed Social Security benefits</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Having a job is the best way for me to be an independent person*</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No-one on benefits should be allowed to turn down the offer of a paid job</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you try a new job and it does not work out, you end up worse off than before.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most people like me are better off on the dole.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would be better off in a low-paid job than on benefit.</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) ONE Cohort 2, Waves 1 and 2. Self-completion.

\(^2\) Wording on PAM was ‘Lone parents with young children have the right to choose to be supported by the State’.

\(^*\) Statements that make up general attitudes towards work scale on FACS.

\(^#\) Statements that make up attitudes towards working roles and benefits on FACS.
3.3 What should be measured

There are two key areas that the literature, and the ‘experts’ consulted as part of this study, agreed were important factors in understanding lone parents’ decision-making about work and parenting. These are individuals’:

• underlying attitudes and beliefs about how best to combine parenting and paid work; and

• perceptions about how best to meet the needs and wellbeing of children.

Furthermore, cultural, family and societal pressures can influence such decisions and those consulted felt some attempt should be made to capture these influences.

In general terms, we would recommend that any survey attempting to look at the factors influencing lone parents’ decisions about work and parenting should include questions that attempt to capture such attitudes and beliefs. These questions should, ideally, be asked prior to questions that seek to identify choices and constraints around going (back) to work, such as those described in Chapter 4. This is because questions on attitudes and beliefs will provide a context within which respondents can think about choices and constraints and allow lone parents to express views on parenting, permitting respondents who are not thinking about or interested in going back to work to articulate these feelings. This would overcome one of the problems with the current ‘barriers to work’ approach.

3.4 How should attitudinal data be collected

Batteries of attitudinal questions are usually presented to survey respondents in a self-completion format. There are several reasons for this:

• asking a series of attitudinal questions in a face-to-face or telephone interview can be very tedious for interviewers, and respondents;

• self-completion formats allow respondents more time to consider their answers, as they can work through the questions at their own pace. The assumption here is that the more time the respondent spends considering his or her answer, the more thought will have gone into it, which should mean it is more accurate; and

• attitude questions can ask about sensitive issues. Self-completion formats have been found to be less threatening, encouraging respondents to be more honest in their answers.

For these reasons we would recommend that the attitude questions be asked in a self-completion format (either on paper or as a computer-assisted self-completion module). The self-completion questionnaire should ideally be given to respondents to complete prior to them being asked the choices and constraints questions recommended in Chapter 4.
3.5 Developing attitude questions

In terms of deciding on the attitude statements to include in the survey, we would like to raise two possible approaches, which would meet the requirements set out in Section 3.3 but also provide useful analytical tools. These approaches are:

- quantifying the work orientation, attitudes to parental care typology developed by Bell et al. (2005); and/or
- using a theory of planned behaviour approach.

We discuss each of these options in more detail below.

3.5.1 Work orientation and parental care typology

The typology developed by Bell et al. (2005) described earlier in Section 3.1, provides a useful framework for developing attitude statements about parenting and work. There are several reasons for this:

- The typology is empirically based, being derived from an analysis of qualitative interviews with non-working lone parents. This means that we can be reasonably confident that the key dimensions that determine work and parental care orientations are known, and so we should be able to develop measures of work and parental care orientations that have good construct validity (i.e. that we are really measuring orientations towards work and parental care).\(^3\)
- It affords us a way of exploring lone parents’ deep-seated beliefs about work and parental care, and how these two orientations interact to shape decisions about work and childcare.
- It has policy-relevance, as the four different groups (high work and parental care orientation; high work and lower parental care orientation; lower work and high parental care orientation; and lower work and lower parental care orientation) have potentially different needs and pathways (back) to employment. For example, those lone parents with a high parental care orientation (Type 1 parents) might require (greater) financial assistance with settling children in to formal childcare, as the settling in period might need to be longer (Bell et al.:137).
- It explores attitudes to parental care and childcare, not just work, so allowing respondents to articulate their views and beliefs about their roles as carers, as well as exploring their views on work and ‘providing’ for their families.

\(^3\) We say ‘should’ because we would need to test this assumption. This would involve asking the attitude questions designed to measure work and parental care orientations and then conducting analysis to: 1) check that items that are, according to the typology, highly interrelated are in practice interrelated (convergent validity); and 2) that items that are not supposed to be related according to the typology, are in practice not related (discriminant validity).
Using this typology to develop attitude statements would allow us to:

a validate the existence of the four groups and their relationship to likely paths back into employment.

b quantify their size within the population of lone parents.

To utilise this typology, one would require for (a) and (b) above a measure of:

1 work orientation.

2 disposition towards parental care.

Furthermore for (a) above, one would require:

3 information on whether the respondent is in work or not (this assumes the survey covers all lone parents or all parents – not just ones out of work).

4 for (lone) parents not in work, a self-assessment of how they might react to various interventions – e.g. whether they would work full-time/part-time/not at all under certain situations or the perceived likelihood of getting a job.

Of course, the measures in (4) could be used directly to assess the likely effect of various interventions, but the underlying assumption is that respondents are not very good at predicting their own behaviour, so the typology developed by Bell et al would be a better indication. Nevertheless, the typology and self-assessment should correlate, and this would need to be assessed by piloting.

It is reasonably easy to identify ‘pure’ attitude questions of work orientation and ‘pure’ questions of dispositions towards parental care. But there is a grey area of attitudes about women and work where it is not a priori obvious whether they are measures of work orientation or measures of attitudes towards parental care. It would be better to treat it as a matter for empirical investigation whether individual questions relate to one or other dimension. If Bell et al are right in their typology, the questions should load on two dimensions when entered in a factor analysis. Initial investigations, undertaken as part of this study suggest that this approach looks promising⁴. Again, this would need to be assessed more thoroughly through piloting.

An advantage of adopting this approach would be that the statements developed could be asked of all mothers (not just lone parents), and of those in work (or who

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⁴ Using a limited number of questions from the British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey relating to lone parents’ attitudes towards work and parental care it was possible to construct, albeit crudely, the four categories in the Bell et al typology. Analysis of BSA data using the typology (cross tabulating hours worked by and attitudes towards women and work by the typology for lone parents) indicated that it did seem to classify lone parents in the way one might expect. For example, those with a high work orientation tended to be those lone parents who worked 30 or more hours a week.
have recently (re) entered the labour market) as well as those not in work. This would allow for exploration of whether the proportion of mothers in each group (refer to Figure 3.1) varies by whether they have a partner or not, and by whether mothers have a job or not. In combination with an exploration of the factors cited for not currently working, described in Chapter 2, this approach could yield a much deeper understanding of the decision-making process around going (back) to work than has hitherto been possible with survey data.

### 3.5.2 Theory of planned behaviour approach

Human actions, according to the theory of planned behaviour, are guided by three types of deliberation:

- behavioural beliefs about the likely outcomes of behaviours and one’s evaluations of these outcomes;
- normative beliefs about the expectations of others and one’s motivation to comply with these expectations; and
- control beliefs about the existence of factors that may help or hinder one in being able to do x, and the perceived influence of these factors (Ajzen, 2006).

The basic argument is that behavioural beliefs produce a positive or negative attitude towards the behaviour. Normative beliefs result in social pressure (subjective norms) and the perceived control one has over the behaviour results in a behavioural intention. The more favourable the person’s attitudes and subjective norms are to the behaviour, and the more perceived control the person believes she or he has over the behaviour, the stronger should be the person’s intention to carry out the behaviour. Given sufficient actual control over the behaviour, the theory would expect individuals to carry out their intentions when the opportunity arises. These constructs (behavioural beliefs, attitudes towards behaviour, normative beliefs etc) are what psychologists call latent variables; that is they are things that cannot be directly observed. Rather questions need to be designed that allow researchers to infer respondents’ attitudes, beliefs, intentions and so on from the answers they give so that they can predict behaviour.

The key to adopting a theory of planned behaviour approach is developing questions, usually attitude statements, which measure all the salient beliefs that are related to the behaviour. In the case of lone parents and work, the likely areas of interest will be beliefs about work, childcare and parental care. Within the theory of planned behaviour, attitudes can be measured by asking the respondent to evaluate the behaviour in question e.g. ‘working part-time would be...bad/good; harmful/beneficial, etc’ or by asking the respondent to identify underlying beliefs and to evaluate these. For example, the belief might be ‘If I work I will not be able to spend time with my children during the day’ and the evaluation of the belief would be the response to the statement ‘not spending time with my children during the day will be bad...good’.
The predictive power of the theory of planned behaviour model can be enhanced by including statements that capture respondents’:

- self-efficacy (the extent to which you believe you can work);
- moral norms (the extent to which you feel that being a working parent is the right moral decision);
- anticipated regret (the extent to which you will feel regret working/leaving your child); and
- planning (the extent to which you have made plans for returning to work/ for childcare etc).

The design of a questionnaire to measure the variables in the theory of planned behaviour model involves a number of stages, described below:

1. Define the behaviour under study. For example define what is meant by work.
2. Decide how best to measure intentions.
3. Determine the most important people or groups of people who would approve or disapprove of the behaviour.
4. Identify the perceived barriers or facilitating factors that can make it easier or more difficult for people to adopt the behaviour.
5. Draft questions to measure all the variables in the model (described earlier in this section).
6. Test this draft questionnaire, using cognitive interviewing, piloting and test-retest reliability methods and make any modifications.

The theory of planned behaviour approach is of potential value as it could predict which lone parents might work and under what circumstances. In addition, it helps us to identify those in favour or not of potentially working, how much social pressure they feel to work, and whether they feel in control of being able to work. This in turn could help in targeting policies at turning round more negative views of work, by addressing some of the constraints.

Whilst this seems a potentially useful approach, it would require further work to ensure that all the relevant (salient) beliefs are mapped and translated into statements. The enhancements (capturing self-efficacy etc) would also require translation into questions that would be tested at stage 6 above.

The number of statements required to measure all the relevant beliefs may also be considerable. Theory of planned behaviour questionnaires often contain 50 or more questions, usually asked in a self-completion format. For a survey dedicated to

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5 Frances et al (2004) recommends test-retest reliability where indirect measures of the predictor variables (such as beliefs) are included in the questionnaire.
exploring lone parents’ decision-making around work and childcare this may not be a problem but if the question set described in this study is to be adopted by an existing survey, then overall interview length might preclude the adoption of the TPB approach. A further practical limitation of the approach is that the definitions of the target (survey) population and behaviour need to be quite tightly defined and this may mean that different variants of the attitude questions may need to be devised for different groups (for example lone mothers not in work, partnered mothers not in work etc). This may be problematic if resources are limited. It also raises issues about how to compare findings between different groups. The latter would need to be explored in developing the approach further. Finally consideration would need to be given to how this approach would fit with the card sort, described in Section 2.1. The proposed design of the new question set is that the attitudinal questions would precede the questions identifying intentions about going to work. The latter determine whether respondents are asked to do the card sort activity or are asked a more general question about their priorities for the future. Determining respondents’ intentions about work is a key component of the theory of planned behaviour approach, and the positioning of these questions would need careful thought.

3.5.3 Conclusions

Measuring attitudes is important in understanding decision-making around work, childcare and parenting and any survey wishing to examine these issues should include attitudinal questions. Asking attitudinal question about work, parenting and childcare prior to asking about intentions to work and factors affecting the decision to work would provide a context for people to consider such factors, providing parents who have no intention of working an opportunity to express their views on parental care and childcare. This would overcome a criticism with the current ‘barriers to work’ approach.

Two possible approaches, one based on operationalising the work/parental care orientation typology proposed by Bell et al (2005), the other based on theory of planned behaviour, offer frameworks for developing and analysing such attitudinal questions. Both have potential value to policy makers, as they can identify groups of lone parents with different needs, values, beliefs and attitudes that may make them more susceptible to certain interventions than others, which might allow them to work if they so wish.

3.6 Developing attitude statements to be included in the 2006 Families and Children Study

During the life of this project the opportunity arose to incorporate both the attitude statements and questions identifying choices and constraints, described in Chapter 2, into the 2006 FACS. FACS, as mentioned earlier, is a panel survey, which collects information on families’ finances and wellbeing. The interview is around an hour in length, and as such there was a constraint on how many new questions could be added to the questionnaire. The concern was that if the interview became too long
this might affect response rates for the panel, and affect the quality of information being collected (respondents becoming fatigued towards the end of the interview and therefore not being willing or able to give thoughtful, accurate answers).

Taking on board these constraints, we decided to opt for developing attitude statements based on the work/parental care orientation typology, described in Section 3.5.1. This decision was, in part, a pragmatic one, as the number of questions to be asked under this approach was likely to be fewer than those needed under the theory of planned behaviour model (30 or so questions as opposed to 50 or more). Furthermore, the work involved in developing the statements for the theory of planned behaviour approach outstripped the development time available.

Having decided on the approach to use, we reviewed our findings from the literature review and consultation with external experts, and held a meeting with National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) ‘experts’ to identify key dimensions that the attitude statements should cover. Four main dimensions were identified:

- work orientation;
- parental care orientation;
- social norms (what you think others think you should do); and
- combining work and parenting.

Within the parental orientation dimension, four sub-domains were felt to be important:

- respondents’ feelings about being a parent;
- what they think the role of a parent is;
- how best they think the needs of their child(ren) could be met;
- whether they had any lifelong aspirations to be a parent.

Four sub-domains were felt to be important within the social norms dimension.

- societal influences, including the media and government;
- family influences, particularly matriarchal;
- influence of partners (or ex partners);
- influence of friends/peers.

The next stage was to review the attitude statements asked on existing surveys (FACS, NDLP, ONE and PAM, refer to Table 3.1) and classify them under one of the four dimensions (work, parental care, social norms or combining work and parenting) identified above. This process identified gaps where new statements needed to be developed. The main gap was in relation to parental care, where no existing statements were identified.
Having drafted new statements and identified existing survey questions that covered the four dimensions, the statements were sent to the external and NatCen ‘experts’, for comment. Specifically, they were asked to vote for the statements that they thought best captured the particular dimension being measured. Experts were told that we were aiming for between 20 and 30 statements in total out of the 54 they were sent, and that they could vote for between five and eight statements under each dimension (work, parenting etc).\(^6\) In addition, experts were asked to give feedback on:

- whether we were missing a particular dimension or sub-domain;
- the wording of statements;
- the classification of statements under the main headings (i.e. parental orientation) or sub headings (i.e. feelings about being a parent); and
- any other comments.

Taking on board the comments and votes received, we were able to identify 32 statements to be included in the 2006 FACS pilot, shown in Figure 3.2. A further review of these statements will be made using the pilot data; to validate the work/parental care typology along the lines described in 3.5.1. The statements would be asked in a Computer Assisted Self-Interviewing (CASI) format. The answer options presented to the respondent for each statement would be a Likert five-point agree/disagree scale (including a mid-point ‘neither agree nor disagree’ option).

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\(^6\) This limitation on the number of statements (between 20 and 30) reflected the amount of interview space available within FACS. There was concern that the inclusion of these new questions in FACS might significantly increase the length of interview, which may in turn have a detrimental impact on response rates. Hence, there was a need to set parameters around how long the new question set would take to administer (i.e. how many questions could be asked).
**Figure 3.2  Recommended attitude statements to be piloted on FACS 2006**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work orientation</th>
<th>Social norms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A person must have a job to feel a full member of society</td>
<td><strong>Societal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having almost any job is better than being unemployed</td>
<td>If you live on Social Security Benefits, everyone looks down on you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once you’ve got a job, it’s important to hang on to it, even if you don’t really like it</td>
<td>No one should ever feel badly about claiming social security benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having a job is the best way for me to be an independent person</td>
<td>Stay-at-home mums are not valued by society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have always thought I would work</td>
<td>The Government expects all lone parents to work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Family**

- My mother thinks I should spend more time with my children
- I pay a lot of attention to what my parents think about how I bring up my children

**Partner**

- My (ex)partner thinks I should spend more time with the children
- My (ex) partner would not like it if I had a paid job
- My (ex)partner thinks I should work
- I pay a lot of attention to what my (ex) partner thinks about how I bring up my children

**Friends/peers**

- Most of my closest friends think mums should go out to work if they want to
- Most of my closest friends think mums should stay at home and look after their children

Continued
### Hybrid (Combining work and parenting)

| A job is all right, but I really want to be with my children at home |
| Working for pay is more fulfilling than looking after the home and family |
| Working mums provide positive role models for their children |
| If you work when your children are little you will miss out on seeing them grow / develop |
| Children do best if their mum stays home to look after them |
| Working mothers have the best of both worlds |
| Combining work and family brings more problems than benefits |
| It’s not possible to put your children first and work |

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### Parental orientation

#### Feelings about being a parent

I might get a job one day but looking after my children is what I want to do now

#### Role of parent (mum)

My job is to look after the home and family

---

#### How best to meet needs of child

Children under five are happiest being looked after by their parents

---

#### Aspirations to be a parent

I always thought that if I had children I would stay at home and look after them

---

1 The statement would refer to ‘ex-partner’ when asked of lone parents and ‘current partner’ when asked of partnered mothers.

Italicised statements come from FACS
4 Identifying choices and constraints

This chapter presents findings from phase four of this study – the cognitive testing of questions designed to identify choices and constraints for lone parents when thinking about work, and makes recommendations on the wording of the final question set.

The test questions were administered face-to-face by an interviewer and are reproduced in Appendix B. The first few survey questions collected background information about the respondent and were not the focus of cognitive testing. A series of questions were then asked to identify lone parents who, expected to/thought it was likely they would, work in the future, which determined whether they were asked to do the card sort exercise. This exercise involved respondents looking at 19 cards, each containing a statement describing a factor that might make it difficult for a lone parent to work. Respondents were asked to sort the cards into three piles: those that were big factors, smaller factors or not a factor in them not wanting or being able to work at this time. Those who did not express a desire to work in the next three years and had not thought about working in the past 12 months did not get asked to do the card sort exercise, rather they were asked about their priorities for the future.

A mixture of think aloud and cognitive probing techniques were used to evaluate the proposed questions, and the protocol for the cognitive interview is reproduced in Appendix B. Think aloud was primarily used to evaluate the card sort exercise. Appendix A contains further details on cognitive interviewing methods, the conduct of interviews and the analysis of data.

Specifically the cognitive interviews aimed to provide information on whether respondents:

- were able to answer the questions (e.g. were key terms and concepts understood consistently);
- were willing to answer the questions (and if not why);
• felt able to say that they were not thinking about work at this time (e.g. did they feel pressurised to say that they had thought about or would like to work, and thus answered subsequent questions about what might make going to work at this time difficult when really they wanted to say they were not interested in work?); and
• were able to think about the factors that would make work difficult at this time, even when they had not got a specific job or type of work in mind.

4.1 Identifying lone parents who have thought about work

Respondents were asked a number of questions to provide an introduction to the card sort task. These collected information on the respondent’s current activity, what may happen over the next three years, including starting work, and whether the respondent had thought about the kind of work or a particular job they might want.

4.1.1 Current activity

Question A15 was asked of all respondents and checked on their work status. For the purposes of this study, we were only concerned with testing questions appropriate to non-working lone parents, and the recruitment interview had asked whether people were currently in paid work. Question A15 in part acted as a further check, filtering out any lone parents who had started work since the recruitment interview had taken place. However we also wanted to ease lone parents into the main task, that of the card sort exercise. Ideally we would have liked to have asked lone parents a series of attitude questions prior to going into this section of the interview but this was not possible for the reasons set out in Chapter 3. Instead we asked a modified version of the ‘standard’ economic activity question asked on many social surveys. The modifications we made were to:
• re-order the list of activities, so that looking after the home and family came first (an activity most if not all non-working lone parents might identify with) and work near the bottom; and
• record all activities the respondent was currently doing. Commonly, this type of question is single coded, with paid work taking priority over all other activities.

We hoped that by making these modifications, respondents would feel able to prioritise their role as child carers and parents, and that this would set the tone for the rest of the interview. These points are important if this type of question is going to be used to identify non-working parents, and as an opening question that will set the tone for the rest of the interview.

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7 As it turned out none of the 29 lone parents interviewed indicated that they were in paid work, were waiting to take up paid or were on maternity leave.
A15. SHOW CARD G

May I just check, which of the things on this card are you currently doing?

INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL THAT APPLY. PROBE: What else?

1. Looking after the home or family
2. Caring for a sick or disabled child
3. Caring for a sick, elderly or disabled person
4. In education
5. On a training scheme
6. Doing voluntary or unpaid work
7. Looking for work
8. Temporarily sick/disabled
9. Permanently sick/disabled
10. Working in a paid job as an employee or self-employed
11. Waiting to take up/start a paid job
12. On maternity leave
13. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)

Overall this question met its objectives: encouraging respondents to report on all the activities they were currently doing; and making them feel that parenting activities were of as much interest to us as work. However the following issues were identified as part of the cognitive interviewing process:

- not realising that more than one answer could have been given to the question;
- feeling slightly awkward about answering the question. For example, one respondent said she felt that she ‘should be working’; and
- that hobbies and interests were missing from the list, for example going swimming or taking the children out to places.

These were not recurrent issues, and they did not prevent respondents from being able to provide an answer, so we do not propose making any amendments to the wording of the question or answer categories in relation to these points.

Cognitive testing of this question also aimed to uncover any confusion with specific answer categories and respondents were particularly probed on the ‘in education’ and ‘looking for work’ categories.
In education
There was some initial confusion about whether this category included participation in evening classes such as art, or distance learning such as Open University or Learn Direct courses. On the whole, respondents concluded that they would include these in the education category. This confusion arose where respondents’ definition of ‘in education’ did not (initially) accommodate these types of course. Education was seen as being unpaid, classroom-based, something that would lead to a further qualification and it would take place during the day or normal working hours, thus excluding evening classes.

Looking for work
The term ‘looking for work’ was generally understood in the way it was intended. When asked what it meant, respondents cited looking in the paper, going to the job centre for a chat or an advice session with their personal advisor, or writing and sending out CVs to potential employers. Also mentioned were finding out about vacancies through word of mouth and looking on the Internet.

Some respondents commented that they were considering or working towards a career change or thinking about further qualifications to help find a job rather than actively looking for work. These respondents questioned whether these activities should be included at category 7 (looking for work) and either classified them as such or selected the ‘other’ category.

Implications
Generally this question was well received and straightforward; people understood that they could select more than one category. The categories were clear although slight confusion did exist over the education category. Despite this the question can be used for its intended purpose.

Recommendations
- We recommend the question be included as currently written with one addition; the ‘In education’ is amended to read ‘In education/studying’.

4.1.2 Desire to work
Questions 3, 4 and 31 below aimed to identify respondents who were thinking or had thought about work. Specifically questions 3 and 4 sought to identify those lone parents for whom work might be a possibility over the few years, either as an activity they would like to do or thought they would do. Those who mentioned work at either questions 3 or 4 were then routed to the card sort exercise. If respondents did not express a desire to work at questions 3 or 4, then they were asked question 31, which asked whether they had thought about returning or going to work in the last twelve months. The rationale for this approach was that the card sort exercise would make sense and be easier for people to do if they were currently thinking (or had recently thought) about going to work.
Q3 SHOW CARD H
Which, if any, of the things listed on this card would you like to happen to you over the next three years?
CODE ALL THAT APPLY

Q4 SHOW CARD H
And which, if any, of the things listed on this card do you think will happen to you over the next three years?
CODE ALL THAT APPLY
1 Stay at home and look after my children
2 Settle down with a new partner
3 Have another child
4 Go to college/study
5 Do some voluntary work
6 Get a paid job/become self-employed
7 None of these

Q31
In the last 12 months have you thought about returning-going to work at all?
Yes
No

It should be noted that three of our test respondents did not express a desire to work in the next three years and so were asked question 31. Question 31 was found to be straightforward, with no problems identified. Here we report on the performance of questions 3 and 4.

Overall these questions did what they were supposed to do: identify lone parents who thought work was a possibility (albeit it some cases a remote one) in the next few years. However the following problems were identified, which indicate that in terms of mapping the full range of expectations for the next three years, the answers may be less reliable:

- The task could be difficult where respondents saw certain answer options being contingent or influenced by others, meaning there could be conflict between them. For example, one respondent said he would like to settle down with his new partner but if he did that then that would mean moving house, which in turn might affect whether some of the other categories became more or less likely to happen.
The time period referred to in questions 3 and 4, that of three years, was not always considered. In some cases a much shorter reference period was used (respondents thinking about the next few months or the coming year), in others a longer time frame was considered. In general the time period of three years worked well if the respondent had been thinking about long-term plans, for example going to college. In this case, answering these questions was considered to be easy. The questions were found to be more difficult if the respondent did not have long-term plans or did not tend to look that far ahead. One respondent commented that:

‘Three years is such a long time and anything can happen to you over the next three years’.

(Female, 34, 1 child, had previously worked)

A common strategy was for respondents to use landmarks to think about the future, such as their child starting school or themselves starting or finishing an education course:

- a recurrent answer that respondents wanted to mention at questions 3 and 4, but was not included on the show card, was that they were thinking about moving house or moving away from the area;
- respondents could express the desire to get back together with a previous partner, rather than a ‘new’ partner (category 2) as specified on the show card.

Finally it is worth noting that one respondent refused to answer questions 3 and 4, stating that they were ‘too personal’ and too difficult to answer. She also had concerns about confidentiality and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP’s) interest in why she was not working. This respondent suggested we instead ask about what she hoped to:

‘...have achieved by the end of next year’.

(Female, 35, 2 children, had previously worked)

However, despite these feelings, this respondent did go on to complete the card sort task, as she was happy to answer question 31 that asked if she had thought about work in the past 12 months.

**Implications**

Questions 3 and 4 fulfil their purpose; to establish easily whether respondents would like to, or think they will, go back to work in the near future. The questions worked well together and on the whole respondents could differentiate between what they would like to happen and what they thought will happen. The questions also focused lone parents’ thoughts on work and the future, providing a context for the card sort exercise.
Recommendations

- Leave the question wording as it currently stands but add one extra answer category ‘Move home’. The inclusion of this additional category would make the list of options more complete. However caution should be used in analysing these data, as the questions do not necessarily map the full range of hopes respondents may have, nor should too much emphasis be placed on the timescale in which these desires might take place. If such information is required then a more detailed question set should be developed to explore this issue, perhaps using a trade off approach to look at priorities (i.e. settling down with a (new) partner as opposed to getting a paid job).

- We also recommend altering the question wording to ask about ‘the next few years’. Our findings have shown that respondents tend to think about a time period that is relevant to them rather than the one specified in the question wording.

4.1.3 Kind of work and particular job

Those respondents who mentioned at questions 3 or 4 that they would like to or thought it likely they would get a paid job were asked a number of follow up questions to determine whether they had a particular type of work or specific job in mind. If respondents did have a particular type of work or specific job in mind then they would be asked to think about it when completing the card sort exercise. The follow up questions (question 5-8) are shown below.

{If Q3 or Q4 CODED 6 Get a paid job/become self-employed}
Q5
Have you thought about the kind of work that you might do?

{If Q5=YES}
Q6
Have you thought about a particular job that you might want to do?

{If Q6=YES}
Q7
What was the title of this job that you had thought about?
INTERVIEWER WRITE IN JOB TITLE

{If Q6=NO}
Q8
What kind of work have you thought about?
INTERVIEWER PROBE FOR DETAILS OF TYPE OF WORK THOUGHT ABOUT
Answer strategies

The answer strategy adopted largely depended on whether respondents had well thought out plans for the next few years. Where respondents had thought about working and had made steps towards going to work these questions were felt to be easy to answer. However, for those respondents who said they would like to work but had not given much thought as to what they wanted to do, and perhaps had never worked previously, these questions were, not surprisingly, more difficult. This was particularly the case for those who said they would like to work but deep down felt it was not a realistic option as they would not be able to get a job, or one that would pay enough to make it worthwhile leaving benefits. However, although these respondents when probed as part of the cognitive interview, said they found the questions more difficult to answer, they were still able to provide answers (no). The fact that they did not have a particular type of work or job in mind was not problematic as these respondents were asked to consider either the type of work they had done in a previous job (if they had worked before) or work in general when completing the card sort exercise.

Particular job

Some respondents had thought a great deal about, and were already working towards, either getting a (new) job or returning to work they had done previously and so had a particular job in mind. Some examples of jobs mentioned were: shop assistant, legal secretary, carer, horse groom, florist, paramedic, primary school teacher and teaching assistant.

Kind of work

In other cases respondents had not thought about a particular job they might do but usually did have some idea of the kind of work they would like to move into. Examples of answers given to this question included: office work, catering, factory work, shop or bar work. If respondents could not give an example of the kind of work they would like to do they were able to say the type of work they did not want to do, which was often based on past work experience. Respondents described ‘kind of work’ as something they would be ‘reasonable happy in’, worthwhile ‘getting out of bed for’ and a specific job they would ‘really want’.

Recommendation

- Include these questions as currently worded.

4.2 Card sort exercise

The card sort exercise is an approach similar to the one used on the Incapacity Benefit (IB) Pilot Survey, described in more detail in Section 2.3, and is used to identify factors that would need to change for the lone parent to be able to work. Depending on the route they come through the questionnaire, respondents are asked to think about
either a job they would like to do, or have done in the past or just their current situation (refer to Figure 2.1). All respondents who enter the card sort exercise are not in work. Respondents were given 19 cards, each containing a factor for not wanting to or being able to work, and are asked to sort them into one of three piles: those that are big factors, smaller factors and those that are not a factor for them not wanting or being able to work at the present time. Interviewers recorded the card letters of those said to be not a factor, small factors and big factors.

4.2.1 Comprehension of the exercise

As part of the cognitive interview respondents were asked to think aloud as they did the card sort exercise. This approach allowed us to assess respondents’ initial reactions to and comprehension of the task. Examples of respondents’ understanding of the exercise included:

‘Looking at things which some people would find a huge issue and put them into categories and decide whether they would be a huge issue for you or not.’

(Female, 35, 2 children, had previously worked)

‘Work out the pros and cons of working...why you should work and what prevents you from working.’

(Female, 43, one child, had previously worked)

‘How easy it would be for you to go to work or get a job, what you need, what help you can get and how hard it is.’

(Female, 30, one child, Never worked)

and illustrate the overall finding that respondents understood the card sort exercise in the way the research team intended.

4.2.2 How the exercise worked in general

Overall the card sort exercise worked well. The exercise was described as ‘fine’, ‘OK’ and ‘not too taxing’. There was consistent evidence to suggest that the exercise allowed more time for respondents to think through the statements separately and in greater depth, more so than they might have done if the statements had been presented in a list on a show card (refer to Section 2.1). One respondent, for example, said she preferred the exercise to answering questions with show cards:

‘I didn’t like the lists of things, it feels like you’re under pressure’.

(Female, aged 39, 3 children, never worked)

There was also evidence that suggests this approach may elicit more honest answers. Some of the issues were seen as ‘reasonably private’, and respondents ‘might admit more than being asked questions’. One respondent said she would not
want to answer if the statements were asked in a series of questions and the exercise therefore was:

‘...probably easier to do than have an interviewer sit and ask questions.’

(Female, 35, 2 children, had previously worked).

On the other hand cognitive interviews revealed the card sort exercise might initially be seen as patronising. For example one respondent said initially the exercise appeared to be ‘like school, with flash cards and putting them into boxes’, but then went on to say she thought the exercise was in fact easy and ‘got all that affected you out quite quickly.’ A minority view was that the exercise was ‘repetitive’, with ‘too many cards’. This feeling may have been the result, at least in part, of our testing out the wording of two similarly worded statements on childcare (refer to Section 4.3.1) and the order in which the respondent viewed the statements.

4.2.3 How the exercise worked for different types of lone parents

As with any exercise of this kind, some respondents found it easier than others. There was no hard evidence to suggest that those who had never worked found it any more difficult than those who had previously worked.

Respondents who described the exercise as easy said this was because they had either thought about some or all of the issues before and/or knew what they wanted to do and were confident about this. Respondents who were already thinking about college or going/returning to work, with clear goals, also said they found the exercise easy.

Respondents who had difficulty with the exercise cited reasons such difficulty placing the cards under one of the three headings due to their own circumstance or difficulty due to feeling bad or guilty about not working. Generally if any initial difficulty was experienced this tended to disappear once the respondent began the exercise and started sorting the cards into piles. There was no evidence to suggest those respondents who found the exercise more difficult were those who had not thought about the issues before or in any depth. The few difficulties that were reported do not indicate a problem with the complexity of the exercise itself.

On occasion interviewers did have to re-read the introduction to the card sort exercise to respondents who queried what it was they were supposed to be doing. Cognitive probing revealed that respondents’ initial uncertainties related to the use of the term ‘factor’, refer to Section 4.2.11, and respondents understood the exercise once the introduction was repeated to them. This highlights an important aspect of interviewer training; Interviewers will need to be trained NOT to paraphrase the introduction and will need clear guidelines on what to say and what not to say if the respondent requests clarification. These points are reflected in our recommendations for implementation (refer to Section 5.3).
4.2.4 Acceptability of the task

In general respondents were happy to do the exercise. One respondent for example said, ‘it wasn’t too pushy...it was OK’. There was no evidence to suggest the exercise made respondents feel pressurised into thinking about work. One respondent for example said the exercise made her feel neither ‘depressed or elated’; the exercise did not bring up anything new and if she had sat and thought about work, she would have considered all those things anyway.

There were mixed reports about how the exercise made people feel. There was consistent evidence to suggest the exercise made people think (more deeply) about issues they may not have thought about (so much) before. There was evidence to suggest the exercise may have elicited feelings of guilt and shame with regards to claiming benefits. One respondent for example, although happy to carry out the exercise, said it did make her feel guilty for being on benefits.

The findings also indicated that the card sort statements mapped the key issues for lone parents in considering work.

4.2.5 Answer strategies employed

Respondents employed a range of different answer strategies when deciding whether something was a factor or not, and if it was a factor then how big it was. In some cases the same respondent employed multiple answer strategies. The strategies used are described below:

• for each statement, considering whether it was a problem or not;
• comparing statements and deciding which were priorities, then ranking them in order of importance;
• reviewing the relevance of the statement to the respondent’s own situation, then deciding whether it was important or not;
• thinking about and drawing upon the respondent’s own work experience, or the experience of others, to decide whether something would be a problem or not;
• imagining themselves applying for a job and then considering what the (main) issues would be for them in being able to take the job;
• deciding between those factors that were ‘stronger’ and ‘there all the time’ and those that were ‘not an issue’;
• reflecting on their views or feeling about the issue and comparing those with how they thought others (children and family) would feel about it.

4.2.6 Differences between the three main categories

Respondents universally reported on the difficulty of deciding whether statements on the cards were small factors; it was easier to decide that things were a big factor or not a factor. A common method used by respondents was to eliminate those
things seen as not a factor and to then sort the remaining cards into small and big factors. Table 4.1 shows the kinds of distinctions respondents made between the three categories.

Table 4.1 Criteria used to define factors as big, small or not a factor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Big factor</th>
<th>Small factor</th>
<th>Not a factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ones which you have no control over</td>
<td>• Excuses for not working</td>
<td>• Insignificant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Major problems</td>
<td>• Might not be a problem</td>
<td>• Things that are not a problem and down to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Areas that need addressing more urgently</td>
<td>• Could live with</td>
<td>• Could live with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Big problems, holding me back</td>
<td>• Easier to deal with issues</td>
<td>• Not a factor because I don’t need childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Things which would cause a worry</td>
<td>• Might stop you working</td>
<td>• Doesn’t apply to me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Things that prevent you from working</td>
<td>• Not too bothered but might be a problem</td>
<td>• Irrelevant to my situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Things that would need to be addressed first, of higher importance</td>
<td>• It’s a kind of big factor but at the same time it wouldn’t stop me</td>
<td>• Wouldn’t cause worry or distress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Excuses for not working</td>
<td>• Easily overcome or manageable on a long term basis</td>
<td>• Things that are not a problem, things that are good in life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• May be a problem but would deal with them if they came up</td>
<td>• Factors where there was uncertainty whether they would be an issue or not and would depend on the job got</td>
<td>• Something that doesn’t concern you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Can see a way of dealing with these/getting help with over time</td>
<td>• Something in the middle – ‘neither nor and not some thing you rely on’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another important finding from the cognitive interviews, which mainly has implications for interviewer briefings and instructions, was that respondents, on occasion, ended up placing some of the cards in between the big and small factor main headings. This issue is discussed further below, in Section 4.2.7.

4.2.7 Implications for the analysis of card sort data

Cognitive interviews with respondents highlighted the ambiguity that may exist around how respondents categorise small factors and those things that are not a factor, see Table 4.1. There were cases where people were not sure or did not know where to place cards and eventually decided they were small factors. In other cases respondents said things were ‘not really a problem’ but still placed them under the
small factor main heading. Finally there was evidence that respondents were placing things they admitted to know little or nothing about under the small factor heading. This has implications for how the card sort data should be analysed. In particular it suggests that care must be taken in treating these two categories (smaller factors and not a factor) as being mutually exclusive as there was not always consistency in how respondents categorised factors under these two headings. This point is reflected in our recommendations for analysis of the card sort data, described in Section 7.1.

4.2.8 The most important big factor

Respondents who cited two or more big factors were asked a follow up question to ascertain whether there was actually a main/most important factor or not. There was an interviewer code that could be used for those respondents who answered that no one factor was most important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which one, if any, of the things that you said are big factors for not working would you say is the most important?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No one factor is most important 00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRITE IN CARD LETTER   ____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents who were able to give one ‘most important factor’ said it was easy to do so on the basis that this one factor for them not working was ‘stronger’ or more important than the other/s. One respondent, for example, explained that her health problems were the most important factor because they were there all the time whereas her confidence could vary. Another respondent found it easy to choose the most important factor, as it was the one that influenced most things she did in her life.

There were occasions, however, when respondents were not able to say which one of the two or more big factors they had identified was the most important. This occurred for one of two reasons:

a) there was no one single most important factor for the respondent, the big factors identified were all seen as being as important as each other; or

b) two or more big factors were seen as being equally most important.

The only option available to the interviewer in either of these circumstances was to code ‘no one factor is most important’. This code was felt to be appropriate for type (a) respondents, who did not see any of the big factors they identified as being of any greater importance than the others. However, it was not felt to be applicable for respondents in (b) above, who could identify a subset of the big factors they mentioned as being the most important (usually two) but could not pick out one. To overcome this problem the following recommendation is made.
Recommendation

Suggest including an additional interviewer code: ‘\textit{Respondent couldn’t decide between two or more big factors’}

4.2.9 Job in mind

The interviewer instructions to the card sort exercise asked respondents to either think about a job or kind of work they would like to do or had thought about doing, their last job, or just their ‘current situation’. This ‘job in mind’ depended on the route respondents came through the test questionnaire (see Figure 2.1).

There was evidence to suggest respondents were thinking about specific jobs throughout the exercise, for example one respondent was thinking about being able to do the child psychologist job that she had cited at question 7, and what would need to change for her to be able to do that job. Cognitive probing also revealed however, that despite being asked to think about a specific job or the kind of work they might do, respondents did not necessarily have a job in mind during the exercise.

If respondents were not thinking about a specific job or kind of work, they tended to think about ‘work generally’ and the practicalities of working such as hours they would be able to work. One respondent, for example, said she was thinking about:

‘…any job, from being a toilet cleaner to a managing director’.

(Female, 35, 2 children, had previously worked).

Only a few respondents went down the route of being asked to think about the kind of work that they had done in a previous job. One potential problem identified with this approach was that the type of work the respondent had done in a previous job might not be something that they would be willing or able to do now. For example, one respondent had worked as a ‘live in nanny’ in her last job. She decided not to think about returning to work as a nanny, even though the introduction to the card sort exercise had instructed her to do so, because she did not think this type of work would be practical now she had children herself. Instead she thought about general problems and reasons why she could not work at the moment.

Evidence does suggest that getting people to think about a job they had thought about doing or their last job could be a helpful device when doing the card sort exercise. An important finding that can be drawn from the cognitive testing is that respondents were able to think about the factors that would make work difficult at this time, regardless of whether they had a specific job or type of work in mind.
Recommendation

We recommend keeping the reference to a job the lone parent had thought about doing, their last job or current situation (dependent on routing) in the card sort introduction.

Furthermore we recommend including an additional question, for those respondents who have worked before, that would check whether the type of work they did in their last job is something that they would consider going back to now.

4.2.10 Interpretations of the term ‘factor’

In the context of the card sort exercise, respondents described the term factor in a number of ways; a ‘problem’, an ‘issue’, ‘things that get in your way’, ‘relevancy’, ‘reasons’ and ‘things which were important’. One respondent described ‘factors’ as any influences on her deciding whether or not she can go back to work.

The term ‘factor’ was not always immediately understood by respondents and there were suggestions for replacing the term with ‘problem’, ‘reason’ or ‘issue’. One respondent, for example, said:

‘I think if it said problem...if that was to say not a problem or a small problem I probably would have been alright to register what it meant...it was just a different word that threw me a bit.’

(Female, 35, 4 children, never worked).

Despite this initial confusion it should be noted that all respondents were able to carry out the card sort exercise. The term ‘factor’ did not hinder respondents’ understanding of the aim of the exercise. For example, one respondent said she would have preferred it to say ‘reasons’ as it would have been clearer. Yet despite her initial confusion with the term ‘factor’, when she saw the cards she fully understood what the exercise was about.

Recommendation

• We recommend the use of the term ‘factor’ throughout the card sort exercise. At this stage we are loath to suggest a change to the wording of the introduction, replacing ‘factor’ with ‘problem’ or ‘reason’ for example, without further cognitive testing.

4.3 Card sort statements

Respondents were given 19 small cards containing different statements, which they were asked to sort into big factors, smaller factors and those that are not a factor in them not wanting or being able to work at this time. Each statement was randomly
assigned a letter to aid with recording statements on the questionnaire. The statements are shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Card sort card statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H I have difficulties due to my health condition/disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P I am not sure I would be better off financially in work than I am on benefits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B My family wouldn’t like it if I worked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E I would have problems with transport to and from work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J My confidence is low at the moment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N I haven’t got the qualifications or experience to get the kind of job I would want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Employers aren’t very family-friendly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K I want to look after my child(ren) myself/at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R I need to be very flexible about the hours I work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L I care for someone who has a health condition, disability or behavioural difficulties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X I don’t want to leave my child or children with anyone except family or close friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A My child/children wouldn’t like me to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G There are few suitable job opportunities in the local area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q There isn’t enough suitable, affordable childcare around here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z I have personal or family troubles that need to be sorted out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C It’s hard to find appropriate child care I can afford.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y I am concerned about leaving the security of Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T My family or close friends are not able/live too far away to provide childcare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M I am worried I will not have enough time with my children.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The statements on the cards tended to cover the range of different respondent experiences and there was little evidence to suggest there was anything fundamental missing:

‘A lot of these cards show a typical single mum and what they feel and what they want to do’.

(Female, 35, 4 children, never worked)
4.3.1 Understanding of card statements

A specific aim of the cognitive question testing was to explore interpretations and feelings towards some of the statements on the cards. These particular statements were items that were thought to be potentially ambiguous or that might make respondents feel awkward and or uncomfortable.

‘Employers aren’t very family-friendly’

Overall this statement was understood by respondents in the way the research team intended. Respondents thought about employers’ willingness to allow their employees to take time off work at short notice to deal with unexpected circumstances relating to their children. For example, if a child was sick, needed to be taken to the doctor or the dentist, or if child care arrangements fell through:

‘…say if your child was ill and they [the employer] wouldn’t appreciate you having the time off or if something’s happened at school and you have to leave work.’

(Female, 39, 3 children, never worked)

Respondents also interpreted this statement with reference to flexible hours and having an employer who would allow an employee to choose the hours she worked to fit around her children. If an employer did not allow the employee to take time off, especially during school holidays, they would not be ‘family oriented’, as one respondent described it.

‘I haven’t got the qualifications or experience to get the kind of job I would want’

Respondents were asked how they felt about this statement, as there was some concern people may find it intimidating and would feel uncomfortable during the exercise. There was no hard evidence however to suggest this was the case. There was the odd case where a respondent said they felt embarrassed and ashamed for not having any qualifications, however respondents still selected this as a big factor, if appropriate.

‘My family wouldn’t like it if I worked’

We were interested to see who respondents were including as their ‘family’ when considering this statement. Cognitive interviews revealed respondents were thinking either about their children, their mothers, sometimes their sisters or both their children and their mothers. One respondent said she excluded her children because another card had mentioned them (Card A – ‘My child/children would not like me to work).
Recommendation

A statement already exists which captures lone parents’ children’s influence on their decision to work (My child/children wouldn’t like me to work) so we would suggest a change in wording to now read:

‘My parent(s) wouldn’t like it if I worked’

My confidence is low at the moment

Respondents were asked in the cognitive interviews what they understood this statement to mean. It tended to be interpreted as referring to confidence in one’s ability to go out and look for work, go for job interviews, get a job and deal with a job. This statement was also seen to be related to feelings of nervousness, worry, low self-worth and low self-esteem as well as depression. There were no reports of confusion or misunderstanding with this statement:

‘It’s hard to find appropriate childcare I can afford’ and ‘There isn’t enough suitable, affordable childcare around here’

Two statements, both aiming to measure lack of affordable/available childcare as a factor for not wanting to or being able to work, were included as part of the cognitive question testing. These two variants had been included in existing surveys as answer options, but it was not clear whether they were actually measuring the same ‘barrier’ or not. The aim here was to find out whether respondents thought ‘appropriate’ and ‘suitable’ childcare were the same or not.

Figure 4.1 Comparison of respondents’ understanding of suitable and appropriate childcare
Figure 4.2 shows that there was a significant overlap in the meaning of these two terms. Respondents tended to see these two statements as being interrelated, as encapsulated by the following comment:

'It’s hard to find appropriate childcare because there isn’t enough suitable childcare.

(Female, 35, two children, had previously worked)

Cursory analysis of the card sort data (refer to Table 7.1) indicated that these two statements tended to be classified under the same heading (for example, both being seen as a big factor), supporting findings from the cognitive interviews that the statements are seen by respondents as measuring the same thing.

**Recommendation**

We would recommend that one of these two statements be selected to be included in the main set of factors to be considered by respondents, the other being dropped. There was no strong evidence to indicate which statement would be better. Our preference would be that the statement ‘It’s hard to find appropriate childcare I can afford’ is the one dropped, as ‘appropriate’ is a more vague term but this is a subjective viewpoint.

I need to be very flexible about the hours I work

There was some evidence to suggest this statement may have been misinterpreted. The statement is designed to capture lone parents’ need for flexible/part-time working, however there were occasions where respondents took this statement to be referring to an employer needing to be flexible around their employees’ working time and more specifically their hours.

**Recommendation**

Suggest rewording this statement to read:

‘I would need a job where I could take time off at short notice to look after my child(ren)’

I don’t want to leave my child or children with anyone except family or close friends

Cognitive interviews with lone parents suggested that this statement might be problematic. The odd respondent interpreted this statement as referring to ‘leaving children with someone who isn’t safe’ which is not what was intended. Rather this statement was designed to measure lone parents’ willingness to leave their child/children with anyone except family.
4.3.2 Other statement specific findings

There was the odd case where a respondent saw some of the other statements on the cards to be similar or the same. For example, one respondent thought card Y (I am concerned about leaving the security of Benefits) and card P (I am not sure I would be better off financially in work than I am on benefits) may be too similar. Another respondent viewed card Z (I have personal or family troubles that need to be sorted out) and card L (I care for someone who has a health condition, disability or behavioural difficulties) as the same thing. Consultation with experts and evidence from the literature however suggests that these factors are in fact different, and therefore we would recommend they be kept in the card sort exercise. Chapter 6 contains recommendations on the wording of the statements to be used for non-working lone parents.

There is evidence to suggest card Z (I have personal or family troubles that need to be sorted out) picks up on worries about debt. One respondent sighted debt as quite a big factor for her not working and had incorporated this into her understanding of card Z.

4.3.3 Other factors respondents mentioned

There were a number of factors associated with the difficulty of working which respondents mentioned during cognitive probing, and these are shown below:

- lack of knowledge of tax credits in relation to wages from work;
- level of income from a job may not cover expenditure on things like childcare;
- lack of knowledge of how to find a job.

Another issue that was raised related to concerns about interviewing techniques as an important factor in not wanting to, or being able, to work, which was not felt to be covered by the statements on the cards. One respondent said she knew interviewing techniques changed over time and would like to know what to expect in an interview situation. This feeling may reflect a lack of confidence in being able to get a job, and as such could be seen as a subset of the overall dimension of self-confidence.
**Recommendation**

Including questions on knowledge about tax credits and in-work benefits, and knowledge about how to find a job should be included in any survey looking at decision-making around work.

### 4.4 Priorities for future

Questions 58-60 (see below) were designed to attempt to capture some further information on the priorities of those lone parents who do not expect to, or think it is likely they will, go back to work in the next three years and had not thought about work in the past 12 months, and hence did not complete the card sort exercise. The literature review undertaken at stage 2 and described in Section 2.2, indicated that there were a range of factors that lone parents may need to deal with first, before being able to begin to consider the possibility of work. These factors are reflected in the answer options provided at Q58.

---

**Q58**

SHOW CARD I

Here are some things that people have said are priorities for them. Thinking about your own situation, which, if any of these things, are priorities for you over the next few years?

**CODE ALL THAT APPLY**

1. Staying at home and bringing up my children
2. Looking after a sick or disabled child
3. Looking after a sick, disabled or elderly family member or friend
4. Managing my own health condition/disability
5. Managing my drug or alcohol problems
6. Emotionally coming to terms with the break up of my relationship
7. Sorting out financial issues resulting from the break up of my relationship
8. Sorting out custody/access issues for my children
9. Building/maintaining a good relationship with my family
10. Getting somewhere permanent to live
11. Getting some (more) qualifications
12. Doing some voluntary work
13. Building my self-confidence
14. None of these
Q59 SHOW CARD I
Are there any other priorities for you over the next few years, which are not mentioned on this card?

(IF Q59 CODED YES)

Q60 What are these priorities?
PROBE FULLY

Only two respondents who took part in the cognitive testing ended up being asked these questions and as such it is difficult to evaluate their performance. No significant problems were identified. One respondent reported that she thought some people might find option 5 on show card I (Managing my drug or alcohol problems) to be too personal and may not wish to answer, although she did provide this answer. Further piloting of these questions would be required to assess whether this was indeed a problem.

Recommendation

We recommend that these questions are included in the question set. Having run the questions on a survey, levels of item non-response, particularly refusals, could be assessed to determine acceptability.
5 Implementation of new questioning approach

Chapter 5 discusses the implementation of the new questioning approach described in Chapters 3 and 4. In particular, we highlight general implementation issues and those that are specifically relevant to the incorporation of these new questions into existing surveys. Firstly, we list the topic areas that would be useful for an existing or new survey to cover, which would provide additional information to that collected by the new approach.

5.1 Additional topic areas to be covered by a survey

The following topics are known to be of relevance in understanding lone parents’ decision-making about work. In setting up a new survey to explore the choices and constraints facing lone parents in thinking about work, or in considering existing surveys that might be able to accommodate this new questioning approach, the inclusion of questions covering the topics listed below would be useful, if not essential:

- respondents’ socio-demographic characteristics (including the respondent’s age and the ages of the children);
- health status (self-assessed) and that of the child(ren);
- work history;
- qualifications and training;
- current benefits received;
- knowledge of in-work benefits and tax credits;
- social capital;
- debts and arrears;
- maintenance payments.
5.2 Length of new block

An important consideration for any survey is the length of interview, as the longer the length the greater the risk of respondent fatigue, which could lead to errors. Non-response is also a concern with long interviews: either to the survey as a whole because respondents are put off or cannot spare the time required to take part; or to particular questions, such as those towards the end of the interview. With longitudinal surveys, long interviews can exacerbate panel attrition.

The inclusion of the two question blocks – on attitudes to work and parenting and identifying choices and constraints – into an existing survey will need care, in part to ensure that respondents are not over-burdened. The card sort exercise is cognitively demanding, and respondents need to be allowed sufficient time to consider each statement and decide how much of a factor it is for them. The attitude questions, which we recommend should be answered prior to the questions on choices and constraints using a self-completion format, will also require sufficient time to be allowed to encourage respondents to read each statement and consider their answers.

It is difficult to provide an estimate of the length of time that should be allowed for each of these blocks of questions because they have not been piloted. The attitude questions were not part of the main question development and testing stages of this study. The choices and constraints questions were tested, but as part of a cognitive interview, making an estimate of the time taken by respondents to answer them impractical. However, there are interviewer-training points that need to be considered to ensure that respondents are given sufficient time to carry out the card sort exercise, and these are described in the next section.

5.3 Interviewer training points for card sort

The cognitive interviews conducted as part of this study highlighted the importance of interviewers being trained in how to administer the card sort. This tool is not commonly used on surveys and so interviewers will need specific guidance on how to administer it. In particular:

- interviewers must read the introduction and explanation of the task exactly as worded;
- they must read this slowly, as the explanation contains a number of important points;
- they must not hurry or rush the respondent whilst the cards are reviewed and placed into piles;
- once the respondent has reviewed all the cards and put them into piles the interviewer must offer the respondent the opportunity to review all the cards they have placed under each heading and move cards from one pile to another;
• the recording of the cards under each heading must be done as carefully as possible, checking they have recorded the card letters correctly under each main heading (big, smaller and not a factor) and that all the cards have been categorised;

• Interviewers must be provided with clear instructions about how to deal with respondent queries about the task, particularly what to say to respondents if they have difficulty placing a card under one of the three headings provided.

Of course, survey interviewers should already adhere to many of these principles. However, in practice interviewers often end up conducting interviews at a brisk pace to try to avoid respondent fatigue and minimise partial interviews. As mentioned earlier, the card sort exercise is designed to make respondents think more deeply about the factors that are important in them not working. Sufficient time needs to be given to respondents, therefore, to read and consider each statement and decide how big a factor it is for them.

5.4 Who questions should be asked of

A final consideration is who the target population for these questions should be. The choices and constraints questions that were cognitively tested were asked of non-working lone parents. However a similar set of questions could be asked of lone parents who are in work. The wording of the statements may need to be changed slightly in some cases, to reflect the fact that those reviewing them would be in work, but essentially the same task could be performed by working lone parents. The questions to be asked of this group, along with the card sort statements, are contained in Appendix E. It should be noted that these questions and statements were not cognitively tested.

One argument for measuring the choices and constraints affecting working lone parents is that many of these factors will continue to exist once lone parents go to work. For example, finding affordable, suitable childcare is likely to be an ongoing issue. By asking working lone parents to perform a similar task we would be able to collect information on how lone parents manage to remain in work. From a policy perspective, this could be very useful, as a significant number of lone parents who go (back) to work end up back on benefits again within a few months.

Furthermore, one could argue that these questions should be asked of all mothers (and single fathers), whether partnered or not. This approach would allow exploration about whether and how decisions around parenting and work are different for partnered mothers than for lone parents. Adopting such an approach might facilitate the development of policies that take account of the dynamics of family formation and change: being a lone parent is not a fixed state; lone parents become couple families and vice versa.
5.5 Positioning of the questions

Care needs to be taken in siting these questions, particularly if they are to be placed into an existing survey. The order in which questions are asked can influence the way in which respondents understand and go on to answer them. In particular, the questions should be introduced in a way that avoids respondents feeling pressured into saying that they are thinking about, or have thought about, going (back to) work.
6 Overview of recommendations for new questioning approach

The existing approach of asking about ‘barriers to work’ should be replaced with one that seeks to understand the choices and constraints facing lone parents when thinking about work and childcare.

This new approach would comprise of asking respondents about their attitudes to work and parenting, then establishing an intention to work, and finally conducting a card sort exercise to establish the relative importance of a range of factors that make work difficult/not an option at this time.

The attitude questions should be asked in a self-completion format, and come immediately before the intention to work and card sort exercise. The card sort exercise would need to be carried out as part of a face-to-face interview.

Whilst this study was concerned principally with developing questions for non-working lone parents, it is recommended that a similar set of questions be asked of non-working mothers in couple families, and of mothers who have recently returned to work (say in the past 12 months).

Asking these questions as part of a longitudinal study would be highly desirable, so that the relationship between intentions and actual behaviour, and intentions, attitudes and behaviour can be explored.

The recommended wording for statements to be included in the card sort exercise for non-working lone parents, which take on board findings from the cognitive interviews (described in Chapter 4), are as follows:

- I have difficulties due to my health condition/disability.
- I am not sure I would be better off financially in work than I am on benefits.
- My parent(s) wouldn’t like it if I worked.
• I would have problems with transport to and from work.
• My confidence is low at the moment.
• I haven’t got the qualifications or experience to get the kind of job I would want.
• Employers aren’t very family-friendly.
• I want to look after my child(ren) myself/at home.
• I would need a job where I could take time off at short notice to look after my child(ren).
• I care for someone who has a health condition, disability or behavioural difficulties.
• I am not prepared to leave my child or children in the care of anyone other than my family or close friends while I work.
• My child/children wouldn’t like me to work.
• There are few suitable job opportunities in the local area.
• There isn’t enough suitable, affordable childcare around here.
• I have personal or family troubles that need to be sorted out.
• I am concerned about leaving the security of Benefits.
• My family or close friends are not able/live too far away to provide childcare.
• I am worried I will not have enough time with my children.

Proposals for the wording of questions on choices and constraints are contained in Appendix E.
Part 2
Making better use of data
7 Descriptive analysis of the new question set

The new set of questions on factors that affect entries to work are specifically designed to allow for inter-relationships between those factors to be better understood. If the design is to be capitalised on, the analysis of data has to take this complexity into account. In particular, descriptive analyses that look at the factors in isolation would be very wasteful of the data.

In Chapter 7 we make suggestions as to how the data using the new question approach described in Chapter 2, might be analysed in a descriptive sense. That is, we consider analysis approaches that are not driven by hypotheses, or by any need to model the likely impact of change (either policy or other change). We instead focus on how to describe or summarise the factors that influence decisions around work. This, we anticipate, is the type of analysis that would appear in a descriptive survey report. A hypothesis-led analysis would suggest other approaches such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) – and Appendix C of this report gives a thorough account of the use of this approach in the analysis of data on lone parents’ decisions around work.

The new question set is very different to previous survey questions on decisions around work and will generate rather different data. The analysis described here is, we believe, a type of analysis that would suit the nature and complexity of the data that will be generated. In particular, because the questions are designed to give multivariate (i.e. multi-dimensional) data, the analysis approach described (even for descriptive analysis purposes) is multivariate.

We should stress that the approach set out here (namely Latent Class Analysis) is by no means prescriptive. Depending upon how the research questions are posed, other methods may prove more or less appropriate. Furthermore, without a current dataset to test the analysis out on, it is impossible to be sure that the approach will generate a meaningful description of the data. The question set is being included in the 2006 wave of the Families and Children Study (FACS): a proper test of the options will be possible once these data become available.
7.1 The nature of the data

Table 7.1 shows how the lone parents in the cognitive interviews sorted the statements into those that were big, smaller or not a factor. Clearly this is not a representative sample of lone parents, so no statistics can be derived from it. But the data do suggest, very clearly, that there is considerable variation in the responses. The number of ‘big factors’ ranges from zero to ten, and there is no obvious pattern in the factors that appear in the ‘big factor’ pile. There are however some factors that seem to cluster together, such as two and 14.

The aim of the descriptive analysis, of course, will be to try and condense this data into a fairly small number of statistics, but in such a way that, between them, these statistics reflect the diversity and complexity of the data.

Table 7.1 Illustration of data obtained from the card sort exercise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Big factors</th>
<th>Small factors</th>
<th>Not a factor</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Continued

The most obvious clustering is of questions 11 and 19, but these were designed as alternative wordings of the same factor, so will not both appear in the final question set.
Table 7.1 Continued

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Person</th>
<th>Big factors</th>
<th>Small factors</th>
<th>Not a factor</th>
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<td>16,10,4,5,18</td>
<td>12,13,6,15,1,9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Factor key:
1. Difficulties due to my health condition/disability.
2. I am not sure I would be better off financially in work than I am on benefits.
3. I would have problems with transport to and from work.
4. My confidence is low at the moment.
5. I haven’t got the qualifications or experience to get the kind of job I would want.
7. I need to be very flexible about the hours I work.
8. I care for someone who has a health condition, disability or behavioural difficulties.
9. My family wouldn’t like it if I worked.
10. I want to look after my child(ren) myself/at home.
11. There isn’t enough suitable, affordable childcare around here.
12. My family or close friends are not able/live too far away to provide childcare.
13. I don’t want to leave my child or children with anyone except family or close friends.
14. There are few suitable job opportunities in the local area.
15. I have personal or family troubles that need to be sorted out.
16. I am concerned about leaving the security of Benefits.
17. I am worried I will not have enough time with my children.
18. My child/children wouldn’t like me to work.
19. It’s hard to find appropriate childcare I can afford.

7.2 Analysis approaches

Any descriptive analysis of the card sort data will inevitably need to start with some basic counts and frequencies for each factor: that is, how many lone parents have zero big factors? how many one? and so on. And then, how many lone parents identify factor one as a big factor? how many factor two? and so on. These preliminary analyses will help to give some indication of the nature of the data.

This analysis would, however, only skim the surface of the data and would give no understanding of the inter-relationships between the factors. Extending beyond this very basic analysis, the two key descriptive analysis questions that should probably be tackled are:

1. In terms of the factors that influence decisions around work, are there discrete groups or classes of lone parents (such that, within a group lone parents identify the same sub-set of factors, and with different groups identifying different sets of factors)?
2 Are the characteristics and attitudes of the lone parents related to group membership? That is, do identifiable sub-groups of lone parents tend to identify similar sets of ‘big factors’?

Although there are a number of ways these questions could be addressed, one analysis approach that seems particularly suited to addressing the first question is latent class analysis (LCA). In what follows we describe, in broad terms, how LCA might be used. Given that the new question set is to be used in the 2006 wave of data collection on the FACS, we recommend that data from that survey be used to test the use of LCA, with LCA only being adopted as the standard analysis approach if the results prove to be interpretable and informative.

LCA is a statistical technique for analysing relationships in categorical data (whether the categories be nominal (that is, unordered) or ordinal). The analysis divides individual cases in a dataset (in this instance ‘cases’ would be survey respondents) into discrete non-overlapping groups or ‘latent classes’. Essentially, a model is fitted that (a) identifies the number of latent classes in the data, and (b) generates probabilities, per respondent, of their being in each class (one probability per class). An individual will then be assigned to the class for which they have the highest probability.

Texts on LCA describe LCA as analogous both to cluster analysis and to factor analysis. The analogy with cluster analysis is clear: essentially both cluster and latent class analysis are a means of identifying sub-groups within data. The analogy with factor analysis lies in the fact that the two techniques are a means of reducing data: but whereas factor analysis reduces a set of variables into a smaller set of continuous variables, LCA reduces a set of variables into a single categorical variable (that is, class membership).

There are two main advantages of LCA in the current setting over either factor or cluster analysis:

Firstly, LCA can be used with ordinal data, whereas both factor and cluster analysis use continuous data (with binary data being treated as continuous by many researchers). Given that parents are asked to sort factors into ‘big factor’, ‘small factor’, ‘not a factor’ categories, it is clear that analysis that handles the natural ordering in these categories is preferable. (Note that an analysis that combined any of the two categories could, in principle, adopt an analysis approach that handled binary data (such as cluster analysis), but there would be no obvious advantages in switching from LCA to cluster analysis beyond software issues.)

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9 The cognitive interviews found some ambiguity between the ‘small factor’ and ‘not a factor’ columns (refer to Section 4.2.7). Given this, one option would be to combine responses to just two: ‘big factor’ and ‘other’. This means that each of the 18 factors would be coded, per survey respondent, as a series of binary variables: 1 if in the big factor pile and 0 otherwise.

10 Cluster analysis is available within most statistical software packages. LCA is not.
Secondly, unlike cluster analysis, LCA generates a parameterised model of class membership. These parameters allow the relationship between the original set of variables (i.e., the card sort responses) and the final latent classes to be formally traced. In particular, it is possible to say why a respondent is in one class rather than another, and what the members of a class have in common. This should help greatly in the interpretation of the latent classes.

Assuming that the LCA proves fruitful, a second key analysis question is whether it is possible to shed light on why lone parents fall into particular latent classes. A natural way to approach this would be to explore whether the characteristics of lone parents (such as age of children, previous work experience, etc.) are associated with membership of particular latent classes. This is equivalent to asking whether parents with particular characteristics tend to identify a similar set of factors that affect decisions around work.

This association could be explored in a number of ways, but two standard approaches would be:

- simple cross-tabular analysis, if the lone parent characteristics are to be explored one by one;
- multinomial logistic regression, if the joint associations of the characteristics are to be explored. This would essentially create a prediction model that used lone parent characteristics to predict class membership.

The more challenging analysis question is how to relate attitudinal questions to class membership. It is recommended that a series of attitude questions be asked prior to the card sort exercise that, between them, capture parents’ attitudes, values, and beliefs about parenting, work, and childcare. The rationale for including these questions is that attitudes to parenting, work, and childcare act as the context against which parents will make decisions around work. The responses to these questions would be measured on an ordinal agree/disagree scale.

In principle, it would be possible to analyse each attitudinal statement separately. However, the questions being used in the 2006 FACS are attempts to tap into four underlying (or latent) attitudinal variables: attitudes towards work, attitudes towards parental care, attitudes towards childcare, and attitudes towards combining work with bringing up children. These four variables are intended to map onto the work/parenatal care typology (developed by Bell et al. and described in more detail in Chapter 3). An analysis that constructed these four variables, which could then be used to study the association with class membership, would be a rather more succinct approach than an analysis that looked at each attitudinal statement separately.

One approach that could be adopted would be to reduce the attitudinal statements to ‘latent variables’ using either factor analysis or latent trait analysis (LTA). This would tie in well with the LCA for the card sort data, all three methods being

Descriptive analysis of the new question set
members of a general class of models called latent structure models\textsuperscript{11}. Both factor analysis and LTA are very similar, in that they both reduce a variable set to a smaller number of latent variables measured on a continuous scale: the choice between the two depends upon whether the analyst chooses to treat the original attitude questions as measured on a continuous scale or on an ordinal scale. If continuous then factor analysis is the approach to use; if ordinal then LTA is appropriate. (Some analysts might also want to consider the possibility that the latent attitudinal statements are categorical rather than continuous, in which case either LCA or, even, latent profile analysis (which creates categorical latent variables from continuous variables) would be appropriate.)

The combination of the LCA on the card sort data and the LTA analysis on the attitudinal data, once completed, will in principle generate no more than five variables per respondent: class membership (measured as a categorical variable); attitudes to work; attitudes to parental care; attitudes to childcare; and attitudes towards combining childcare with work (for the four attitude variables being measured as scaled variables). Having reduced the dataset to such a degree, the task of relating the five variables becomes relatively easy and no special analysis methods should be needed.

7.3 Extending the descriptive analysis longitudinally

The analysis described above assumes cross-sectional analysis. Using the attitude and card-sort questions in a longitudinal survey would, inevitably, increase the possibilities for analysis and allow for many more hypotheses to be explored. The natural, and relatively simple, extensions to the descriptive cross-sectional analysis would be:

• does class membership change over time for parents, and if so, how and for whom?

For this analysis the LCA would probably not be run independently each year: rather, the model fitted in one wave would be applied to the second wave. This would ensure the same number and interpretation of classes each year.

• is a change in class membership associated with a change in attitudes? And if so, how?

Again, to ensure the same interpretation of the attitude scales in the two waves, the factor or LTA analysis used to generate these would be run just once and then ‘applied’ to the second year’s data.

The exact nature of the analysis that would be used to address these questions depends on many factors: number of parents changing classes, the prevalence of particular class changes; the overall sample size; and so on. Under some circumstances

\textsuperscript{11} In fact it might prove possible to combine the LCA and LTA in a single model.
it may prove possible to construct a single, overall, model that describes the change process – but given the uncertainties about the details of the cross-sectional descriptive analysis, we have not attempted to set out a programme of work here.

7.4 Timing and resource issues

The descriptive analysis set out above will, if adopted, mean that the analysis of the new dataset will need considerably more time and resources applied to it than standard descriptive analysis. The resources needed may be quite considerable the first time these data become available from a survey, simply because several variations of the models may have to be run to test for sensitivity to assumptions. (After the first data set has been analysed, the analysis of subsequent data sets can, to a degree, replicate the first analysis.) The analysis will also need to be carried out with full support from researchers with a background in multivariate analysis and, given that LCA is not available in many statistical software packages, time to learn new software may need to be factored in. Finally, the findings will inevitably be more difficult for many readers to grasp than standard descriptive statistics, so time and thought will need to be put into how to report the findings.
Appendix A
Technical details

This appendix describes in further detail the design and conduct of the cognitive testing.

Study design

This project involved the development and testing of a new set of questions. The questioning approach developed included a card sort exercise, to identify factors that would need to change for the lone parents to be able to work. A number of additional survey questions, collecting information about lone parents’ current activities, aspirations for the next few years and, for those who had thought about going (back to) work in the past 12 months or in the next three years, information about whether they had a specific job or kind of work in mind, were asked prior to the card sort exercise. These survey questions were asked of lone parents with dependent children who were not in paid work.

The test questions were designed to be administered face-to-face by survey interviewers and as such they were asked in this format. Interviews were conducted by members of the National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) research team and field interviewers trained in cognitive interviewing methods. Interviewers were instructed to read the test questions exactly as worded and record respondents’ answers. Having asked a series of questions, interviewers then asked a number of specific cognitive probes to ascertain what respondents understood particular terms and questions to mean and how they decided on their answers. Respondents were encouraged to ‘think-aloud’ as they went through the card sort exercise, to vocalise how they went about sorting the cards under the different headings. Further retrospective probing took place at the end of the card sort exercise to explore comprehension of the task and the statements, and the judgements respondents made in deciding how big a factor a particular statement was. The test questions and probe sheet used are reproduced in Appendix B. Interviews were tape recorded, and detailed notes made by the interviewer reviewing the recording. Notes were
analysed using a content analysis approach, described below.

The aim was to conduct 32 interviews covering a range of different types of lone parent. Characteristics identified from the literature that were associated with reasons for not wanting or being able to work were:

- age;
- whether they have worked before;
- the number of children they have;
- the age of their youngest child;
- whether they have a disability or long-standing illness; and
- their highest educational qualification.

These characteristics were used to set quotas, shown in Table A.1.

**Table A.1  Recruitment quotas set to achieve 32 interviews**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worked before</th>
<th>Fewer than 5 GCSE’s grades A-C</th>
<th>At least 5 GCSEs grades A-C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of youngest child</td>
<td>Under 5 years</td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved interviews</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Never worked before</th>
<th>Fewer than 5 GCSE’s grades A-C</th>
<th>At least 5 GCSEs grades A-C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age of youngest child</td>
<td>Under 5 years</td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieved interviews</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Cognitive methods**

Cognitive interviewing methods, which are derived from cognitive psychology, enable researchers to examine (in greater detail) the question and answer process, helping to identify problems with questions and possible solutions. Cognitive interviewing techniques focus on four main processes:

- how respondents understand and interpret questions;
- how respondents recall the information required to answer questions;
- the judgements they make as to what information to use when formulating their answers; and
- how to respond to the questions.
The two most frequently used cognitive interviewing techniques are ‘think aloud’ and probing. In this study a mixture of think aloud and probing techniques were used. In the think aloud technique, respondents are asked to say out loud what they are thinking as they go about answering the question. For example, respondents would be encouraged to articulate what they think the question means, what information they are drawing on to answer the question, what decisions they make about what the question means or what information is required to answer it and how they provide their (final) answer to the question. The think aloud technique was used when respondents were completing the card sort exercise. In the probing technique the interviewer will ask specific, usually scripted, questions which provide similar information. These ‘probes’ are partly pre-scripted and provide a guide to the topics to be covered in the cognitive interview. Probing was carried out retrospectively, after a series of questions had been asked. Copies of the cognitive probes used in each test are contained in Appendix B.

Recruitment

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) supplied NatCen with a sample of lone parents who had recently attended one or more Work Focused Interviews (WFIs) and had agreed to be re-contacted. The research team then selected five areas in England where the interviewing took place:

1. Portsmouth;
2. London;
3. South Essex;
4. Teeside; and
5. South West Lancashire

It was felt important to include a number of different areas, rural and urban/metropolitan, within the sample to ensure diversity among lone parents. The actual areas selected met this criterion, and were areas where it was possible for us to conduct interviews (cognitive interviewers were available and so was a sample within the required timeframe). NatCen’s Telephone Unit then carried out a telephone screening exercise to identify eligible lone parents (those with dependent children who were not in work) and to fill the specified quotas (see Appendix B for copies of the telephone unit recruitment instructions, screening questionnaire and master quota sheet).

When recruiting respondents for a member of the research team to interview, an appointment was made by the Telephone Unit recruiter at the end of the screening interview with eligible respondents. A letter was then sent by the recruiter to the lone parent, which explained more about the study, gave a contact person at Head Office, and confirmed details of the appointment. When recruiting respondents who would be interviewed by a field interview the process was slightly different.
Contact details for lone parents who were willing to be approached to take part in the study were passed on to the field interviewers by the Telephone Unit. Letters were sent to these lone parents informing them of the name of the interviewer who would be contacting them in the near future to arrange a convenient time to conduct the interview (see Appendix B for copies of these letters).

Although the aim was to conduct 32 interviews, some quotas were not filled because particular types of lone parents were quite rare (see Table 2). In total 29 interviews were conducted. Table 1.1 in Chapter 1 shows the breakdown of lone parents who were recruited and interviewed by quota type.

**Table A.2 Number of respondents required in each quota and number interviewed in each quota**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age youngest child</th>
<th>Worked before</th>
<th>Never worked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Left continuous f/t education aged 16 years or younger</td>
<td>Left continuous f/t education aged 17 years or older</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Under 5 years</td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of interviews set to achieve</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of interviews achieved</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conduct of interviews

Cognitive interviews took place in respondents’ homes and were conducted face-to-face, on a one-to-one basis, to ensure respondent confidentiality. Interviews lasted around an hour and were tape recorded with respondents’ consent. Respondents were given a £20 High Street voucher as a token of our appreciation for taking part in the interview.

Analysis

The members of the research team and the field interviewer, all of whom were
trained in cognitive methods, made detailed notes on their cognitive interviews, with reference to the tape-recording of the interview. These notes, tape recordings of the interviews and the completed test questionnaires were reviewed as part of the analysis process.

Notes were analysed using a content analysis approach based on Framework, an analytic tool developed by the Qualitative Research Unit at NatCen. A matrix was set up, which listed the respective test questions across the page and cases down the page. The matrix included a summary of the characteristics of respondents; such as their gender, number of children, age of youngest child, and whether ever worked. Under each question a summary was made of each respondent’s understanding of the question, recall strategies used, judgements made in formulating an answer and the answer provided. Any other problems were also recorded. Thus data could be read horizontally as a complete case record for an individual, or vertically by question, looking across all cases.

Once the matrix was completed the data were reviewed. In reviewing the matrix the full range of problems with questions were explored.
Appendix B
Question testing materials

This appendix contains copies of the following:

• test questions and list of card sort statements
• cognitive interview probe sheet
• recruitment screening questionnaire and quota sheet
Lone parents decision making about parenting, work and childcare

Test questionnaire

Serial Number: ____________________

Date of interview: ___/___/2006

Name of interviewer: ____________________
SECTION A  DEMOGRAPHICS

ASK OR CODE

A1. Sex of respondent is…
1  Male
2  Female

A2. What was your age last birthday?

YEARS _____

A3. Can I just check your current legal marital status. Are you…
ASK OR RECORD. CODE FIRST THAT APPLIES
IF COHABITING AND NEVER PREVIOUSLY MARRIED CODE 1

1  ...single, that is never married
2  married and living with husband/wife
3  married and separated from husband/wife
4  divorced, or
5  widowed?

A4. And who else lives here as part of your household?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First name</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>What was [name’s] age last birthday?</th>
<th>What is [name’s] relationship to you? (Write in description, e.g. child)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A5. SHOW CARD A
To which of these ethnic groups do you consider you belong?
INTERVIEWER: THIS IS A QUESTION OF OPINION

1. British
2. Any other White background (please describe)
3. White and Black Caribbean
4. White and Black African
5. White and Asian
6. Any other mixed background (please describe)
7. Indian
8. Pakistani
9. Bangladeshi
10. Any other Asian background (please describe)
11. Caribbean
12. African
13. Any other Black background (please describe)
14. Chinese
15. Any other (please describe at A5a)
16. None of these

(If Ethnicity Other White or Other Mixed or Other Asian or Other Black or Any Other background (Ethnic =2 or 6 or 10 or 13 or 15))

A5a
Please can you describe your ethnic group?

A6. (Can I check,) is English your first or main language?

1. Yes, English is first or main language
2. No, another language is first or main language
3. Respondent is bilingual in English with another language

A7. Do you have any longstanding illness, disability, or infirmity of any kind? By longstanding I mean anything that has troubled you over a period of time or that is likely to affect you over a period of time?

1. Yes
2. No
A8 [Does this health problem/Do any of these health problems] limit your daily activities in any way compared to people of your age?
1 Yes
2 No

A9. SHOW CARD B
(Now, thinking about all the qualifications you may have …) From this list, please tell me the highest qualification which you have obtained.
INTERVIEWER: THIS REFERS TO RESPONDENT’S HIGHEST QUALIFICATION OVERALL (NOT JUST THOSE FROM ANY RECENT COURSES)
HIGHEST = NEAREST THE BOTTOM OF THE LIST.

1 GCSE grade D-G, CSE grade 2-5, SCE O Grades D-E, SCE Standard Grades 4-7, Scottish National Qualifications (Access level), SCOTVEC National Certificate Modules
2 GCSE grade A-C, GCE ‘O’-level passes, CSE grade 1, SCE O Grades A-C, SCE Standard Grades 1-3, Scottish National Qualifications (Intermediate level), School Certificate / Matriculation
3 GCE ‘A’-level, AS Level, SCE Higher Grades A-C, Scottish National Qualifications (Higher level)
4 First degree, e.g. BSc, BA, BEd, MA at first degree level
5 Higher degree, e.g. MSc, MA, MBA, PGCE, PhD
6 Other academic qualifications (including overseas qualifications)
7 No, none of these

A10. SHOW CARD C
Do you have any of the qualifications listed on this card?
CODE ALL THAT APPLY
1 Level 1 NVQ or SVQ, Foundation GNVQ or GSVQ
2 Level 2 NVQ or SVQ, Intermediate GNVQ or GSVQ
3 Level 3 NVQ or SVQ, Advanced GNVQ or GSVQ
4 Level 4 NVQ or SVQ
5 Level 5 NVQ or SVQ
6 NVQ, SVQ or GNVQ - not sure what level
7 City & Guilds Part 1, RSA Certificate
8 BTEC First or General Certificate, BEC or TEC General, City & Guilds Part 2, Craft or Intermediate, RSA Advanced Diploma or Certificate
9 BTEC National Certificate or Diploma, City & Guilds Part 3, Final or Advanced Craft, ONC or OND
10 BEC Higher or TEC Higher, BTEC Higher, City & Guilds Part 4, HNC or HND
11 Other vocational or pre-vocational qualification
12 No, none of these
A11. SHOW CARD D
Which of these best describes the accommodation you are living in at the moment?

1. Owned outright
2. Being bought on a mortgage/bank loan
3. Shared ownership (owns & rents property)
4. Rented from a Council or New Town
5. Rented from a Housing Association
6. Rented privately
7. Rent free
8. Some other arrangement

A12. SHOW CARD E
Which, if any, of these benefits other than Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit or rent rebate are you receiving at the moment?
CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1. Income Support
2. Child Benefit
3. Maternity Allowance
4. Statutory Maternity Pay
5. Widows Benefit, Bereavement Allowance or Widowed Parents (formerly Widowed Mother’s) Allowance
6. Job Seeker’s Allowance (was Unemployment Benefit)
7. New Deal Allowance
8. State Retirement Pension
9. Some other state benefit - NOT Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit
10. None of these
A13. SHOW CARD F
And which, if any, of these health or disability benefits or tax credits are you receiving at the moment?
CODE ALL THAT APPLY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Benefit Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Incapacity Benefit (previously Invalidity Benefit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Severe disablement allowance (SDA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Statutory sick pay (SSP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Attendance Allowance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Disability Living Allowance - Care Component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Disability Living Allowance - mobility or motability allowance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Disability Living Allowance for children - Care component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Disability Living Allowance for children - mobility or motability allowance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Industrial injuries disablement benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>War Pensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Invalid care allowance (ICA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Some other benefit for people with disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>None of these</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A14
Does your child/ Do any of your children have any long-standing illness or disability? By longstanding I mean anything that has troubled them over a period of time or that is likely to affect them over a period of time?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A15. SHOW CARD G
May I just check, which of the things on this card are you currently doing?
INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL THAT APPLY. PROBE: What else?

1. Looking after the home or family
2. Caring for a sick or disabled child
3. Caring for a sick, elderly or disabled person
4. In education
5. On a training scheme
6. Doing voluntary or unpaid work
7. Looking for work
8. Temporarily sick/ disabled
9. Permanently sick /disabled
10. Working in a paid job as an employee or self-employed
11. Waiting to take up/ start a paid job
12. On maternity leave
13. Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)______________________________________

A16 INTERVIEWER CODE:
IS RESPONDENT CURRENTLY WORKING (A15 CODED 10, 11 OR 12)?

1    YES  GO TO Q61
2    NO  ASK Q3
SECTION B  WORK ORIENTATION (THOSE NOT CURRENTLY IN WORK)

Q3 SHOW CARD H
Which, if any, of the things listed on this card would you like to happen to you over the next 3 years?
CODE ALL THAT APPLY
1. Stay at home and look after my children
2. Settle down with a new partner
3. Have another child
4. Go to college/ study
5. Do some voluntary work
6. Get a paid job/ become self-employed
7. None of these

Q4 SHOW CARD H
And which, if any, of the things listed on this card do you think are likely to will happen to you over the next 3 years?
CODE ALL THAT APPLY
1. Stay at home and look after my children
2. Settle down with a new partner
3. Have another child
4. Go to college/ study
5. Do some voluntary work
6. Get a paid job/ become self-employed
7. None of these

Q4a. INTERVIEWER CODE:
WOULD RESPONDENT LIKE TO WORK IN THE NEXT 3 YEARS OR THINK IT LIKELY THAT S/HE WILL WORK (Q3 OR Q4 CODED 6)?
1 Yes – ASK Q5
2 No – GO TO Q31

(if Q3 or Q4 CODED 6 Get a paid job/become self-employed)

Q5
Have you thought about the kind of work that you might do?
1 Yes – ASK Q6
2 No - GO TO Q15
{If Q5=YES}
Q6
Have you thought about a particular job that you might want to do?

1   Yes – ASK Q7
2   No    - GO TO Q8

{If Q6=YES}
Q7
What was the title of this job that you had thought about?
INTERVIEWER WRITE IN JOB TITLE

{If Q6=NO}
Q8
What kind of work have you thought about?
INTERVIEWER PROBE FOR DETAILS OF TYPE OF WORK THOUGHT ABOUT
SECTION C

**NOT IN WORK, HAVE JOB IN MIND: REASONS NOT ABLE TO WORK**

(If not currently in paid work and have mentioned a job title or type of work at Q7 or Q8)

**Q9**

**INTRO**

You mentioned that you (would like to/ think it is likely that you will) get a paid job or become self employed in the next three years. The next few questions are about the reasons (factors) that may influence your decision about whether to go to work or not. In answering these questions I would like you to think about working (as a/in...ANSWER TO Q7 or Q8...) now.

**INTRODUCE SHUFFLE PACK A (Statements in Annex A)**

Each of these small cards has on it a factor that some lone parents have mentioned for not wanting or being able to do paid work. Thinking about your current situation, please sort the cards into big factors, smaller factors and those that are not a factor in your not wanting to or being able to work at this time. Place them under the headings on this larger card.

**INTERVIEWER: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATIONS.**

**CODE** ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE NOT A FACTOR AT THIS QUESTION AND SMALLER AND BIG FACTORS AT Qs 10 AND 11.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS OF THOSE NOT A FACTOR ________________________________

**Q10** **INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE SMALLER FACTORS HERE AND BIG FACTORS AT Q11.**

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

**Q11** **INTERVIEWER: RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE BIG FACTORS HERE:**

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

(If two or more big factors coded at Q11 THEN)

**Q12** **SHUFFLE PACK A**

INTERVIEWER, ASK RESPONDENT TO REVIEW FACTORS CODED AS BIG FACTORS. Which one, if any, of the things that you said are big factors for not working would you say is the most important?

No one factor is most important 00

WRITE IN CARD LETTER  _____
**Q13** Apart from the things I have asked about, is there anything else that is a big factor for you in deciding that you do not want to or are not able to work at this time?

Yes 1 **ASK Q14**

No 2 **END, CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING**

Don’t know 8 **END, CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING**

(If Q13=Yes)

**Q14** What else is a big factor?

PROBE FULLY: And what else?

**END. CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING**
SECTION D

NOT IN WORK, NO JOB IN MIND BUT HAS WORKED BEFORE: REASONS NOT ABLE TO WORK

(IF Q5=2)
Q15
May I just check have you ever had a paid job or worked as a self-employed person?

1   Yes – ASK Q16
2   No – GO TO Q25

(IF Q15=2)
Q16
What was your last main job?
ENTER JOB TITLE.

Q17
Which year did you leave your last main job, either as an employee or self-employed?

ENTER THE YEAR _____

Q18
Was your last main job full-time or part-time?

1   Full time
2   Part time

Q19
Shuffle Pack Exercise
INTRO
You mentioned that you (would like to/ think it is likely that you will) get a paid job or become self employed in the next three years. The next few questions are about the reasons (factors) that may influence your decision about whether to go back to work or not. In answering these questions I would like you to think about going back to do work as a (…ANSWER TO Q16…) now.

INTRODUCE SHUFFLE PACK A
Each of these small cards has on it a factor that some lone parents have mentioned for not wanting or being able to do paid work. Thinking about your current situation, please sort the cards into big factors, smaller factors and those that are not a factor in your not wanting to or being able to work at this time. Place them under the headings on this larger card.

INTERVIEWER: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATIONS.
CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE NOT A FACTOR AT THIS QUESTION AND SMALLER AND BIG FACTORS AT Qs 20 AND 21.
WRITE IN CARD LETTERS OF THOSE NOT A FACTOR______________________________

Q20 INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE SMALLER FACTORS HERE AND BIG FACTORS AT Q21.
WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

Q21 INTERVIEWER: RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE BIG FACTORS HERE.
WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

{IF two or more big factors coded at Q21 THEN}
Q22 SHUFFLE PACK A
INTERVIEWER, ASK RESPONDENT TO REVIEW FACTORS CODED AS BIG FACTORS.
Which one, if any, of the things that you said are big factors for not working would you say is the most important?

No one factor is most important 00
WRITE IN CARD LETTER _____

Q23 Apart from the things I have asked about, is there anything else that is a big factor for you in deciding that you do not want to or are not able to work at this time?
Yes 1 ASK Q24
No 2 END, CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING
Don’t know 8 END, CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING

{If Q23=Yes}
Q24 What else is a big factor?
PROBE FULLY: And what else?

END. CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING
SECTION E

NOT IN WORK, NO JOB IN MIND, NOT WORKED BEFORE: REASONS NOT ABLE TO WORK

(if Q15=2)

Q25
Shuffle Pack Exercise

INTRO
You mentioned that you (would like to/ think it is likely that you will) get a paid job or become self employed in the next three years. The next few questions are about the reasons (factors) that may influence your decision about whether to work or not.

INTRODUCE SHUFFLE PACK A
Each of these small cards has on it a factor that some lone parents have mentioned for not wanting or being able to do paid work. Thinking about your current situation, please sort the cards into big factors, smaller factors and those that are not a factor in your not wanting to or being able to work at this time. Place them under the headings on this larger card.

INTERVIEWER: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATIONS.
CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE NOT A FACTOR AT THIS QUESTION AND SMALLER AND BIG FACTORS AT Qs 26 AND 27.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS OF THOSE NOT A FACTOR__________________________

Q26 INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE SMALLER FACTORS HERE AND BIG FACTORS AT Q27.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

Q27 INTERVIEWER: RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE BIG FACTORS HERE.
WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

(IF two or more big factors coded at Q27 THEN)
Q28 SHUFFLE PACK A
INTERVIEWER, ASK RESPONDENT TO REVIEW FACTORS CODED AS BIG FACTORS. Which one, if any, of the things that you said are big factors for not working would you say is the most important?

No one factor is most important 00
WRITE IN CARD LETTER _____
Q29 Apart from the things I have asked about, is there anything else that is a big factor for you in deciding that you do not want to or are not able to work at this time?

1  Yes - ASK Q30
2  No - END, CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING
3  Don’t know - END, CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING

{If Q30=Yes}
Q30 What else is a big factor?
PROBE FULLY: And what else?

END. CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING
SECTION F

NOT IN WORK, NOT MENTIONED WOULD LIKE TO OR EXPECT TO WORK IN NEXT 3 YRS.

Q31
In the last 12 months have you thought about returning/going to work at all?

1. Yes – ASK Q32
2. No – GO TO Q58

{Q31=1}

Q32
Have you thought about the kind of work that you might do?

1. Yes – ASK Q33
2. No - GO TO Q42

{If Q32=YES}

Q33
Have you thought about a particular job that you might want to do?

1. Yes - ASK Q34
2. No - GO TO Q35

{If Q33=YES}

Q34
What was the title of this job that you had thought about?
INTERVIEWER WRITE IN JOB TITLE

{If Q33=NO}

Q35
What kind of work have you thought about?
INTERVIEWER PROBE FOR DETAILS OF TYPE OF WORK THOUGHT ABOUT
NOT IN WORK, NOT MENTIONED WOULD LIKE TO OR EXPECT TO WORK IN NEXT 3 YRS. THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING TO WORK IN LAST 12 MONTHS. HAS PARTICULAR JOB/TyPe IN MIND: REASONS NOT ABLE TO WORK

(If not currently in paid work and have mentioned a job title or type of work at Q34 or Q35)

Q36
You mentioned that you have thought about going (back) to work in the last 12 months. The next few questions are about reasons (factors) that may influence your decision about whether to go (back) to work or not. In answering these questions I would like you to think about working (as a/ in…ANSWER TO Q34 or Q35…) now.

INTRODUCE SHUFFLE PACK A
Each of these small cards has on it a factor that some lone parents have mentioned for not wanting or being able to do paid work. Thinking about your current situation, please sort the cards into big factors, smaller factors and those that are not a factor in your not wanting to or being able to work at this time. Place them under the headings on this larger card.

INTERVIEWER: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATIONS.
CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE NOT A FACTOR AT THIS QUESTION AND SMALLER AND BIG FACTORS AT Qs 37 AND 38.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS OF THOSE NOT A FACTOR__________________________

Q37 INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE SMALLER FACTORS HERE AND BIG FACTORS AT Q38.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

Q38 INTERVIEWER: RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE BIG FACTORS HERE.
WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

(If two or more big factors coded at Q38 THEN)

Q39 SHUFFLE PACK A
INTERVIEWER, ASK RESPONDENT TO REVIEW FACTORS CODED AS BIG FACTORS. Which one, if any, of the things that you said are big factors for not working would you say is the most important?

No one factor is most important 00
WRITE IN CARD LETTER _____
Q40 Apart from the things I have asked about, is there anything else that is a big factor for you in deciding that you do not want to or are not able to work at this time?

Yes 1 ASK Q41
No 2 END, CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING
Don’t know 8 END, CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING

{If Q40=Yes}

Q41 What else is a big factor?
PROBE FULLY: And what else?

END. CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING
SECTION G

NOT IN WORK, NOT MENTIONED WOULD LIKE TO OR EXPECT TO WORK IN NEXT 3 YRS. THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING TO WORK IN LAST 12 MONTHS. DON’T HAVE PARTICULAR JOB/TYPK IN MIND

(If Q32=NO)

Q42
May I just check have you ever had a paid job or worked as a self-employed person?

1. Yes – ASK Q43
2. No – GO TO Q52

Q43
What was your last main job?
ENTER JOB TITLE.

Q44
Which year did you leave your last main job, either as an employee or self-employed?

ENTER THE YEAR ______

Q45
Was your last main job full-time or part-time?

1. Full time
2. Part time
Q46

INTRO
You mentioned that you have thought about going (back) to work in the last 12
months. The next few questions are about the reasons (factors) that may influence your
decision about whether to go back to work or not. In answering these questions I
would like you to think about going back to do work as a (ANSWER TO Q43) now.

INTRODUCE SHUFFLE PACK A
Each of these small cards has on it a factor that some lone parents have mentioned for
not wanting or being able to do paid work. Thinking about your current
situation, please sort the cards into big factors, smaller factors and those that are not a factor in
your not wanting to or being able to work at this time. Place them under the headings
on this larger card.
INTERVIEWER: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATIONS.
CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE NOT A FACTOR AT THIS QUESTION
AND SMALLER AND BIG FACTORS AT Qs 47 AND 48.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS OF THOSE NOT A FACTOR________________________
Q47 INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE SMALLER FACTORS HERE AND
BIG FACTORS AT Q48.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________
Q48 INTERVIEWER: RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE BIG FACTORS HERE.
WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

(If two or more big factors coded at Q48 THEN)
Q49 SHUFFLE PACK A
INTERVIEWER, ASK RESPONDENT TO REVIEW FACTORS CODED AS BIG FACTORS.
Which one, if any, of the things that you said are big factors for not working would you
say is the most important?

No one factor is most important 00
WRITE IN CARD LETTER  _____

Appendices – Question testing materials
Q50 Apart from the things I have asked about, is there anything else that is a big factor for you in deciding that you do not want to or are not able to work at this time?

- Yes 1 ASK Q51
- No 2 END, CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING
- Don’t know 8 END, CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING

{If Q50=Yes}

Q51 What else is a big factor?
PROBE FULLY: And what else?

END. CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING
SECTION H

NOT IN WORK, NOT MENTIONED WOULD LIKE TO OR EXPECT TO WORK IN NEXT 3 YRS. THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING TO WORK IN LAST 12 MONTHS. DON'T HAVE PARTICULAR JOB/TYPe IN MIND. NOT WORKED BEFORE: REASONS NOT ABLE TO WORK

(if Q42=NO)

Q52
Shuffle Pack Exercise

INTRO
You mentioned that you have thought about going (back) to work in the last 12 months. The next few questions are about the reasons (factors) that may influence your decision about whether to work or not.

INTRODUCE SHUFFLE PACK A
Each of these small cards has on it a factor that some lone parents have mentioned for not wanting or being able to do paid work. Thinking about your current situation, please sort the cards into big factors, smaller factors and those that are not a factor in your not wanting to or being able to work at this time. Place them under the headings on this larger card.

INTERVIEWER: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATIONS.
RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE NOT A FACTOR AT THIS QUESTION AND SMALLER AND BIG FACTORS AT Qs 53 AND 54.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS OF THOSE NOT A FACTOR__________________________

Q53 INTERVIEWER: RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE SMALLER FACTORS HERE AND BIG FACTORS AT Q54.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ____________________________________________

Q54 INTERVIEWER: RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE BIG FACTORS HERE.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ____________________________________________

(IF two or more big factors coded at Q54 THEN)

Q55 SHUFFLE PACK A
INTERVIEWER, ASK RESPONDENT TO REVIEW FACTORS CODED AS BIG FACTORS. Which one, if any, of the things that you said are big factors for not working would you say is the most important?

No one factor is most important 00
WRITE IN CARD LETTER _____
Q56 Apart from the things I have asked about, is there anything else that is a big factor for you in deciding that you do not want to or are not able to work at this time?
Yes 1 ASK Q57
No 2 END, CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING
Don’t know 8 END, CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING

{If Q56=Yes}
Q57 What else is a big factor?
PROBE: What else?

END. CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING
SECTION I - PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

NOT IN WORK, NOT MENTIONED WOULD LIKE TO OR EXPECT TO WORK IN NEXT 3 YRS. NOT THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING TO WORK IN LAST 12 MONTHS.

(IF Q31=NO)
Q58 SHOW CARD I
Here are some things that people have said are priorities for them. Thinking about your own situation, which, if any of these things, are priorities for you over the next few years?
CODE ALL THAT APPLY
1. Staying at home and bringing up my children
2. Looking after a sick or disabled child
3. Looking after a sick, disabled or elderly family member or friend
4. Managing my own health condition/ disability
5. Managing my drug or alcohol problems
6. Emotionally coming to terms with the break up of my relationship
7. Sorting out financial issues resulting from the break up of my relationship
8. Sorting out custody/ access issues for my children
9. Building/maintaining a good relationship with my family
10. Getting somewhere permanent to live
11. Getting some (more) qualifications
12. Doing some voluntary work
13. Building my self-confidence
14. None of these

Q59 SHOW CARD I
Are there any other priorities for you over the next few years, which are not mentioned on this card?
1 Yes ASK Q60
2 No END, CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING

(IF Q59 CODED YES)
Q60 What are these priorities?
PROBE FULLY

END. CARRY OUT COGNITIVE PROBING
Items for Shuffle Pack cards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. Difficulties due to my health condition/disability</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I have difficulties due to my health condition/disability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I am not sure I would be better off financially in work than I am on benefits</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>I am not sure I would be better off financially in work than I am on benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I would have problems with transport to and from work</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>I would have problems with transport to and from work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. My confidence is low at the moment</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>My confidence is low at the moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. I haven’t got the qualifications or experience to get the kind of job I would want</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>I haven’t got the qualifications or experience to get the kind of job I would want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Employers aren’t very family-friendly</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Employers aren’t very family-friendly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. I need to be very flexible about the hours I work</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>I need to be very flexible about the hours I work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. I care for someone who has a health condition, disability or behavioural difficulties</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>I care for someone who has a health condition, disability or behavioural difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. My family wouldn’t like it if I worked</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>My family wouldn’t like it if I worked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9A. My child/children wouldn’t like me to work</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>My child/children wouldn’t like me to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. I want to look after my child(ren) myself/at home</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>I want to look after my child(ren) myself/at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. There isn’t enough suitable, affordable childcare around here</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>There isn’t enough suitable, affordable childcare around here</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11A. It’s hard to find appropriate childcare I can afford</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>It’s hard to find appropriate childcare I can afford</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
17 factors that, according to the literature and discussion with experts, are important in the decision-making process. These factors are listed below.

1. Health of lone parent  
2. Financial issues/making work pay  
3. Transport availability/affordability  
4. Self esteem/confidence  
5. Qualifications needed for job (what employers are looking for)  
6. Hours available/flexibility/perceived ‘lone parent friendliness’ of employers  
7. Lone parent’s need for flexible/part-time working  
8. Caring responsibilities/looking after sick child/adult/family member  
9. Attitudes of family and children towards lone parent working  
10. Lone parent wanting to look after child(ren) herself  
11. Lack of affordable/available child care  
12. Lack of informal childcare  
13. Lone parent’s preparedness to leave child/children with anyone except family  
14. Availability of suitable work  
15. Personal or family troubles in lone parents’ life that make it difficult for them to work  
16. Fear of loosing benefits- fear of financial insecurity  
17. Concern about not having enough time with children
P2513 Probe sheet

Aims/ research questions

The questions we are testing are attempting to capture the factors that shape lone parents’ decision making around parenting, work and childcare. The aim of the testing is to evaluate the success of this approach, specifically whether respondents:

- are able to answer the questions (e.g. are key terms and concepts understood consistently);
- are willing to answer the questions (and if not why);
- feel able to say that they are not thinking about work at this time (e.g. do they feel pressurised to say that they have thought about or would like to work, and thus answer subsequent questions about what might make going to work at this time difficult when really they want to say they are not interested in work); and
- are able to think about the factors that would make work difficult at this time, even when they have not got a specific job or type of work in mind.

It is suggested that you get the respondent to think aloud as they carry out the Shuffle Pack exercise, and then to retrospectively probe specific information for particular questions of interest.

A15

- How did you go about answering this question? *(If only gave one answer check if R realised that s/he could have given more than one. Any other activities that they would have said they are currently doing?)*

- Were there any activities on the card *(SHOW CARD G)* that you were uncertain about? If so, which ones? Why?

- What did you think ‘in education’ meant when answering this question?

- What did you think ‘looking for work’ meant when answering this question?

Q3 and Q4

- How did you go about answering this question?

- What time period were you thinking of? *(Probe for details, i.e. from Jan 06 to Jan 09).*

- How easy or difficult was it for you to think about the next 3 years? *(Probe for reasons why easy or difficult (What made it easy/difficult?)*

- IF MENTION ‘Stay at home and look after my children’. What were you thinking about here?

- Was there anything else you think might happen to you over the next 3 years, which wasn’t listed? If so, what?
Q5 – Q8

- How easy or difficult was it to think of the kind of work/a particular job that you might want to do? *Probe for reasons why easy or difficult (What made it easy/difficult?)*

- Q5 – what information did you think you were being asked to give here? (What did you understand by the phrase ‘kind of work’ you might do?)
- How easy or difficult was it to provide details about the job you were thinking about – either the title or a description of the type of work? *Probe for reasons why easy or difficult (What made it easy/difficult?)*
Shuffle Pack A Exercise

INTERVIEWER: Encourage ‘think-aloud’ during shuffle pack exercise. Use the suggested probes to pick up on anything that may have been missed.

General probes

- Please can you tell me in your own words what you thought you were being asked to do? *Probe any uncertainties about what task involved (What was unclear/ what were you unsure about?)*

- How easy or difficult did you find the shuffle pack task? *Probe for reasons why easy or difficult (What made it easy/difficult?) Explore any issues that arise because the respondent was not thinking about a specific job/ type of work (those answering Section E or Section H).*

- What job did you have in mind when answering these questions? *Probe: For those who have worked before who are asked to imagine that they went back to do the same kind of work they did in their last job (but not necessarily with the same employer) – those answering Section D or G* *When answering these questions were you thinking about going back to do a similar type of work to what you had done before; to do same job, with same employer; or to do another job?*

- What did you understand by the term ‘factor’?

- How did you go about the task? *Probe: how did you decide whether something was a factor or not and whether it was big or small? Ask for examples.*

- (If observed) What made you move factors between headings?

- How easy or difficult was it to put the factors under headings? *Why? Probe: details of any statements R found difficult to classify; any statements seen as being about the same thing?*

- How did the task make you feel? *Probe for details about what it was about the task that made them feel the way they did. (What was it about the task that made you feel this way?)*

- Had you ever thought about any of these issues before now?

- **IF TWO OR MORE BIG FACTORS GIVEN:** How easy or difficult was it to choose the most important factor? *Why? Did you feel able to say that there was not one factor that was the most important? (If no: what made it difficult for you to say this/ how could the question have been worded to have made you feel able to say this?)*

- Did you feel the statements fitted your experiences? Was there anything missing from the statements on the cards?
Shuffle pack statement specific probes

- What did you understand ‘Employers aren’t very family-friendly’ to mean?
- ‘I haven’t got the qualifications or experience to get the kind of job I would want’ – How did you feel about this statement?
- ‘My confidence is low at the moment’ – Could you tell me in your own words what you think this statement means?
- ‘My family wouldn’t like it if I worked’ - Who were you thinking of as your family?
- ‘There isn’t enough suitable, affordable childcare around here’ When considering this statement what were you thinking of as being suitable childcare? **Probe for examples.**
  - The statement talks about childcare ‘around here’. Where were you thinking of / what area were you thinking of? Get R to describe area (e.g. miles from home, on particular bus route etc).
  - In considering this statement, how did you decide whether this would be a problem?
  - Where does your knowledge of suitable/affordable childcare around here come from? (Probe: what does R know about the local childcare market?)

- ‘It’s hard to find appropriate child care I can afford‘ When considering this statement what did you think of as being appropriate childcare? What area were you thinking of, if any? In considering this statement, how did you decide whether this would be a problem or not? Have you tried to find childcare at any point since having your (child/children)?

- Were there any reasons for not wanting or not being able to work that weren’t statements on the cards?

Suggestions for improvements

- Do you have any suggestions for ways in which we could improve these questions to make them more relevant to lone parents? IF YES: probe for details.
Qs 58 & 59 – Priorities for the future

INTERVIEWER: Encourage respondent to ‘think-aloud’ as s/he answers Qs58 & 59. Use the suggested probes to pick up on anything that may have been missed.

General probes

- How did you go about answering this question?
- What did you understand by the term ‘priority’?
- Can you tell me a bit more about you priorities over the next few years?
- What time period were you thinking about when you answered this question? Probe for details.
- Are there any things that are priorities for you over the next few years that are not listed on the card? If so what are they?
- Is there anything missing from the list?
- What did you understand ‘Doing some voluntary work’ to mean?
- What did you think was meant by ‘managing’ my own health condition/disability/drug or alcohol problems?
- What did you think was meant by ‘sorting out’ financial issues resulting from the break up of my relationship/custody/access issues for my children?
- What did you think was meant by ‘staying at home and looking after my children’?

Suggestions for improvements

- Do you have any suggestions for ways in which we could improve these questions to make them more relevant to lone parents? IF YES: probe for details.
P2513 - RECRUITMENT INSTRUCTION SHEET & SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

(1) Introductions and Recruitment Conversation

- My name is [AS APPROPRIATE], and I am calling from the National Centre for Social Research. We are an independent research institute and we are doing a study for the Department for Work and Pensions.

- We have been passed on your details by the Department as you are on their records as being a lone parent that has previously been invited to a Work Focused Interview. I hope that you don’t mind us calling you.

- We have been asked by the Department for Work and Pensions to develop some new survey questions that find out about the factors that shape parents decisions about whether to work or not. As part of this process we want to test them out, to find out how people understand the questions and go about answering them. By testing our questions out in this way with people like yourself will we be able to check that our questions are being understood in the way in which we intended them to be.

- Taking part would involve you talking to an interviewer from the National Centre for Social Research. The interview would last approximately one hour and most people who take part enjoy it. It would take place at your home, or at another venue convenient to you and you would receive a £20.00 high street voucher as a thank you for taking part. Your benefits will not be affected by taking part in this study.

- Everything that you say in the interview will be treated in strict confidence and no information will be shared with Personal Advisors or the Department for Work and Pensions. This research will be written up as a report, but you will not be identified in it and what you say will not be linked with your name and address.

- Participation is entirely voluntary, which means we rely on the good will of people to take part so that we achieve a good representation of lone parents. Would you like to take part?

- Before proceeding, can I just check some information with you. We are trying to get a spread of different people for this study so I’d just like to run through a few questions with you to see whether you match our criteria...

- PLEASE ASK ALL SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE ON NEXT PAGE
(2) Screening Questionnaire (ASK ALL)

1. May I please check, are you currently working in a paid job or as a self-employed person?
   - Yes 1 END, NOT ELIGIBLE
   - No 2 ASK Q2

2. May I just check, are you currently living with a husband/wife or partner?
   - Yes 1 END, NOT ELIGIBLE
   - No 2 ASK Q3

3. Are there any children aged 16 or younger living here with you, as part of your family?
   - Yes 1 ASK Q4
   - No 2 END, NOT ELIGIBLE

4. What is the age of your youngest child …
   - …under 5 years, □
   - …5 to 10 years, or □
   - …11-16 years? □

5. May I just check, have you ever worked in a paid job, or as a self-employed person?
   - Yes 1
   - No 2

6. At what age did you leave continuous full-time education?
   - 16 years or under 1 GO TO 7
   - 17 years + 2 GO TO 7

7. RUN THROUGH QUOTA QUESTIONNAIRE TO DETERMINE IF RESPONDENT FITS ONE OF THE 12 TYPES

8. COMPLETE QUOTA GRID TO DETERMINE IF NEEDED FOR INTERVIEW (OR RESERVE SAMPLE)
9. IS RESPONDENT NEEDED FOR INTERVIEW OR RESERVE?
   Yes  GO TO 10
   No    END

10. SET UP AN APPOINTMENT IF FOR RESEARCHER OR RECORD DETAILS IF FOR INTERVIEWER
    APPOINTMENT SET UP?
    Yes  GO TO 11
    No    GO TO 12

11. ARRANGE CONVENIENT DATE AND TIME, AGAINST RELEVANT RESEARCHER’S AVAILABILITY. RECORD IN BOX BELOW.

   DATE:
   TIME:
   NAME OF RESEARCHER:

12. TELL RESPONDENT THE NAME OF THE FIELD INTERVIEWER WHO WILL BE IN TOUCH TO ARRANGE AN APPOINT, OR THE NAME OF THE RESEARCHER WHO WILL BE COMING TO INTERVIEW THEM.

13. CHECK/RECORD RESPONDENT’S CONTACT DETAILS

   Name: _________________________________
   Address: _______________________________
   _________________________________
   _________________________________
   _________________________________
   Telephone no _________________________
   Sex: ______
   Quota Cell ref no: ______

END OF SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO MICHELLE GRAY.
(3) Refusals

IF THEY ARE HESITANT, OR DO NOT WANT TO TAKE PART:

At various points along the way, respondents may say they do not want to participate. We want to ask very gently about why that is, just to find out if there are particular groups of people who are more reluctant to take parts than others. Please ask something like, ‘Just for the record, I wonder if you’d mind telling me why you do not want to take part’?

Please record all refusals on the refusals record sheet.
P2513 – Master Quota Sheet – Use answers from screening questionnaire to fill quotas

START

Q5

Worked Before?

YES

Q6

Age left school

16 or under

17+

Q4

Age of youngest child

0-5

6-10

11+

NO

Q6

Age left school

16 or under

17+

Q4

Age of youngest child

0-5

6-10

11+

Appendices – Question testing materials

1. Fill 18 quota boxes for Interviewers (BOLD BOXES)
2. Fill 6 reserve quota boxes for Interviewers (Unbolden boxes)
3. Fill remaining quota boxes for Researchers (Bold and Unbolden boxes)
Forward to analysis papers (Appendices C and D)

Two short papers were commissioned as part of this project. The first, by Glenn Williams of Nottingham Trent University and Robert Walker of the University of Nottingham, describes how Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) could improve understanding of the factors that influence lone parents’ decisions around work. Unlike the descriptive analysis described in the main body of the report, which looks for patterns in data without any strong expectations of what will be found, SEM starts with the premise of developing a theoretical model that is based on prior hypotheses about the nature of the relationships in the data. It is, therefore, a far more powerful tool than descriptive analysis when the analyst’s aim is to test whether expectations about relationships and change in the data are being realised.

The paper sets out the principles of SEM in general terms (Section 2) before turning specifically to how SEM might be used on survey data that captures lone parents’ decisions around work. Eight potential research questions that might be addressed using SEM are described (Section 3). This is then followed (Section 4) with an assessment of the value of SEM in addressing these types of questions.

The second, by Diane Houston of the University of Kent, explores the use of attitudinal data in understanding lone parents’ decision-making about work and childcare. Specifically, she looks at the use of the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) as a means of understanding this decision-making process and discusses how such an approach could be utilised by analysts.
Appendix C
Barriers to lone parents entering the workplace: Contributions of a structural equation modelling analysis

By Glenn A. Williams¹ and Robert Walker²

1. Tackling the multivariate mechanisms of barriers to lone parents entering the workplace

Many multivariate statistical techniques commonly used in the social policy arena are descriptive or exploratory in nature (e.g. factor analysis, cluster analysis). Others include theory development components (e.g. logistic and ordinary least squares (OLS) regression) but the use of these methods is beset with controversy concerning, for example, the appropriateness of basing the inclusion of variables in a model on statistical criteria (as in stepwise regression) rather than on theoretical ones (Ullman, 2001). The traditional use of exploratory methods in social policy research does not allow for the explicit generation and testing of hypotheses concerning the reasons behind people’s attitudes and behaviours. It also does not reflect the way in which researchers often approach their subject matter with an array of expectations that are usually borne out of previous empirical work or existing literature. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) makes this process overt and enables researchers to generate a range of theoretical models and to test them.

¹ Nottingham Trent University.
² University of Nottingham.
SEM starts from the premise of developing a theoretical model by drawing on the literature to hypothesise on the relationships between variables. With a conventional statistical analysis, data collected from a sample (e.g. a cross-section of lone parents in the London borough of Brent) is used as the starting point for explaining what might be happening in a population of people (e.g. all lone parents in Brent). Instead, the process of SEM begins with building a general theory (e.g. concerning the way that lone parents might approach the world of work) and involves gauging how well the sample data fit with this theory. Unlike exploratory factor analysis (EFA), where the theoretical model is unknown, SEM assesses the extent with which data fit one or more theoretical models entailing direct or indirect links between variables. EFA may be used as a precursor in generating theory and hypotheses before conducting a SEM analysis.

2. Principles of the structural equation modelling approach

SEM has been used in the social sciences since the 1960s. It has its origins in path analysis, which began with analysis of genetic pathways in the 1920s. It is sometimes confused with labels of ‘causal modelling’ or ‘confirmatory factor analysis’ but both of these labels do not convey the versatility of SEM. ‘Causal modelling’ is not a preferred term since causality cannot be directly inferred when analysing cross-sectional data with SEM. The term ‘confirmatory factor analysis’ also understates the use and potential of SEM.

3. Requirements

In the past, SEM analysts needed to grasp the finer details of matrix algebra and the meaning of notation linked to many Greek symbols. Nowadays, the process of running a SEM analysis has become simpler, but there is still an underlying philosophy and terminology to be mastered before using this technique. SEM requires specialised software and four different packages are readily available – LISREL, AMOS (which interfaces with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), EQS and SAS CALIS (for Statistical Analysis Software, SAS). A comprehensive overview of the strengths and limitations of each program is given in Ullman (2001; pp.764-771).

4. Model Development and Testing

The application of SEM typically involves the following sequence of steps (Information Technology Services, 2001):

1. Theory development – theory is based on the literature, personal observations and/or previous exploratory research;

2. Model construction – the theoretical concepts are outlined, along with the ways of measuring these concepts;

3. Instrument construction – a measure (e.g. questionnaire, interview schedule, observation rating scale) is developed to tap into the concepts;
4. **Data collection** – data are collected from a sample drawn from a population;

5. **Model testing** – the sample data are compared with a theoretical model of the population to gauge the extent of overlap;

6. **Interpretation of results** – a decision is made about how well the theory is reproduced by the sample data.

7. **Further theory development and testing?** Depending on the results, steps 1-6 will be repeated or theory development and testing will terminate at this point. It should be borne in mind that more than one model may fit the data very well and typically, alternative models are generated and tested (cross-validated) iteratively often across a range of different samples. Once the process of SEM has been mastered, these iterations can be done relatively quickly.

When starting on the initial stages of this process, the theory development will require identifying the variables of interest and examining ways to measure them.

**Variables**

SEM involves defining latent and observed variables. Latent variables (also known as unobserved variables, constructs or factors) are generally abstract constructions. For example, the barriers to lone parents working are not directly observable as we would be able to see a door as a barrier to entering a house. Latent variables such as ‘lack of readiness to work’ are measured indirectly via one or more observed variables (also known as measured variables, indicators, or manifest variables). In Figure C.1, latent variables are portrayed as ellipses in the model, as is the convention, and observed variables are depicted as rectangles.

Each observed variable has two sources of variance – that attributed to the latent variable (i.e. the ‘true’ variance of the observed variable being measured) and measurement error (i.e. variance from other sources and represented with ellipses e1 to e8 for their respective observed variable). The latent variable represents the variance accounted for by all of the observed variables representing a theoretical construct; it is analogous to using a juicer machine, in which some elements of the fruit are discarded and only the juices that are wanted remain.
Appendices – Barriers to lone parents entering the workplace: Contributions of a structural equation modelling analysis

Figure C.1  Measurement model of cognitive barriers to working for lone parents

- Work gets in the way of more important things
- It is not important for me to work
- The benefits system prevents me from working
- I’d rather not work if it jeopardises my benefits
- It is more important to look after family than look for work
- It is important to fulfil my role as parent and stay at home
- Negative attitudes to work
- Welfare Blocks Working
- Lack of Readiness to Work
- I haven’t applied for any jobs
- I am not intending to work
Figure C.2 Structural model of cognitive barriers to work for lone parents

Model specification

SEM models have two parts. The first, the ‘measurement model’ (see Figure C.1), appertains to relationships between observed variables and latent variables and is so called because it related to hypotheses concerning how the latent variables are measured. The second element, the ‘structural model’, relates to the way latent variables are structured conceptually (see Figure C.2).

As with regression analysis, dependent variables (DV)s are distinguished from independent variables (IV)s that, when aggregated, explain variation in the dependent variable(s). DVs (also known as endogenous or downstream variables) are the outcome indicators and are predicted by IVs. DVs may be either continuous or discrete and, in graphical representations of the theoretical model being tested, a DV has single-headed arrows pointing to it. With the case of Figure C.1 in the measurement model, the DVs are statements like ‘It is not important for me to work’, ‘I am not intending to work’, and ‘I am not applying for jobs’. These statements only have arrows pointing to them. In this structural model, there is only one DV and that is the lone parent’s readiness to work. However, the model could be extended by including ‘intention to work’ and ‘starting work’ in the same model – the former being the IV and the latter as the DV alongside the attitude data. In this way, SEM could tell the whole story about how the subjective world of attitudes and perceptions can translate into reality with lone parents actually commencing work.

SEM requires one or more continuous or discrete variables to be defined as independent variables (IV)s (also known as predictor, exogenous or upstream variables). IVs are hypothesised to predict one or more DVs. In the measurement model (Figure C.1), the latent variables of ‘negative attitudes to work’, ‘welfare
blocks work’ and ‘parenting attitudes’ are expected to predict each of their two
associated, observed variables. In the structural model (Figure C.2), these three
latent variables are hypothesised to be IVs and predictors of a lone parent’s lack of
readiness to work. There is also variance not attributed to these three variables and
that is labelled as a disturbance (or D1 in Figure C.2). The three latent predictor
variables are also hypothesised as correlating with each other. This is indicated with
double-headed arrows linking all three variables.

The Bentler-Weeks method (see Ullman, 2001; p.665) is used to specify the
parameters of the model. Parameters are estimates of a study population, which is
what the model is meant to represent. Estimated parameters include the regression
coefficients generated (e.g. DV being predicted by IVs or by other DVs) and the
variances and covariances of the IVs. Errors of the observed variables and disturbances
for the latent variables are also included in the parameter estimates.

**Instrument construction**

A fictionalised dataset will be used in a simplified form to demonstrate the
fundamentals of SEM, although SEM models can often be much more complex than
the one presented. In this fictitious study, there are eight questionnaire items
measured with a Likert-type response scale (‘1’ = ‘very much disagree’ to ‘5’ = ‘very
much agree’). Two statements were expected to match each of the four latent
variables based on the results of an exploratory factor analysis. ‘Work gets in the way
of more important things’ and ‘it is not important for me to work’ was found to load
highly with a factor of ‘negative attitudes to work’. ‘The benefits system prevents me
from working’ and ‘I’d rather not work if it jeopardises my benefits’ were found to
load strongly with a factor labelled as ‘welfare blocks working’. ‘Parenting attitudes’
were represented by ‘it is more important to look after family than look for work’ and
‘it is important to fulfil my role as parent and stay at home’. The construct of ‘lack of
readiness to work’ had two items loading onto it – ‘I am not intending to work’ and
‘I haven’t applied for any jobs’.

**Model testing and evaluation**

The goal of SEM analyses is to establish whether or not the sample data – in this case,
a fictionalised dataset – differ significantly from relationships specified in the model.
This is different from conventional statistical testing, in which significant variable
relationships and/or differences are the aim. Instead, the hypothesised model is
compared with at least two other models – (1) the null (or independence/baseline)
model, which specifies the variances but estimates all covariances as 0, and (2) the
saturated model, which fits the data perfectly with a chi-squared of 0. A typical
statistic used to examine how well the sample data fit with the hypothesised model
is the chi-squared test. For the fictionalised case study example we used, we
obtained a chi-squared statistic of 74.24, degrees of freedom = 14, and p < .000. The
aim in the chi-square analysis in SEM is always to obtain a non-significant chi-square
value, although the chi-squared statistic is often likely to be significant with large
samples and should be treated with caution (Haase & Pratschke, 2004). There are
other fit statistics that minimise the role of sample size. The optimal method for
gauging fit would be to use a range of indices like the Goodness-of-fit index (GFI),
the Adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), and the Parsimony goodness of fit index
(PGFI) to assess the extent to which they exceed values like .90, indicating that the
sample and the model have a satisfactory level of fit (Marcoulides & Hershberger,
1997). Residual-based fit indices, like the root mean square residual (RMR), are
based on the residuals (or error) and a small value of 0.08 or less indicates a good-
fitting model. There is an array of indices available for evaluating how well the data
fit the hypothesised model and there may be some confusion over which of the
indices to rely on. Perhaps the optimal method of evaluating how well the data fit
the model is through looking at several fit indices rather than relying on one. Table
C.1 outlines an abbreviated version of the model fit summary statistics for this case
study example.

Table C.1 Model fit analysis summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>RMR</th>
<th>GFI</th>
<th>AGFI</th>
<th>PGFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Default model</td>
<td>.149</td>
<td>.890</td>
<td>.718</td>
<td>.346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturated model</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence model</td>
<td>.534</td>
<td>.495</td>
<td>.350</td>
<td>.385</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As this table shows, the hypothesised model has a better fit than the independence
model, although the fit indices seem to indicate that the model hypothesised in
Figure C.1 is far from parsimonious.

Another part of the model testing entails examining the path diagrams illustrating
the unstandardised (Figure C.3) and standardised (Figure C.4) regression coefficients
produced by the model. Each unstandardised regression coefficient shows the
amount of change in the DV for each one unit change in the IV. For example, in
Figure C.3, the lack of readiness to work decreases -3.35 for each 1.00 increase in
negative attitudes to work. If this model was logically consistent, the unstandardised
regression coefficients should have a positive value so that, as one of the barriers
increased, the lack of ‘readiness to work’ value would also increase. This unexpected
finding can be explained by the use of a fictionalised dataset and also that the three
latent variables deemed to be predictors of ‘lack of readiness to work’ have
moderate correlations with each other (i.e. the double-headed arrows between the
three latent variables indicate correlations of between .55 and .66).

In Figure C.4, Squared Multiple Correlations (SMCs) are shown on the top right
hand corner next to each observed variable (e.g. a value of .40 next to ‘work gets in
the way of more important things’). This value is a check for multicollinearity and
high values would indicate that the observed variable is highly correlated with others
in the dataset. In this case example, although there are some observed variables with
moderate SMCs of up to, and including, .50, this is not high enough (> .90) to
indicate likelihood of multicollinearity. The values associated with each path
between variables are the standardised regression coefficients. These depict the
amount of change in the DV, given a standard deviation unit change in the IV. For example, the dependent variable, ‘work gets in the way of more important things’ would change by .70 of a standard deviation unit as a result of the latent variable, ‘negative attitudes to work’.

**Figure C.3  Model of cognitive barriers to working for lone parents with unstandardised parameter estimates**
5. An application of SEM to lone parents and work datasets

There are at least eight research questions that could be addressed with SEM to examine the barriers to lone parents becoming employed:

(i) Which is the optimal model for explaining barriers to lone parents entering the workplace?

A range of theoretical models can be developed and tested using SEM. For example, if it could be hypothesised that one latent variable (e.g. attitudes to working) has the most predictive power in explaining why some lone parents do not enter the workplace. This one factor solution could be compared with a two-factor solution (e.g. ‘attitudes to work’ and ‘welfare system perceptions’ latent variables) and a
three-factor solution (e.g. ‘attitudes to work’, ‘perceptions of the welfare system’ and ‘attitudes to parenting’ latent variables). By using a SEM analysis the researcher will be able to discover which of the three models best fits the data.

(ii) How much of the variance in lone parents’ responses to questions on intentions to enter employment can be accounted for by ‘barriers to working’ predictor variables?

SEM has many of the characteristics of multiple regression, so the researcher can analyse the relative contribution of predictor variables like ‘attitudes to working’ and ‘attitudes to parenting’ explaining the variation in the multiple dependent variables like ‘intending to work’ and ‘entering the workplace’. R²-type statistics can be generated to see how each predictor contributes to the variance in a specified dependent variable.

(iii) How reliable are the variables used to measure barriers to work for lone parents?

SEM can be used to examine the internal consistency of items that are meant to tap into a specified latent variable; SEM could be used to test the efficiency with which a set of items (and individual items) measure the latent variable ‘barrier to lone parents for getting into the workplace’

(iv) Is the effect of barriers on lone parents entering the workplace direct or indirect?

A SEM analysis would be able to test whether an IV (e.g. lone parents having negative attitudes to work) can directly predict a DV (e.g. lack of intention to seek work) or whether this IV does so in an indirect way, via factors such as lack of motivation to work.

(v) Are there inter-group differences among lone parents and barriers to their working?

SEM, could be used to examine whether a single theoretical model applies equally well to different groups of lone parents or whether the experiences of, say, young parents differ from those of older ones. Cross-validation of the model could also be achieved with data from male and female lone parents, for example.

(vi) What is the short-term, medium-term or long-term uptake of programmes to support lone parents in being able to enter employment?

Longitudinal differences can be tracked through latent growth curve modelling. Three or more time points could be used to track individual changes to see whether perceptions of work among lone parents become more positive over time before, during and after interventions (e.g. Anderson & Pires, 2003) to assist them.
(vii) How well do lone parents fare between, and within, communities in terms of barriers to employment?

Multilevel modelling is a variant on SEM and involves the study of nested models. This technique can be especially useful if there are small groups of lone parents, such as those from ethnic minorities, which are generally under-represented when compared to the wider population of lone parents. Multilevel modelling allows for a hierarchical analysis such that lone parents may be nested within communities on one level, within local labour markets at another level, and perhaps also within broader regional economies. Further information about multilevel modelling can be obtained from Hox (1995).

6. Assessment of the overall value of SEM to addressing barriers to entering the workplace for lone parents

A search of the literature has shown that there is some interest in applying SEM when conducting labour market data analyses. On a broad level, SEM analyses have been used for cross-national comparisons of income, deprivation and economic strain (Whelan et al., 2001), decision-making around retirement (Lim & Feldman, 2003) and dealing with deprivation associated with unemployment (Waters & Moore, 2002). Specific analyses on parenthood and employment have entailed modelling the wellbeing of women in relation to their transitions in employment and whether they are in a lone parent or cohabiting couple family setting (Wilk, 2001). As a method, it appears that the potential for SEM is beginning to be realised when examining issues of parenthood and employment. There has been also been a study into lone mothers and work (Gonzalez, 2004) involving probit regression analysis of data from 13,440 single mothers in 15 countries, with 57 per cent of them in employment. This study has been helpful in predicting likelihood of entering employment due to demographic variables like age, in-work benefits and expected earnings. However, the model developed from this study has not been able to account for the contributions of attitudinal and socio-cultural variables, which a SEM approach might be able to resolve.

Economists have begun to use SEM as a way of assessing latent economic variables, such as in studying the impact of institutional changes within 25 Eastern European transition economies (Raiser et al., 2000). SEM has also been useful in permitting simultaneous estimation of a factor model and a regression model and, in so doing, allows researchers to undertake a comprehensive process of hypothesis-testing and evaluation of a theoretical model (Kuklys, 2004).

This statistical method is unique among the multivariate techniques as it allows for the estimation and removal of measurement error (Haase & Pratschke, 2004), adding to the precision with which the fit between the data and a theoretical model can be checked. It also has useful heuristics for estimating and handling missing data – a problem that may arise when getting participants to provide information about sensitive topics.
SEM can be used with designs that are cross-sectional (i.e. measures taken at one time point), longitudinal (i.e. information taken at more than one time point) or experimental (i.e. allocation of participants into comparison groups and manipulation of the IV, such as receiving an educational intervention to improve employment prospects).

Whereas multiple regression can aid analysis of the impact of a series of predictor variables on one DV (e.g. lone parents entering the workplace), SEM improves on this capability by enabling simultaneous analysis (e.g. Khan et al., 2002) of the role of predictor variables on many DVs (e.g. lone parents intending to enter the workplace and their actual behaviour). It also permits predictor variables to be related, whereas this common phenomenon (i.e. multi-collinearity) bedevils regression analysis (Maruyama, 1998). More sophisticated theory development can result by recognising the complex interrelationships of variables influencing a lone parent’s intention to enter, or remain away from, the workplace.

There are some issues that need to be acknowledged when evaluating the potential for SEM in addressing barriers to work for lone parents, although these issues are not a threat to the value of SEM as a viable alternative to traditional approaches to multivariate analysis. SEM is not to be used for exploratory purposes, so the analyst would need to have a clear idea of the underlying latent variables that are hypothesised as existing, and their potential relationships, before using this technique. In terms of sample size, a minimum of 100 participants is required (Miles & Shevlin, 2003) although other experts in SEM analysis (e.g. Ullman, 2001) have advocated a sample of at least 200 participants. Typically, surveys influencing social policy involve large samples, so this should not be a problem.

Another consideration to bear in mind when using SEM is that this technique involves the assumption of data being normally distributed (Koslowsky, 1998). When variables that elicit dichotomous data have been used, we would advise summing dichotomous variables with other similar ones where this makes sense with the underlying concepts being measured. Alternatively, log transformation of variables with non-normal data distributions would be another way of overcoming normality violations as a pre requisite for SEM analysis.

Although not a direct limitation of SEM as an analytic technique, it is worthy of note that SEM may not be able to solve the statistical difficulties sometimes encountered with cross-sectional data. If lone parent respondents were only asked about their subjective experiences (e.g. attitudes to work or attitudes to family life), it is likely that a high correlation between these variables would be due to common method variance (Koslowsky, 1998); this is ‘variance that is attributable to the measurement method rather than to the constructs the measures represent’ (Podsakoff, et al., 2003; p.879). One way of tackling this potential problem could be through using multiple methods of collecting data from the same respondent or through asking lone parent respondents to give an indication of the frequency with which they have carried out certain behaviours (e.g. seeking jobs, applying for jobs, etc.). Multitrait Multi-Method (MTMM) matrices by means of SEM would be one way of combating
common method variance problems (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). However, the use of
the MTMM method would require measuring at least twice as many variables as a
conventional design, thus impacting on the size of the questionnaire and the time
needed to complete it.

When comparing SEM with other multivariate techniques, it is clear that SEM has the
advantage. With an ANOVA, there could be a simple test of differences (e.g. ‘are
lone parents in the work-based learning group more likely to enter the workplace
than lone parents who haven’t attended this initiative?’); an ANCOVA may involve
establishing differences between groups whilst adjusting for a covariate (e.g. ‘are
lone parents different to other parents with their attitudes to work, when taking into
account the age of parent?’). Unlike with ANOVA and ANCOVA, SEM can test all of
the above questions and also analyse the direct and indirect relationships between
the variables concerned (e.g. Schoon et al., 2003).

As a result, it has been claimed:

‘…when the phenomena of interest are complex and multidimensional, SEM
is the only analysis that allows complete and simultaneous tests of all the
relationships [between variables].’

(Ullman, 2001; p.656)

Some researchers studying the socio-economic aspects of deprivation have
acknowledged the strengths of SEM over other multivariate statistical methods, like
regression techniques. Pratschke and Haase (2000) have argued that SEM is
especially advantageous for longitudinal research:

‘Structural Equation Modelling is the only statistical technique in current use
that facilitates comparisons across time and space.’

SEM is a versatile tool for handling multivariate large sample data. It can be used to
address a range of research questions. SEM can aid in theory development necessary
for explaining barriers that may exist for lone parents in becoming employed and in
predicting the efficacy of initiatives to minimise such barriers.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Vivienne Brunsden, Psychology Division, Nottingham Trent University for
comments on a draft of this paper.

References


313.
Appendices – Barriers to lone parents entering the workplace:
Contributions of a structural equation modelling analysis


Appendices – Using ‘psychological variables’ to predict lone parents work intentions and behaviour

Appendix D
Using ‘psychological variables’ to predict lone parents work intentions and behaviour

Diane Houston, Professor of psychology, University of Kent, Canterbury

Women’s work participation in the UK
In the UK, 70 per cent of working age women and 79 per cent of working age men are in paid work Labour Force Survey (LFS), (2005). The proportion of women who are economically active has increased steadily since the 1950s, however almost all of this can be accounted for by an increase in part-time work. Hakim (2004) uses census and data to illustrate this point. In 1951, 30.3 per cent of women were in full-time work, in 2003 36 per cent. Two per cent were in full-time work. Hakim argues that women’s full-time employment rates have been virtually stable since the 1950s, and that increases in both jobs and female labour market participation can be accounted for by the increase in part-time work of partnered women. This has almost doubled in the last twenty years, from 28 per cent in 1980 to 53 per cent in 1999 (McRae, 2003). However, this increase now appears to have stabilised, with LFS figures for 2005 showing that 54 per cent of women with children under five are in employment (Clegg, 2005).

Within British sociology and social policy, there has been considerable controversy around the conceptualisation of women’s work orientations (e.g. Hakim, 1991; Fagan & Rubery, 1996; Ginn et al., 1996; Crompton & Harris 1998). Crompton and Harris (1998) have argued that the work patterns of women are a product of their particular circumstances, their opportunities and constraints, and the decisions that they make in response to these. They suggested that work and home orientations might fluctuate according to occupation, lifecycle and national context. By contrast, Preference Theory (Hakim, 2000) states that women in affluent societies can make
a real choice between family work and market work. Hakim argues that women can be classified as home-centred (20 per cent), adaptive (60 per cent), or, work-centred (20 per cent). Hakim argues that adaptive women do not want to make a choice between work and family – they want both and ‘if they give priority to family or to paid work, it is a temporary emphasis rather than a lifetime commitment.’ (Hakim, 2000) Only adaptive women are influenced by lifecycle changes, as a consequence they are less likely to make significant achievements in the world of work because they prefer a balanced life. By contrast, work and home-centred women remain committed to these domains across the lifespan. Hakim (2000) suggests that even childless women may be home-centred, prioritising the domestic sphere, and that women who are work-centred may choose to be childless or will have children in the same ways as among men, as an expression of normality and a weekend hobby.

McRae (2003) conducted analyses of longitudinal data from the UK’s maternity rights surveys that include items on women’s work histories and attitudes. She concluded that her findings provided support for Hakim’s argument that employment careers are centrally important for only a minority of women, but that there was little evidence to support the assertion that it is choice and preference which determines work behaviour. McRae’s analysis demonstrated that only ten per cent of first-time mothers in the UK had maintained full-time employment by the time their first child was 11 years old. McRae (2003) suggests that women with similar preferences, but different capacities for overcoming constraints, may have very different work patterns.

**Predicting work intentions and behaviour**

Within social psychology the search for an explanation as to why people behave in specific ways had tended to focus on theoretical models that place cognitions and behaviour within a framework in which people are thought to act in a rational way after making a cost-benefit assessment of the likely outcomes of a behaviour. The theory of reasoned action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), which later became the theory of planned behaviour (TPB: Ajzen 1985, 1991, 2002), is the most influential model that has taken this approach.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977, 1980) proposed that intentions are the proximal determinants of behaviour. They suggested that intentions are derived from both attitudes and a conceptually discrete factor, which they called subjective norms. They defined attitudes as an overall evaluation of a behaviour, the degree to which performance of the behaviour is positively or negatively valued. An attitude toward a behaviour is determined by the total set of accessible behavioural beliefs linking the behaviour to various outcomes and other attributes. The strength of each belief is weighted by the evaluation of the outcome or attribute. Thus attitudes are a combination of beliefs ‘If I work I will not be able spend time with my children during the day’ and ones’ evaluation of the belief ‘not spending time with my children during the day will be bad…good’. An important aspect of surveying attitudes within theory of planned behaviour is to ensure that all the relevant salient beliefs are measured in the survey. Pilot work is vital to ensure that all the relevant
beliefs are identified. This involves interviews with the relevant population – in this case lone parents – to explore their beliefs about the relevant behaviour. In the case of lone parents and work the likely areas of interest will be beliefs about work, childcare and parenthood. Beliefs about ‘behaviours’ may also be relevant – accessing/using transport for example. Once the key beliefs are identified via this process attitude statements can be devised which reflect these. Within the theory of planned behaviour attitudes can be measured simply by asking the respondent to evaluate the behaviour in question e.g. ‘working part-time would be...bad/good; harmful/beneficial, etc’ or by asking the respondent to identify underlying beliefs and to evaluate these (using the kind of statements illustrated at the top of this paragraph). While the former strategy will produce a reasonably reliable assessment of attitude, the latter strategy is likely to be more informative in terms of developing strategies/policies to support lone parents into work.

Subjective norms are defined as perceived social pressure to act in a certain way, from people who are important to the individual, ‘In many studies subjective norms have proved to be the weakest predictor of intentions (Van den Putte, 1991; Godin and Kok, 1996; Armitage and Conner, 2001). There has been some suggestion that individual differences may account for the variability in the power of subjective norms; some people may be strongly influenced by attitudes whilst others are more strongly influenced by subjective norms (Trafimow and Finlay, 1996). However there is also evidence that certain behaviours may be more influenced by subjective norms than others. Houston and Marks (2000, 2002, 2006) found that for mothers of preschool children, subjective norms were a much stronger predictor of intentions to work than attitudes. As with attitudes, pilot interviews are important to determine the relevant forms of social pressure. Whilst partners’ norms are important for partnered women, for lone parents the norms of other lone parents (as lone parents often form networks of support) may be as important as family members. Subjective norms can be measured in general terms ‘people who are important to me think I should work part-time’. However more detailed understanding of the sources of social pressure can be obtained by specific items relating to particular relationships ‘my close friends/mother’ etc.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) proposed that the intention to perform a behaviour would only be an accurate predictor of behaviour in so far as that behaviour was under volitional control. The theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985, 1991, 2002) was developed to include perceived behavioural control (PBC) to account for behaviours that are, to some degree, non-volitional. Trafimow et al. (2002) factor analysed typical PBC items and found two clusters. Ajzen (2002) labelled these self-efficacy (underpinned by items that address ease/difficulty and confidence – ‘If I wanted to I could work part-time’) and controllability (underpinned by items that address how much control the individual has and whether enactment of the behaviour is entirely in the actor’s hands – ‘I have complete control over whether I work part-time’). Bandura (1986, 1992) maintained that self-efficacy and control are conceptually distinct and this distinction has been supported by a number of studies (e.g. Terry & Hogg, 1994; Terry & O’Leary, 1995) and by a meta-analysis of 185 studies (Armitage & Conner, 2001).
Within the theory of planned behaviour perceived behavioural control may impact on behaviour indirectly via intention or it may also exert a direct influence on behaviour. It has been demonstrated empirically (e.g. Ajzen, 1991; Madden, Ellen & Ajzen, 1992) that the addition of perceived behavioural control significantly improves the prediction of both intention and behaviour. Meta-analysis has shown that when perceived behavioural control is added to attitudes and subjective norms it increases the amount of explained variance in intention by an average of six per cent (Armitage & Conner, 2001). More work is needed to determine the aspects of control which are relevant in women’s work behaviour. Houston (2005) has suggested that for partnered women control is often as simple as finance – the extent to which a woman feels she needs to work to meet household costs, moderated by the cost of childcare. However for those who have been out of the labour market for sometime self-efficacy related control may be as important. Again pilot work can determine the nature of control in terms of ‘barriers’ to work.

Sutton (1998) points out that overall the theory of planned behaviour tends to explain approximately 50 per cent of the variance in intention using only two or three predictors. However, he points out that a more pessimistic interpretation of this figure is that the models leave as much variance unexplained as they explain. However much of the research examining the theory of planned behaviour has been conducted using experiments, focusing on hypothetical intentions that lack real consequences for the participants (McBroom & Reed, 1992; Sutton, 1998). Sutton (1998) suggests that intentions that have ‘significant personal consequences’ present the best test of the theory of planned behaviour. In the context of a real life meaningful behaviour – returning to work after childbirth – Houston and Marks (2000, 2002, 2006) have found that over 80 per cent of the variance in intentions can be accounted for by attitudes, subjective norms and control. Further that around 60 per cent of the variance in work behaviour can be accounted for by intention and control. For this reason when subsequent behaviour cannot be assessed (e.g. in cross sectional survey data) it is still extremely useful to measure intentions as these will almost certainly be a good predictor of behaviour.

To increase the predictive validity of the TPB model researchers have used additional variables. Ajzen (1991) stated that:

‘...the theory of planned behaviour is, in principle, open to the inclusion of additional predictors if it can be shown that they capture a significant proportion of the variance in intention or behaviour after the theory’s current variables have been taken into account.’

(Ajzen, 1991, p199)

Two routes have been used to increase the overall predictive validity of the TPB model, one is to look at cognitive correlates of behaviour that take their effect via intention, such as self-efficacy (the extent to which you believe you can work), moral norms (the extent to which you feel that being a working parent is the right moral decision) or anticipated regret (the extent to which you feel you will regret working/leaving your child). A second route is to include those cognitive components that
take their effect after the formation of an intention, such as planning (the extent to which you have made plans for returning to work/childcare etc).

Self-identity has also been used within a TPB framework. Self-identity, or self-concept is composed of a number of role identities, such as ‘parent, spouse or employee’ (p.304, Charng, Piliavin & Callero, 1988) derived from the individual’s position in society (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Burke, 1980; Charng, Piliavin & Callero, 1988). The relative importance, or salience of role identities is determined by their hierarchical organisation and this influences the way in which they are expressed (McCall & Simmons, 1978; Stryker, 1968, 1980). Stryker (1968) suggested that role-identity salience is an important predictor of behaviour. Conner and Armitage (1998) reviewed a number of studies that explored the use of self-identity within the context of the theory of planned behaviour. They concluded that self-identity appears to be a useful addition, accounting, on average for one per cent of the variance in intention. However, the range of correlations between intention and self-identity ($r_s = .06$ to $.71$) led them to suggest that self-identity may be more influential for some behaviours than others.

Manstead (2000) has suggested that personal moral norms are a useful addition to the TPB. Manstead argues that personal norms are distinguishable from intention because although moral norms and intention, may sometimes be highly correlated – for example when a person intends to avoid performing an act which they regard as morally wrong – there may be occasions when a person is faced with a moral dilemma and they form an intention to carry out a behaviour even though it goes against their moral code. The TPB component which perhaps carries the most obvious potential for overlap with personal norms is subjective norms. Manstead (2000) suggests that while it may be that people sometimes share the same sense of morality as those who are important to them, this is not always the case. Moreover, people may be affiliated to various groups (for example, family, friends, or work colleagues) who do not all adhere to the same moral code. It may be that different groups or individuals assume the position of greatest importance depending on the decision to be made and the context in which it is made. It may also be possible that although people assimilate their morality from those around them, there comes a point where they hold a moral code, and apply it to themselves, autonomously.

There is a growing body of evidence that moral norms can contribute to the predictive validity of both the theory of reasoned action (e.g. Pomazal & Jaccard, 1976; Schwartz & Tessler, 1972) and the theory of planned behaviour (e.g. Beck & Ajzen, 1991; Parker, Manstead & Stradling, 1995). Most of this research deals with behaviour that has an obvious moral component. For example, Schwartz and Tessler (1972) looked at organ donation. They found that on its own, moral obligation explained between 39 per cent and 53 per cent of the variance. When attitudes and subjective norms were taken into account moral obligations added between six per cent and ten per cent to the explained variance.
Conner and Armitage (1998) also draw a distinction between moral norms and personal norms, but they suggest that personal norms come into play when the behaviour in question does not have an obvious moral component, but does involve the person adhering to standards they apply only to themselves. For example, a person may want to follow a healthy diet because of the standards they set for themselves and not because they feel any moral obligation to do so.

Parker, Manstead and Stradling (1995) examined the role of personal moral norms and found that they were closely linked to the anticipation of regret. They theorised that personal moral norms are, as the name suggests, a very personal sense of morality: In Eagly and Chaiken’s terms they are ‘internalized moral rules’ (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p177). Parker et al. suggest that breaking this personal code of conduct would have affective consequences for the individual, in the form of anticipated regret.

Houston and Marks (2005) found that around 20 per cent of first time mothers made an active decision not to return to work, this had increased to 35 per cent by the time the first child was three years old and a second child had been born. Around half of women with preschool children in the UK do not work. In the Houston and Marks study, the women who gave up paid work to care for their child held a very strong belief that this is the best thing for their child and the ‘right’ thing to do. Qualitative data showed a strong element of making a decision based on morality, and sometimes sacrifice.

Baggozzi (1992), and Gollwitzer (1993) proposed models of behaviour that incorporate two phases in the translation of intention into behaviour. The first, a motivational phase, involved the formation of an intention. The second, a volitional phase, leads to the enactment of a behaviour. Baggozzi (1992) suggested that planning may be required to carry out all the steps necessary to translate an intention into an action. Houston and Marks (2003) found that the majority of women were able to return to work after the birth of their first child, in a manner consistent with their preferences. However, 24 per cent of women who expressed an intention to work after their maternity leave either did not work or worked less than they had intended to. This research demonstrated that the amount of planning women had done prior to their maternity leave and the support provided by their workplace (but not their partner or family) were causal factors in determining whether women were able to carry out their intentions to return to work.

**Measuring work behaviour in lone parents**

In research into women’s labour market participation and partnered women’s labour market behaviour there has been increasing differentiation between part-time and full-time work. In the context of debates on women’s work participation this may have some theoretical relevance and therefore require consideration of the types of statistical analysis methods that examine different categories of work participation or actual hours of work (logistic versus linear regression). However for lone parents a measure of work behaviour may be rather more straightforward –
whether they work or not, as it is likely that most will engage in part-time work. This is because the majority of lone parents (90 per cent) are women and the proportion of women who work full-time has been relatively stable over the last 150 years (at around 1/3) (Hakim, 2004).

**Using attitude data to predict work behaviour in lone parents**

Houston and Marks (2000; 2002; 2003; 2006) have demonstrated that it is possible to use cross sectional data to predict women’s intentions to work from their attitudes, their beliefs about what others important to them think they should do and their sense of control about work and childcare. They have also demonstrated that these intentions are strong predictors of actual work behaviour in longitudinal studies. In both cases the variables used predicted around 80 per cent of the variance in intention and 60 per cent of actual behaviour. In the context of returning to work after maternity leave, Houston and Marks (2003) have also identified barriers to carrying out intentions to work, particularly planning and workplace support.

For lone parents who are not currently working, the perceived and actual barriers to return to work will be more complex and varied than amongst women who are on maternity leave. However a theory of planned behaviour model is one way in which these barriers can be examined, particularly if adequate pilot work is conducted to ascertain the range of beliefs from which attitude statements are constructed.

**Data analytic strategies**

In devising predictive models it is important to be sensitive to both measurement issues and statistical options. Given a large enough sample it becomes possible to test the reliability of a model using repeated sub samples of the dataset (bootstrapping). This can greatly increase one’s confidence in the model. In addition, if longitudinal data are collected, causal relationships can be tested using SEM or simpler cross-lagged panel designs and multiple regression.

There are some important caveats however: First, decisions about work may fall into discrete qualitatively different forms. For this reason it may be necessary to have several different measures of uptake of employment, each of which should be treated as potentially independent outcomes. Intentions to take up work in a child-related (e.g. as a teaching assistant) care setting may have quite different predictors from intentions to pursue a professional career with a long training trajectory. Although statistical techniques such as structural equation modelling can handle some categorical outcome variables, other approaches such as multinomial logistic regression may also be appropriate. Second, some of the variation in individual’s beliefs or subjective norms may stem from their local situation. This might include local amenities, the local employment opportunities, and their membership of a particular subculture. If effective interventions and evaluation are to be designed it may be important to disentangle effects that are attributable to social context factors such as these (‘level 2 effects’) from effects that are attributable to people’s attitudes within those contexts (‘level 1 effects’). Thus, it could well be important to
employ a multi-level modelling approach, as is common in modelling outcomes in education (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Goldstein, 1995).

References


Appendix E
Proposed questions to measure choices and constraints
Q3 SHOW CARD H

Which, if any, of the things listed on this card would you like to happen to you over the next few years?
CODE ALL THAT APPLY
1. Stay at home and look after my children
2. Settle down with a partner
3. Move home
4. Have another child
5. Go to college/ study
6. Do some voluntary work
7. Get a paid job/ become self-employed
8. None of these

Q4 SHOW CARD H

And which, if any, of the things listed on this card do you think will happen to you over the next few years?
CODE ALL THAT APPLY
1. Stay at home and look after my children
2. Settle down with a partner
3. Move home
4. Have another child
5. Go to college/ study
6. Do some voluntary work
7. Get a paid job/ become self-employed
8. None of these

Q4a. INTERVIEWER CODE:
WOULD RESPONDENT LIKE TO WORK IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS OR THINK IT LIKELY THAT S/HE WILL WORK (Q3 OR Q4 CODED 7)?
1 Yes – ASK Q5
2 NO – GO TO Q31
(If Q3 or Q4 CODED 7 Get a paid job/become self-employed)
Q5
Have you thought about the kind of work that you might do?
1  Yes – ASK Q6
2  No -  GO TO Q15

(If Q5=YES)
Q6
Have you thought about a particular job that you might want to do?
1  Yes – ASK Q7
2  No -  GO TO Q8

(If Q6=YES)
Q7
What was the title of this job that you had thought about?
INTERVIEWER WRITE IN JOB TITLE

(If Q6=NO)
Q8
What kind of work have you thought about?
INTERVIEWER PROBE FOR DETAILS OF TYPE OF WORK THOUGHT ABOUT
SECTION C

NOT IN WORK, HAVE JOB IN MIND: REASONS NOT ABLE TO WORK

(If not currently in paid work and have mentioned a job title or type of work at Q7 or Q8)

Q9

INTRO

You mentioned that you (would like to/ think it is likely that you will) get a paid job or become self employed in the next few years. The next few questions are about the factors that may influence your decision about whether to go to work or not. In answering these questions I would like you to think about working (as a/ in...ANSWER TO Q7 or Q8...) now.

INTRODUCE SHUFFLE PACK A (Statements in Annex A)

Each of these small cards has on it a factor that some lone parents have mentioned for not wanting or being able to do paid work. Thinking about your current situation, please sort the cards into big factors, smaller factors and those that are not a factor in your not wanting to or being able to work at this time. Place them under the headings on this larger card.

INTERVIEWER: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATIONS.

CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE NOT A FACTOR AT THIS QUESTION AND SMALLER AND BIG FACTORS AT Qs 10 AND 11.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS OF THOSE NOT A FACTOR________________________

Q10 INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE SMALLER FACTORS HERE AND BIG FACTORS AT Q11.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

Q11 INTERVIEWER: RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE BIG FACTORS HERE:

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

(IF two or more big factors coded at Q11 THEN)

Q12 SHUFFLE PACK A

INTERVIEWER, ASK RESPONDENT TO REVIEW FACTORS CODED AS BIG FACTORS. Which one, if any, of the things that you said are big factors for not working would you say is the most important?

No one factor is most important 00
Two or more factors are most important 97

WRITE IN CARD LETTER  _____
Q13 Apart from the things I have asked about, is there anything else that is a big factor for you in deciding that you do not want to or are not able to work at this time?
Yes 1 ASK Q14
No 2 END
Don’t know 8 END

(If Q13=Yes)
Q14 What else is a big factor?
PROBE FULLY: And what else?
SECTION D

NOT IN WORK, NO JOB IN MIND BUT HAS WORKED BEFORE: REASONS NOT ABLE TO WORK

(IF Q5=2)
Q15
May I just check have you ever had a paid job or worked as a self-employed person?

1  Yes – ASK Q16
2  No – GO TO Q25

(IF Q15=2)
Q16
What was your last main job?
ENTER JOB TITLE.

Q17
Would you consider doing this type of work again in the next few years?

1. Yes – ASK Q19
2. No – GO TO Q25

Q19
Shuffle Pack Exercise
INTRO
You mentioned that you (would like to/ think it is likely that you will) get a paid job or become self employed in the next few years. The next few questions are about the factors that may influence your decision about whether to go back to work or not. In answering these questions I would like you to think about going back to do work as a (...ANSWER TO Q16...) now.

INTRODUCE SHUFFLE PACK A
Each of these small cards has on it a factor that some lone parents have mentioned for not wanting or being able to do paid work. Thinking about your current situation, please sort the cards into big factors, smaller factors and those that are not a factor in your not wanting to or being able to work at this time. Place them under the headings on this larger card.
INTERVIEWER: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATIONS.
CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE NOT A FACTOR AT THIS QUESTION AND SMALLER AND BIG FACTORS AT Qs 20 AND 21.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS OF THOSE NOT A FACTOR________________________

Q20 INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE SMALLER FACTORS HERE AND BIG FACTORS AT Q21.
WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________
Q21 INTERVIEWER: RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE BIG FACTORS HERE.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

(IF two or more big factors coded at Q21 THEN)

Q22 SHUFFLE PACK A
INTERVIEWER, ASK RESPONDENT TO REVIEW FACTORS CODED AS BIG FACTORS.
Which one, if any, of the things that you said are big factors for not working would you say is the most important?

No one factor is most important 00
Two or more factors are most important 97
WRITE IN CARD LETTER _____

Q23 Apart from the things I have asked about, is there anything else that is a big factor for you in deciding that you do not want to or are not able to work at this time?

Yes 1 ASK Q24
No 2 END
Don’t know 8 END

(IF Q23=Yes)

Q24 What else is a big factor?
PROBE FULLY: And what else?
SECTION E
NOT IN WORK, NO JOB IN MIND, NOT WORKED BEFORE: REASONS NOT ABLE TO WORK

(If Q15=2 or Q17=NO)
Q25
Shuffle Pack Exercise
INTRO
You mentioned that you (would like to/ think it is likely that you will) get a paid job or become self employed in the next few years. The next few questions are about the factors that may influence your decision about whether to work or not.

INTRODUCE SHUFFLE PACK A
Each of these small cards has on it a factor that some lone parents have mentioned for not wanting or being able to do paid work. Thinking about your current situation, please sort the cards into big factors, smaller factors and those that are not a factor in your not wanting to or being able to work at this time. Place them under the headings on this larger card.
INTERVIEWER: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATIONS.
CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE NOT A FACTOR AT THIS QUESTION AND SMALLER AND BIG FACTORS AT Qs 26 AND 27.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS OF THOSE NOT A FACTOR______________________________

Q26 INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE SMALLER FACTORS HERE AND BIG FACTORS AT Q27.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

Q27 INTERVIEWER: RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE BIG FACTORS HERE.
WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

(IF two or more big factors coded at Q27 THEN)
Q28 SHUFFLE PACK A
INTERVIEWER, ASK RESPONDENT TO REVIEW FACTORS CODED AS BIG FACTORS.
Which one, if any, of the things that you said are big factors for not working would you say is the most important?
No one factor is most important 00
Two or more factors are most important 97
WRITE IN CARD LETTER ________________________
Q29 Apart from the things I have asked about, is there anything else that is a big factor for you in deciding that you do not want to or are not able to work at this time?

1  Yes - ASK Q30
2  No - END
3  Don’t know - END

(If Q30=Yes)

Q30 What else is a big factor?
PROBE FULLY: And what else?
SECTION F

NOT IN WORK, NOT MENTIONED WOULD LIKE TO OR EXPECT TO WORK IN NEXT FEW YRS.

Q31
In the last 12 months have you thought about returning/going to work at all?

1. Yes – ASK Q32
2. No – GO TO Q58

{Q31=1}

Q32
Have you thought about the kind of work that you might do?

1. Yes – ASK Q33
2. No - GO TO Q42

{If Q32=YES}

Q33
Have you thought about a particular job that you might want to do?

1. Yes - ASK Q34
2. No - GO TO Q35

{If Q33=YES}

Q34
What was the title of this job that you had thought about?
INTERVIEWER WRITE IN JOB TITLE

{If Q33=NO}

Q35
What kind of work have you thought about?
INTERVIEWER PROBE FOR DETAILS OF TYPE OF WORK THOUGHT ABOUT
NOT IN WORK, NOT MENTIONED WOULD LIKE TO OR EXPECT TO WORK IN NEXT FEW YRS. THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING TO WORK IN LAST 12 MONTHS. HAS PARTICULAR JOB/TYPe IN MIND: REASONS NOT ABLE TO WORK

(If not currently in paid work and have mentioned a job title or type of work at Q34 or Q35)

Q36
You mentioned that you have thought about going (back) to work in the last 12 months. The next few questions are about factors that may influence your decision about whether to go (back) to work or not. In answering these questions I would like you to think about working (as a/ in…ANSWER TO Q34 or Q35…) now.

INTRODUCE SHUFFLE PACK A
Each of these small cards has on it a factor that some lone parents have mentioned for not wanting or being able to do paid work. Thinking about your current situation, please sort the cards into big factors, smaller factors and those that are not a factor in your not wanting to or being able to work at this time. Place them under the headings on this larger card.

INTERVIEWER: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATIONS.
CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE NOT A FACTOR AT THIS QUESTION AND SMALLER AND BIG FACTORS AT Qs 37 AND 38.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS OF THOSE NOT A FACTOR________________________

Q37 INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE SMALLER FACTORS HERE AND BIG FACTORS AT Q38.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ______________________________

Q38 INTERVIEWER: RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE BIG FACTORS HERE.
WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ______________________________

(IF two or more big factors coded at Q38 THEN)

Q39 SHUFFLE PACK A
INTERVIEWER, ASK RESPONDENT TO REVIEW FACTORS CODED AS BIG FACTORS.
Which one, if any, of the things that you said are big factors for not working would you say is the most important?

No one factor is most important 00
Two or more factors are most important 97
WRITE IN CARD LETTER _____

Appendices – Proposed questions to measure choices and constraints
Q40 Apart from the things I have asked about, is there anything else that is a big factor for you in deciding that you do not want to or are not able to work at this time?

Yes  1 ASK Q41
No   2 END
Don’t know  8 END

(If Q40=Yes)
Q41 What else is a big factor?
PROBE FULLY: And what else?
SECTION G

NOT IN WORK, NOT MENTIONED WOULD LIKE TO OR EXPECT TO WORK IN NEXT FEW YRS. THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING TO WORK IN LAST 12 MONTHS. DON’T HAVE PARTICULAR JOB/TYE IN MIND

(If Q32=NO)
Q42
May I just check have you ever had a paid job or worked as a self-employed person?

1. Yes – ASK Q43
2. No – GO TO Q52

Q43
What was your last main job?
ENTER JOB TITLE.

Q44
Would you consider doing this type of work again in the next few years?

1. Yes – ASK Q46
2. No – GO TO Q52

NOT IN WORK, NOT MENTIONED WOULD LIKE TO OR EXPECT TO WORK IN NEXT FEW YRS. THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING TO WORK IN LAST 12 MONTHS. DON’T HAVE PARTICULAR JOB/TYE IN MIND BUT HAS WORKED BEFORE: REASONS NOT ABLE TO WORK

Q46
INTRO
You mentioned that you have thought about going (back) to work in the last 12 months. The next few questions are about the factors that may influence your decision about whether to go back to work or not. In answering these questions I would like you to think about going back to do work as a (ANSWER TO Q43) now.

INTRODUCE SHUFFLE PACK A
Each of these small cards has on it a factor that some lone parents have mentioned for not wanting or being able to do paid work. Thinking about your current situation, please sort the cards into big factors, smaller factors and those that are not a factor in your not wanting to or being able to work at this time. Place them under the headings on this larger card.
INTERVIEWER: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATIONS.
CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE NOT A FACTOR AT THIS QUESTION AND SMALLER AND BIG FACTORS AT Qs 47 AND 48.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS OF THOSE NOT A FACTOR________________________
Q47 INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE SMALLER FACTORS HERE AND BIG FACTORS AT Q48.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

Q48 INTERVIEWER: RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE BIG FACTORS HERE.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS ________________________________

(IF two or more big factors coded at Q48 THEN)

Q49 SHUFFLE PACK A

INTERVIEWER, ASK RESPONDENT TO REVIEW FACTORS CODED AS BIG FACTORS.

Which one, if any, of the things that you said are big factors for not working would you say is the most important?

No one factor is most important  00
Two or more factors are most important  97

WRITE IN CARD LETTER  _____

Q50 Apart from the things I have asked about, is there anything else that is a big factor for you in deciding that you do not want to or are not able to work at this time?

Yes  1 ASK Q51
No  2 END
Don’t know  8 END

(IF Q50=Yes)

Q51 What else is a big factor?

PROBE FULLY: And what else?
SECTION H

NOT IN WORK, NOT MENTIONED WOULD LIKE TO OR EXPECT TO WORK IN NEXT FEW YEARS. THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING TO WORK IN LAST 12 MONTHS. DON'T HAVE PARTICULAR JOB/TYPe IN MIND. NOT WORKED BEFORE: REASONS NOT ABLE TO WORK

(If Q42=NO or Q44=NO)
Q52
Shuffle Pack Exercise
INTRO
You mentioned that you have thought about going (back) to work in the last 12 months. The next few questions are about the factors that may influence your decision about whether to work or not.

INTRODUCE SHUFFLE PACK A
Each of these small cards has on it a factor that some lone parents have mentioned for not wanting or being able to do paid work. Thinking about your current situation, please sort the cards into big factors, smaller factors and those that are not a factor in your not wanting to or being able to work at this time. Place them under the headings on this larger card.
INTERVIEWER: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATIONS. RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE NOT A FACTOR AT THIS QUESTION AND SMALLER AND BIG FACTORS AT Qs 53 AND 54.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS OF THOSE NOT A FACTOR___________________________

Q53 INTERVIEWER: RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE SMALLER FACTORS HERE AND BIG FACTORS AT Q54.

WRITE IN CARD LETTERS _______________________________

Q54 INTERVIEWER: RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE BIG FACTORS HERE.
WRITE IN CARD LETTERS _______________________________

(If two or more big factors coded at Q54 THEN)
Q55 SHUFFLE PACK A
INTERVIEWER, ASK RESPONDENT TO REVIEW FACTORS CODED AS BIG FACTORS. Which one, if any, of the things that you said are big factors for not working would you say is the most important?
No one factor is most important 00
Two or more factors are most important 97
WRITE IN CARD LETTER _____
Q56 Apart from the things I have asked about, is there anything else that is a big factor for you in deciding that you do not want to or are not able to work at this time?

Yes 1 ASK Q57
No 2 END
Don’t know 8 END

(If Q56=Yes)
Q57 What else is a big factor?
PROBE: What else?
SECTION I - PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

NOT IN WORK, NOT MENTIONED WOULD LIKE TO OR EXPECT TO WORK IN NEXT FEW YRS. NOT THOUGHT ABOUT RETURNING TO WORK IN LAST 12 MONTHS.

(If Q31=NO)

Q58
SHOW CARD I

Here are some things that people have said are priorities for them. Thinking about your own situation, which, if any of these things, are priorities for you over the next few years?

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1. Staying at home and bringing up my children
2. Looking after a sick or disabled child
3. Looking after a sick, disabled or elderly family member or friend
4. Managing my own health condition/ disability
5. Managing my drug or alcohol problems
6. Emotionally coming to terms with the break up of my relationship
7. Sorting out financial issues resulting from the break up of my relationship
8. Sorting out custody/ access issues for my children
9. Building/maintaining a good relationship with my family
10. Getting somewhere permanent to live
11. Getting some (more) qualifications
12. Doing some voluntary work
13. Building my self-confidence
14. None of these

Q59 SHOW CARD I

Are there any other priorities for you over the next few years, which are not mentioned on this card?

1. Yes ASK Q60
2. No END

(IF Q59 CODED YES)

Q60 What are these priorities?
PROBE FULLY
SECTION J – WHAT HAS MADE WORK POSSIBLE

CURRENTLY IN WORK. FIRST JOB OR RETURNED TO WORK SINCE LAST INTERVIEW

Q65
I’d now like to ask some further questions about the paid work that you mentioned you are currently doing. You mentioned that this started in __________. Was there anything that changed at about that time, which made it possible for you to start working?
Yes  1 ASK Q65a
No  2 GO TO Q66
Don’t know  8 GO TO Q66

Q65a
What was it that changed that made it possible for you to start work at that time?
INTERVIEWER: PROBE FULLY

Q66a
How did this change (these changes) make it possible for you to start work?
INTERVIEWER - PROBE FULLY:
And what else changed at about that time?

SHOW CARD D
People who work can sometimes find it hard to stay in their job. Taking your answer from this card, how easy or difficult is it for you to stay in the job you are currently doing?

Very difficult
Fairly difficult
Neither easy nor difficult
Fairly easy
Very easy
Q67
INTRODUCE SHUFFLE PACK B
Each of these small cards has on it a factor that may make it difficult for a parent to stay in work. Thinking about your own situation, please sort the cards big factors, smaller factors, and factors that do not have any affect on your being able to stay in work. Place them under the headings on this larger card.
INTERVIEWER: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO MAKE CHANGES TO THE ALLOCATIONS. CODE ALL THINGS THAT DO NOT HAVE ANY IMPACT ON THE RESPONDENT STAYING IN WORK AT THIS QUESTION THEN THOSE THAT HAVE A SMALLER OR BIGGER IMPACT AT Qs68 & 69.

Q68 SHUFFLE PACK B.
INTERVIEWER: CODE ALL THINGS THAT ARE SMALLER FACTORS HERE AND THOSE THAT ARE BIG FACTORS AT Q69.

Q69 SHUFFLE PACK B.
INTERVIEWER: RECORD ALL STATEMENTS THAT ARE BIG FACTORS HERE.

(IF two or more big factors coded at Q69 THEN)
Q70 SHUFFLE PACK B
INTERVIEWER, ASK RESPONDENT TO REVIEW THINGS THAT ARE BIG FACTORS. Which one of the things that you said are big factors that affect your being able to stay in work, if any, would you say is the most important?

Q71
Apart from the things I have asked about, is there anything else that has had a big affect on how difficult it is for you to stay in work?
1   Yes   ASK Q72
2   No    END
8   Don’t know END

(IF Q71=Yes)
Q72 What else has had a big affect?
PROBE FULLY: And what else?

END
List of Shuffle Pack A statements (for those not in work)

H I have difficulties due to my health condition/disability
P I am not sure I would be better off financially in work than I am on benefits
B My parent(s) wouldn’t like it if I worked
E I would have problems with transport to and from work
J My confidence is low at the moment
N I haven’t got the qualifications or experience to get the kind of job I would want
S Employers aren’t very family-friendly
K I want to look after my child(ren) myself/at home
R I would need a job where I could take time off at short notice to look after my child(ren)
L I care for someone who has a health condition, disability or behavioural difficulties
X I am not prepared to leave my child or children in the care of anyone other than my family or close friends while I work
A My child/children wouldn’t like me to work
G There are few suitable job opportunities in the local area
Q There isn’t enough suitable, affordable childcare around here
Z I have personal or family troubles that need to be sorted out
Y I am concerned about leaving the security of Benefits
T My family or close friends are not able/ live too far away to provide childcare
M I am worried I will not have enough time with my children

List of Shuffle Pack B statements (for those who have entered work recently)

(A) I have problems with transport to and from work
(B) I am worried I do not have enough time with my children
(C) I am not sure that I am better off financially in work
(D) I hadn’t anticipated all the extra things I would need to spend money on now that I’m in work
(E) I have difficulties working due to my health condition/disability
(F) My child/children don’t like me working
(G) My (ex)partner/husband does not like me working
(H) My parent(s) don’t like me working
(I) My confidence has taken a knock since I started work
(J) There isn’t enough suitable, affordable childcare around here
(K) My child/children are not happy in childcare while I’m at work
(J) I’m not confident my childcare arrangements will continue
(L) My employer is not very family-friendly
(M) I am finding it difficult to adjust to having money coming in every month rather than every week
(N) There is a lot of pressure in my present job to work longer hours, stay late or do overtime
(O) I find it stressful combining work and family life
(P) I can’t see this job going anywhere, there are no promotion prospects
(Q) I am not enjoying working as much as I thought I would

Note that the shuffle pack B statements and corresponding questions in section J above were not cognitively tested.
References


