Incacity Benefit reforms – Pathways to Work Pilots performance and analysis

Billy Blyth

A report of research carried out by Work, Welfare and Poverty Directorate, Disability and Work Division on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions
Contents

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................. v
The Author ........................................................................................................................ vi
Summary ............................................................................................................................ 1

1 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 3
   1.1 Policy context ........................................................................................................... 3
   1.2 The data .................................................................................................................. 6
   1.3 Administrative data and the evaluation programme ............................................. 6

2 Headline statistics – cumulative to August 2005 ............................................................ 7
   2.1 Starts ....................................................................................................................... 7
   2.2 Work Focused Interviews and Screening Tool .................................................... 7
   2.3 Choices .................................................................................................................... 8
   2.4 Job entries and Return to Work Credit ................................................................. 8
   2.5 Incapacity Benefit leavers .................................................................................... 8
   2.6 Mandatory extension to existing customers (data to July 2005) ...................... 8

3 IB caseload in Pathways to Work districts .................................................................... 9
   3.1 Incapacity Benefit off-flows ................................................................................ 9
   3.2 Incapacity Benefit caseload .................................................................................. 10

4 Performance and analysis ............................................................................................. 11
   4.1 Scope ..................................................................................................................... 11
   4.2 Pathways starts ....................................................................................................... 11
   4.3 WFI activity (initial WFIs) ...................................................................................... 11
   4.4 Sanctions (based on management information) ................................................... 13
   4.5 The Choices package ............................................................................................. 14
   4.6 Job entries and Return to Work Credit ................................................................. 16
   4.7 In Work Support (based on management information) ...................................... 17

5 Extension to existing customers (data to July) .............................................................. 19
Appendix A  Pathways to Work Pilots evaluation database – data sources .. 21
Appendix B  Published evaluation reports .......................................................... 23

List of tables
Table 1.1  Pathways to Work roll out schedule .............................................. 5

List of figures
Figure 3.1  IB six month off-flow rates ............................................................... 9
Figure 3.2  Change in IB caseload size – indexed to October 2002 ............ 10
Figure 4.1  WFI activity for Pathways benefit IB claimants ...................... 12
Figure 4.2  Total repeat WFI s by month .................................................. 13
Figure 4.3  Sanctions activity ........................................................................ 13
Figure 4.4  Choices programme starts....................................................... 14
Figure 4.5  Proportion of NDDP and CMP customers that had been screened out ................................................................. 15
Figure 4.6  Choices programme take-up ................................................. 15
Figure 4.7  Pathways job entries in month by existing (voluntary) or new customers .................................................. 16
Figure 4.8  Referrals and starts to In Work Support ................................ 17
Figure 5.1  WFI s attended by stock extension customers ....................... 20
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The Author

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Summary

This report provides analysis of performance of the Pathways to Work Pilots. In summary it shows:

- Evidence on the performance of the Pathways to Work Pilots is very encouraging. There are indications of around an eight percentage point increase in the Incapacity Benefit (IB) six month off-flow rates in the Pilot districts (see Figure 3.1). It is not yet possible to be certain that these additional exits from benefit all relate to entries to employment. However, there is no evidence that the additional off-flows are disproportionately caused by transfers to other benefits.

- There are early indications that this appears to be leading to a reduction in incapacity benefit caseload sizes in the Pilot districts, although further analysis will be needed to establish causal links with Pathways.

- To date, there have now been over 19,500 job entries from Pathways to Work customers. Furthermore, the number of Jobcentre Plus Target job entries for people with health conditions and disabilities in the Pilot districts has increased at a greater rate than in the rest of the country.

- Following the initial Work Focused Interview (WFI), take-up of elements of the Choices package is over 21 per cent. There have now been around 17,700 starts to the various elements of the Choices package, with 7,500 referrals to the Condition Management Programmes (CMP), around 75 per cent of which have had an initial assessment with the CMP provider; and 8,500 New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) registrations.

- The comparison for NDDP is quite positive. In Jobcentre Plus integrated offices NDDP take-up following the WFI is approximately four per cent, whereas in Pathways it is substantially higher, with around ten per cent of all people attending the initial WFI going on register with NDDP.

- Since 7 February, over 13,600 WFIs have been conducted as part of the extension to existing customers, with 420 NDDP registrations, 1,180 referrals to other Choices elements and 210 recorded job entries. The Pilots appear to be on schedule to call in all eligible customers by March 2006.
1 Introduction

In October 2003, based on proposals outlined in the Green Paper ‘Pathways to Work: Helping People into Employment’ (2002) changes to Incapacity Benefit (IB) were introduced on a pilot basis in three Jobcentre Plus districts. A further four districts became part of the Pilot in April 2004. This is being expanded to include a further 14 districts in three phases from 31 October 2005, so that the changes will affect a third of the country by October 2006. This report gives an overview of activity and performance in the seven Pilot districts.

1.1 Policy context

The Government’s welfare to work programmes have sought to improve the lives of those receiving out of work benefits by helping them move into work. The significant progress made in reducing both unemployment and the number of lone parents on Income Support (IS) had not been matched for people with a health condition or disability. Despite the introduction of interventions like the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP), aimed specifically at people with a health condition or disability who currently do not actively participate in the labour market, the number of people on IB has, until recently, continued to slowly increase. IB1 customers make up the largest group of economically inactive people of working age in Great Britain, with 2.7 million people of working age currently receiving IB. This number has grown significantly since the 1970s, although there has been a small but significant fall over the last year.

The Pathways to Work Pilots are central to the Government’s aim of reducing the rates of customers moving onto, and remaining on IB. The new package is intended to refocus customers on the prospects of returning to work through a combination of Work Focused Interviews (WFIs) and various associated services and benefits. The main elements of the Pilots are as follows:

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1 This includes people in receipt of the following out-of-work benefits: IB, IS on the grounds of incapacity and Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA). It does not include recipients of Statutory Sick Pay (SSP).
• New specialist teams of specially trained IB Personal Advisers (IBPAs), as well as Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) and work psychologists, have been set up to advise and support people directly.

• As in all Jobcentre Plus integrated offices, all customers making a claim to an incapacity benefit must attend an initial WFI eight weeks after making their claim\(^2\), except in cases where the WFI is deferred or waived. Non-attendance at this or any subsequent mandatory interviews can result in deductions from benefit (sanctions).

• Many customers then go on to attend a further five mandatory WFIs at roughly four-week intervals. The customers who are not mandated into the further WFI process are: a) those who are exempted as a result of the Personal Capability Assessment (PCA) (see below); and b) those judged as being most likely to return to work without additional help. This judgement is made by way of a Screening Tool (see below).

• In order to satisfy the requirements for receiving an incapacity benefit, a customer must undergo a PCA. In most cases in the Pathways Pilot areas, this process is fast-tracked and should be complete within 12 weeks of the claim being made, so that the results should be available in time for the second compulsory WFI. In cases where the customer is assessed as having a severe illness or disability, they will be exempted from participation in the further mandatory WFI process. In the cases of the most extreme illness or disability, the customer is exempted from participation in the PCA process and also from the further mandatory WFI process.

• At the initial WFI, the Screening Tool\(^3\) is applied to everyone except those who have been exempted as a result of their PCA. Those who are screened out by the Screening Tool have no further mandatory involvement with the Pathways process as they are deemed least likely to need additional help, but they may participate on a voluntary basis. Those who are not screened out must go on to attend a further five WFIs at roughly four-week intervals (if they remain on IB).

• The Choices package is available to all Pathways customers. This is a range of programme provision aimed at improving labour market readiness and opportunities. Key aspects of Choices are the NDDP and the Condition Management Programme (CMP). The CMPs are run in co-operation with local health providers with the aim of helping the customer manage their disability or health condition.

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\(^2\) This has been the case since the Pathways Pilots commenced in October 2003, whereas nationally, the timing of the WFI has only recently been moved from the first week of the claim to the eighth week.

\(^3\) Screening Tool: Web-base questionnaire into which Personal Advisers (PAs) input claimants’ answers. These answers are then converted into a score that estimates the probability of the customer still being out of work in 12 months time without further mandatory activity.
• **Return to Work Credit (RTWC)** – customers who enter employment qualify for a weekly payment of £40 per week for twelve months if their salary is below £15,000 per year and they are working at least 16 hours per week.

• IBPAs have access to an **Advisers’ Discretion Fund (ADF)**. This allows them to make awards of up to £100 per customer (up until April 2005 it was £300) to support activities that can improve the likelihood of a person finding or taking up a job (for example, purchasing new clothes to attend interviews).

• **In Work Support (IWS)** – this is a programme of provision which is contracted out to specific providers (and includes one or more of the following elements: mentoring, a job coach, occupational health support, in-depth support, financial advice/debt counselling and an aftercare service) rather than the other forms of in-work support which may be provided by PAs and/or NDDP Job Brokers.

• Existing incapacity benefit customers whose claim commenced prior to the rollout of Pathways are entitled to access all the support available in Pathways on a voluntary basis.

**Extension to existing customers:** from 7 February 2005, Pilot districts began to call in existing customers with a benefit claim duration of approximately one to three years for a series of **three mandatory WFIs** to take place at six week intervals. These customers have access to the full range of Choices provision as well as RTWC and ADF.

Table 1.1 shows how Pathways has been rolled out and plans for future rollout up to October 2006.

### Table 1.1 Pathways to Work roll out schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase</th>
<th>Districts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pilots phase 1</strong></td>
<td>Bridgend Rhondda Cynon &amp; Taff, Derbyshire and Renfrewshire Inverclyde Argyll &amp; Bute. (3 districts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(commenced October 2003)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pilots phase 2</strong></td>
<td>Essex, Gateshead &amp; South Tyneside, Lancashire East and Somerset. (4 districts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(commenced April 2004)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expansions phase 1</strong></td>
<td>Cumbria, Glasgow, Lancashire West and Tees Valley (4 districts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(commenced October 2005)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expansions phase 2</strong></td>
<td>Barnsley Rotherham &amp; Doncaster, City of Sunderland, County Durham, Lanarkshire &amp; East Dumbarton, Liverpool &amp; Wirral, Greater Manchester Central and Swansea Bay &amp; West Wales (7 districts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(commencing April 2006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expansions phase 3</strong></td>
<td>Eastern Valleys, Greater Mersey, Staffordshire (3 districts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(commencing October 2006)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4 This report is based on the seven Pilot districts in the first two phases. There is no useful information available yet from the Pilots launched in October 2005.
1.2 The data

This report contains data up to and including August 2005 (unless otherwise stated). Some of the data given for more recent months in this report may be subject to revisions in future months as more complete benefits data becomes available. In addition to giving in-month statistics on key aspects of the Pathways process, this report includes analyses of activity by month of inflow, which gives a better picture of how customers flow through the process.

The majority of the data used in this report is referred to within the Department as Monitoring Information. It is produced from the Department’s administrative data systems and is validated and cleansed, with erroneous data items being removed to ensure a robust and more consistent picture over time.

Where Monitoring Information is not available, management information is used to give an indication of performance. Management information is not validated or cleansed and is therefore not as robust as Monitoring Information. It will be clearly stated where management information is used within this report. See Appendix A for details of data sources.

1.3 Administrative data and the evaluation programme

The Department’s administrative data is used to monitor the performance of Pathways to Work and additionally it is used as part of the comprehensive programme of evaluation\(^5\) that will deliver the detailed assessment of the outcomes, impact and cost benefit analysis of Pathways to Work. The data is used as part of the analysis and also supports the evidence gathered by the research.

\(^5\) The evaluation is being conducted by a consortium of organisations led by the Policy Studies Institute and includes the National Centre for Social Research, the Social Policy Research Unit, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, Mathematica and David Greenberg of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. A list of reports from the evaluation is included in Appendix B.
2 Headline statistics – cumulative to August 2005

2.1 Starts

148,000 starts\(^6\), of which:
- 135,400 are new customers (eligible for the mandatory process);
- 11,200\(^7\) are existing customers (wholly voluntary participation);
- 82,500\(^8\) of the new customers have a benefit claim identified.

2.2 Work Focused Interviews and Screening Tool

- 44,500 Initial WFIs for new/repeat customers;
- Screening Tool applied in 29,100 initial WFIs (63 per cent);
- 33 per cent of those screened have been screened out of the further mandatory WFI process;
- 34,500 mandatory WFIs beyond the initial one;
- 12,700 voluntary WFIs.

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\(^6\) A start is defined as any instance of someone contacting Jobcentre Plus in order to claim IB, as recorded by the computer system used within Jobcentre Plus offices.

\(^7\) This does not sum to the total because there is a very small proportion that cannot yet be allocated to either group due to the lag in the availability of the benefits data.

\(^8\) Complete benefits data is only available up to April 2005.
2.3 Choices

17,700 starts to Choices programmes, of which:

- 8,500 NDDP registrations;
- 7,500 CMP referrals;
- 1,700 other programme starts.

2.4 Job entries and Return to Work Credit

19,500 job entries, of which:

- 15,100 for new customers;
- 4,000 for existing customers;
- 4,600 are RTWC awards which are not otherwise recorded on Jobcentre Plus systems.

2.5 Incapacity Benefit leavers

- Around an eight percentage point increase in the IB six month off-flow rates in the Pilot districts.

2.6 Mandatory extension to existing customers (data to July 2005)

- 22,700 eligible customers;
- 13,600 WFIs attended in total;
- 2,050 customers have attended all three WFIs;
- 420 NDDP registrations;
- 800 CMP referrals;
- 380 referrals to other programmes.

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9 Work Based Learning for Adults (WBLA) (England), Training for Work (TFW) (Scotland), Programme Centres, Work Trials, Work Preparation, Workstep and Access to Work.

10 This does not sum to the total because there is a very small proportion that cannot yet be allocated to either group.
3 IB caseload in Pathways to Work districts

3.1 Incapacity Benefit off-flows

There is an increasingly clear indication that Pathways is having an impact on IB off-flows. There is an increase of around eight percentage points in the six month off-flow rate in Pathways Pilots compared to other offices nationally (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 IB six month off-flow rates

The off-flow rates presented are produced from the National Benefits Database. This does not include a proportion of short-term IB claims, therefore, the off-flows presented will be lower than actual rates; however, trends over time will be consistent.
Positive though it may be, this is not yet conclusive evidence of an overall impact on off-flows or employment – for example, the gap may reduce in later months (i.e. nine- and twelve-month off-flows) and this will be assessed in future. However, the *Destinations of Benefit Leavers 2004*\(^\text{12}\) survey shows that 56 per cent of IB leavers in Pathways districts enter employment of 16 hours or more. This is consistent with the national IB figure. This indicates that the increase in off-flows is not resulting in a disproportionately high movement of people onto other benefits.

### 3.2 Incapacity Benefit caseload

Another encouraging finding is the early indication that this increase in off-flows is leading to a reduction in total number of IB recipients in the Pilot districts (Chart 2). There was already a slight decline in the IB caseload in the Phase 1 districts, apparent from early 2003 onwards, but this seems to have speeded up following the introduction of Pathways. The IB caseload in the Phase 2 districts, which was following the national trend much more closely, began to decline following the introduction of Pathways. Although very encouraging, this should be treated with caution as further analysis will be needed to establish any direct causal links with the Pathways Pilots.

![Figure 3.2 Change in IB caseload size – indexed to October 2002](image)

\(^{12}\) DWP Research Report No. 244.
4 Performance and analysis

4.1 Scope

This section addresses the Pathways to Work process, as it has been operating in the Pilot districts since October 2003, as described in Section 1.1. The extension to existing customers, which commenced in February 2005, follows a slightly different process and is discussed separately in Chapter 5.

4.2 Pathways starts

There were a total of 147,970 starts\(^{13}\) to the Pathways to Work process up to the end of August 2005. Of these 147,970 starts, 135,440 are currently identifiable as new customers, eligible to be mandated into the process and 11,200 are currently identifiable as voluntary participants\(^{14}\). There are a further 1,330 that we cannot yet allocate to either group\(^{15}\). Starts appear to have achieved a steady state of around 7,000 per month.

4.3 WFI activity (initial WFIs)

There have been a total of 44,500 initial WFIs for new customers by August 2005. At the initial WFI, 19,600 of these customers have been mandated to attend the further five WFIs, following the assessment produced by the Screening Tool.

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\(^{13}\) A start is defined as any instance of someone contacting Jobcentre Plus in order to claim IB, as recorded by the computer system used within Jobcentre Plus offices.

\(^{14}\) Not required to enter the mandatory process, either because they are existing customers or due to their age (under 18 or over 60).

\(^{15}\) The reason we are currently unable to allocate these cases is that benefit details are incomplete for recent months but it is likely that a large proportion of these will eventually be identified as voluntary customers.
Approximately 43 per cent of all benefit claims within Pathways result in at least one mandatory WFI being attended. On first consideration this figure may seem to be rather low, however as Figure 4.1 shows, in the majority of cases where there has been no WFI, this has been either because the customer did not pursue the claim, it ended before the eight week point, or it has not yet reached the eight week point. In a small proportion of cases, the initial WFI has been waived or deferred. We estimate there are around ten per cent of benefit claimants whose progress or WFI status cannot currently be described. This ten per cent is likely to be made up of a combination of three situations: 1) no Initial WFI was ever booked even though it should have been; 2) the initial WFI has taken place but has not been properly recorded, and 3) the customer has failed (so far) to attend the WFI.

**Figure 4.1  WFI activity for Pathways benefit IB claimants**

Voluntary WFIs: There have been a total of 12,660 voluntary WFIs recorded, to the end of August 2005. Of these, 3,360 were with voluntary customers\(^\text{16}\) and the remaining 9,300 were with mandated new/repeat customers. Around 19 per cent of screened out customers go on to attend a voluntary WFI.

Repeat WFIs: There have been a total of 34,510 repeat WFIs to the end of August (Figure 4.2). The underlying trend appears to have levelled off at around 2,500 to 3,000 per month.

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\(^{16}\) Voluntary customers: mainly existing customers but also includes new customers not mandated because of their age (over 60, under 18).
4.4 Sanctions (based on management information)

There have been 730 decisions to consider sanctions since the start of Pathways and 370 sanctions imposed.\textsuperscript{17} The number of sanctions imposed equates to around 0.4 per cent of all benefit starts in Pathways.

\textsuperscript{17} Please note: Sanctions imposed data is only available from December 2004 onwards.
4.5 The Choices package

There were total of 17,670 starts to Choices package programmes to the end of August. This is broken down as 8,540 NDDP registrations, 7,490 CMP referrals and 1,650 other programme\textsuperscript{18} starts.

Choices starts in the most recent four months appear to be running at a slightly lower level than in previous four months (see Figure 4.4). This slight dip is attributable to the number of CMP referrals and coincides with a change in the way CMP referrals are being recorded.

![Figure 4.4 Choices programme starts](image)

Evidence suggests that advisers are using NDDP and CMP to address the needs of relatively distinct groups of customers; there is little overlap between customers being referred to CMP, who tend to be more difficult to help and are expected to take longer to get jobs, and NDDP registrants, who tend to be nearer the labour market. This is reinforced by recent analysis of results from the Screening Tool, which show that NDDP customers are more than twice as likely to belong to the screened out group (closer to the labour market) than CMP customers (see Figure 4.5). The Screening Tool results also show that NDDP customers were more than twice as likely to state that they expect to return to work within the next six months (64 per cent) compared to CMP customers (30 per cent).

\textsuperscript{18} WBLA (England), TFW (Scotland), Programme Centres, Work Trials, Work Preparation, Workstep and Access to Work.
Figure 4.5 Proportion of NDDP and CMP customers that had been screened out

Figure 4.6 shows the underlying take-up rate following an initial WFI for Choices package programmes overall. As it can, in some cases, be many months after the initial WFI before customers take up some sort of Choices provision, this figure only considers people who started Pathways up to 31 January 2005. The figure shows an overall take-up rate of over 21 per cent after nine months.

Figure 4.6 Choices programme take-up

The comparison for NDDP is quite positive. In Jobcentre Plus integrated offices, NDDP take-up following the WFI is approximately four per cent, whereas in Pathways it is substantially higher, with around ten per cent of all people attending the initial WFI going on register with NDDP.
4.6 Job entries and Return to Work Credit

There were a total of 19,550 Pathways job entries to the end of August; 14,970 recorded job entries and 4,600 RTWC awards which are not otherwise recorded on Jobcentre Plus systems. Of the 14,970 recorded job entries (see Figure 4.7), 11,710 were from the mandatory customer group (new customers) and 3,010 were from the voluntary customer group (existing customers). This means that jobs from voluntary customers are making a significant contribution to Pathways performance.

This appears to be having an impact on Jobcentre Plus job entry target performance for customers with health conditions and disabilities. Job entry target performance in the Pilot districts increased by around two-thirds in the twelve months following the roll-out of Pathways.

Figure 4.7 Pathways job entries in month by existing (voluntary) or new customers

RTWC: There have been a total of 11,500 RTWC awards. These break down as: 7,900 from the mandatory customer group and 3,260 from voluntary customers. Of these, 11,500 RTWC awards, there are 4,600 awards that we cannot yet match to a job entry.

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19 This does not sum to the total because there is a very small proportion that cannot yet be allocated to either group. Note: there are none of these ‘unable to allocate’ cases are in earlier months where we have more complete data.

20 This does not sum to the total because there is a very small proportion that cannot yet be allocated to either group.
4.7 In Work Support (based on management information)

There have been 1,570 referrals to IWS and of these, 1,120 (71 per cent) have taken up the offer of this support so far. As Figure 4.8 shows, the numbers of referrals and starts have been increasing fairly steadily, following the introduction of IWS in October 2004.

Figure 4.8 Referrals and starts to In Work Support
5 Extension to existing customers (data to July)

The extension of Pathways to existing customers commenced on 7 February. Lists of potentially eligible customers were produced from a scan of live benefits data and were distributed to the Pilot districts. The total number of customers on the scan was 33,970. Of these, 11,320 have so far been identified as being exempt from the process either because they were PCA exempt or for other reasons such as age (under 18 or over 60) and being IB credits only cases. This leaves 22,650 eligible customers, although some of these will have left benefit before they are called in for the mandatory WFiS. A second scan with approximately 3,000 cases was distributed to districts in July.

To the end of July, for the 22,650 eligible customers, 21,580 WFiS have been booked, of these, 13,640 have so far been attended (7,840 first WFiS, 3,750 second WFiS and 2,050 third WFiS) and 2,860 have been recorded as failing to attend. There have been 420 NDDP registrations, 800 referrals to CMP and 380 referrals to other programmes, with 210 recorded job entries in total (including NDDP broker job entries). It is still too early at this stage to draw any robust conclusions regarding outcomes, given that only 2,050 have completed all three WFiS.
The process has started, i.e. the first WFI has been booked, for 10,700 of the 22,650 eligible customers (47 per cent). This means that the Pilots appear to be on schedule to call in all eligible customers by March 2006.
Appendix A
Pathways to Work Pilots evaluation database – data sources

The Monitoring Information used in this report mainly comes from the Pathways Evaluation Database. This database records actions for all individuals who enter the Pathways process, which makes it possible to track their progress through the process. This means that in addition to recording activity by month, we can also use this data to track the progress of cohorts of individuals through the process. The Pathways Evaluation Database is derived from a number of sources including: Jobcentre Plus database (LMS), the 100 per cent National Benefits Database, the Pathways to Work Screening Tool data and the NDDP Evaluation Database.

**Source data:**

- Jobcentre Plus Database (LMS)
- Benefits data (PSCS – the benefits payments system)
- Pathways to Work Pilots Screening Tool
- RTWC data. Clerical data collection (Jobcentre Plus Finance)
- NDDP Evaluation Database (NDDP Payments system)
- Workstep evaluation database
- DWP Information Directorate sustainability database

More detailed descriptions of data sources and their applications can be made available on request.
Appendix B
Published evaluation reports


Incapacity Benefit reforms – the Personal Adviser role and practices: Stage Two, National Centre for Social Research, DWP report No. 278, 2005.

Reports are available from these sites on the DWP internet sites: