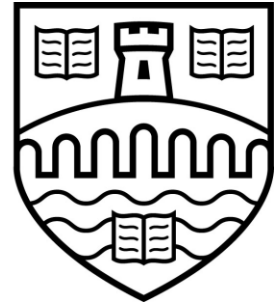


**UNIVERSITY of
STIRLING**



**POLICY, PROVISION AND PRACTICE
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT
PROGRAMMES BETWEEN SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND**

BY

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A Thesis submitted for the degree of
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Declaration

1. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted for any other degree.
2. This dissertation is the result of my own independent work and investigation, except where otherwise stated.
3. I understand the nature of academic misconduct, and I am aware of the University's policy <http://www.stir.ac.uk/academicpolicy/handbook/assessment/#q-8>
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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis was to conduct a comparative study of employability support programmes in England and Scotland, which explores policy, provision, and practices. Specifically, the study focused on the Work and Health Programme in England and Fair Start Scotland, introduced in 2018, both of which are voluntary programmes and outsourced to external organisations.

The interpretivist and qualitative approach employed in the study involved analysing the policies, provision, and practice of these programmes. An analytical framework was developed to compare the programme structures, alongside the application of Street Level Bureaucracy theory. To further explore the influence of policy, semi-structured interviews were conducted with frontline workers to understand their experiences and perspectives.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the employability support programmes in Scotland and England provide personalised support through a similar participant journey. However, significant differences exist between the two countries in terms of governance, programme length, procurement, and remuneration. The minimum service standards set by both governments have a notable impact on the participant journey, with frontline advisers exhibiting varying levels of autonomy and accountability. The study also reveals that the minimum service standards influence the provision of personalised support, leading to frustration and resistance among some frontline advisers due to increased bureaucracy that diluted personalisation. While both programmes utilise Capability and Human Capital Development approaches, the length of the programmes may not adequately address complex health conditions and fail to recognise alternative contributions beyond paid employment.

This study is original in its examination of employability support programmes in two countries with a shared national welfare strategy but separate programmes, addressing a research gap. It contributes to existing literature by providing an in-depth exploration of the policies, provision and practices of employment support programmes. Furthermore, it contributes to understanding the experiences of non-traditional Street Level Bureaucrats, adding to the debates surrounding the challenges of providing public services in a non-public sector domain.

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Acronyms

AET	Administration Earnings Threshold
CCS	Crown Commercial Services
CET	Conditionality Earnings Threshold
CSS	Customer Service Standards
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ESA	Employment Support Allowance
FSS	Fair Start Scotland
IB	Incapacity Benefit
ILO	International Labour Organisation
JCP	Jobcentre Plus
JETS	Job Entry Target Scheme
JSA	Job Seekers Allowance
KDI	Key Delivery Indicator (s)
LTU	Long Term Unemployed
NPG	New Public Governance
NPM	New Public Management
PA	Public Administration
PRaP	Providers Referral and Payment
SETS	Scottish Employability Tracking System
SLB	Street Level Bureaucrat
TPO	Third Party Organisation
TSO	Third Sector Organisation
UC	Universal Credit
WCA	Work Capability Assessment
WTW	Welfare to Work
WP	Work Programme
WHP	Work and Health Programme

Chapter 1 Introduction

Unemployment continues to be a critical issue for successive governments in the United Kingdom (UK) as extensive research indicates that employment improves health, well-being, and purpose but also contributes to social stability and long-term economic growth (Bell and Heitmueller 2009; Weston and Manning 2012; Brown et al. 2015; Voßemer et al. 2018; Roex and Rozer 2017; Sage 2018). Various solutions have been proposed to tackle the issues of unemployment aimed explicitly at disadvantaged groups and those facing barriers to accessing the labour market. The introduction of employment support programmes is one such initiative that aims to provide personalised support, overcome barriers and enhance the employability of job seekers (McQuaid and Lindsay 2005; Davies 2008; Egdell et al. 2016). Employment support programmes play a significant role in government policies which empower individuals to secure and sustain employment. Given the complex political and labour landscape currently in the UK, understanding the factors that shape and influence employment support programmes, provides valuable knowledge for practitioners and academics at a national and international level.

Many studies have explored the effectiveness of personalised services in the public sector, such as learning disabilities (Duffy 2003) in the education sector or mental health (Larsen et al. 2013) and substance abuse (Mann and Hermann 2010) in the health sector. The move towards providing targeted personalised support for job seekers in the welfare sector who are identified as being in a disadvantaged group was consolidated by New Labour's New Deal Programmes (NDP) in 1998 (Toerien et al. 2013). Jobcentre Plus (JCP) staff delivered personalised support for these programmes until 2010. The coalition government elected in 2010 signalled a change as to how employment support for job seekers would be provided and crucially, who would provide this. Since the early nineties, the trend towards contracting out public services from public sector departments has gained momentum in the UK with the adoption of New Public Management (NPM) processes (Hood 1991; Considine et al. 2017). The intensification of NPM enabled the introduction of the Work Programme (WP) in 2011 and led to personalised employment support contracted out to the public, private and third sectors.

The marketisation of public services has changed Lipsky's (2010) original definition of a traditional Street Level Bureaucrat (SLBs) as public sector workers delivering Government policy. The creation of quasi-markets has moved the delivery of personalised employment support from government departments to a diverse range of providers from various sectors, that include the public, private and third sectors (Pollitt and Boukaert 2011; Mori 2020).

A significant body of literature has examined the WP which was the last Welfare to Work (WTW) initiative implemented in Great Britain between 2011-2016. The WP aimed to provide personalised support to job seekers, initially through public employment services such as JCP or contracted-out organisations known as Prime Contractors. Several concerns have been identified, including the difficulties faced by Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) delivering employment support programmes (Davies 2008; Aiken and Bode 2009; McMillan 2010; Rees et al. 2013; Damm 2014; Egdell et al. 2016; Heins and Bennett 2016). Examples have highlighted the disproportionate treatment of job seekers leading to 'parking' and 'creaming' (Pattison 2012; Rees et al. 2014; Carter and Whitworth 2014) and variations to services provided by frontline staff (Bovens and Zouridis 2002; Finn 2011; Johansson 2012; Hupe and Buffat 2013; Rice et al. 2018). These studies explored that the effective delivery of personalised support and services was essential to the success of job seekers and highlighted the need for ongoing research into this crucial area.

In 2018, the WP was replaced by Fair Start Scotland (FSS) and the Work and Health Programme (WHP) in England (Gov. Scot 2016a, 2016b; Gov. Scot 2017a, 2017b; Powell 2020). The programmes were introduced at a time when unemployment was at the lowest recorded rate since the 1970s, and subsequently, this was reflected in the funding provided. The funding for the programmes was significantly reduced, with only £130 million allocated to both programmes combined, compared to the £540.8 million allocated to the WP in 2015/16 (Powell 2020). Due to the devolvement of employability policy, there is a current lack of research that compares employment support programmes in countries with shared welfare policies and presents a unique opportunity to explore this area. This study seeks to fill this gap by exploring how employment support programmes policies differ and how the frontline advisers of Prime Contractors or sub-contractors provide and put into practice personalised support to working-age job seekers. It employs a thematic approach that compares, contrasts and analyses the policy, alongside the provision and practice of frontline advisers who are employed by WHP or FSS Service Providers, which are Prime Contractors or sub-contracted. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with frontline managers and staff to understand how personalised support is provided and to identify factors that may impact the effectiveness of services. Although the study does not focus on how Service Providers have handled the Covid-19 pandemic, it recognises that the pandemic has influenced the provision of personalised employment support by organisations to some extent. The next section presents the aim of the research and outlines the objectives to meet this.

1.1 Research aims and objectives

1.1.1 Research aim

The aim of the research is to compare employability support programmes between England and Scotland to identify and analyse the differences and similarities in their policies, provision and practice.

1.1.2 Research objectives

To compare and contrast the policies of the two main employability support programmes in Scotland and England.

1. What are the policies regarding employability support programmes in Scotland and England?
2. How do the policies of employability support programmes contrast between Scotland and England?

To compare and analyse the provision of personalised and tailored employment support between Scotland and England.

1. What are the similarities and differences in the provision of employment support programmes between Scotland and England?
2. How do the similarities and differences influence the provision of employment support programmes between Scotland and England?

To compare and analyse Street Level Bureaucrats practices to provide employability support between Scotland and England.

1. What are the similarities and differences in the practices of Street Level Bureaucrats providing personalised and tailored employment support programmes in Scotland and England?
2. How do the similarities and differences influence the practices of Street Level Bureaucrats providing personalised and tailored employment support programmes between Scotland and England?

1.2 Structure of thesis

The structure of the thesis comprises of nine chapters and will discuss the following:

Chapter Two - This chapter reviews the academic literature, which explores the background to New Public Management and New Public Governance and how these have influenced employability support programmes in the Welfare to Work arena. Finally, the literature review explores the literature relating to the characteristics of Street Level Bureaucrats and how they put policy into practice at the frontline whilst operating in the public domain.

Chapter Three - This chapter provides the details of the welfare process and context, which facilitates the majority of eligible participants identified by Jobcentre Plus for referral to employability programmes in Scotland and England.

Chapter Four - This chapter provides the philosophical and methodological approach taken towards the research, including data sample, selection and analysis.

Chapter Five - This chapter explains the development of a systematic framework used to compare and contrast the policy approach taken to the Work and Health Programme (WHP) in England and Fair Start Scotland (FSS)

Chapter Six - This chapter analysed the interviews obtained from the WHP and FSS frontline advisers related to the access and assessment of participants referred to the programmes.

Chapter Seven - This chapter analysed the interviews from the WHP and FSS frontline advisers relating to the collaboration and in-work support provided to participants engaged in the programmes.

Chapter Eight - This chapter discusses the findings and puts this in the context of current academic literature in the three areas explored, policy, provision and practice.

Chapter Nine - This chapter concludes the thesis, summarises the findings and discusses the limitations of the research.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

To understand employability support programmes and how they operate within Great Britain (GB), it is essential to identify the mechanisms that influence policy development, alongside the people who put these into practice. The literature review is structured into five sections. Section two has focused on the background of neoliberalism and New Public Management (NPM) which provides an overview of the quasi-marketisation of public services. The third section explores the marketisation of public services and discusses the role of Prime Contractors, the key actors in providing employment support services. The fourth section explores the concept of personalisation and personalised services in public services. Whilst the fifth and sixth sections examine the accessibility and eligibility to public services. Finally, the seventh section focuses on Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs), which provides an understanding of how they deliver policy and provide public services. Together, these sections provide a clear and structured framework which explores the key themes in this area and identifies the actors involved who provide public services in GB.

2.2 Ideologies of policy and practice

This section provides an overview of the economic and political ideologies of neoliberalism and New Public Management (NPM) and their influence on government, policies and practices. The review highlights the dominance of NPM in public sector management and governance, as well as its continued relevance and influence. The impact of NPM on public sector organisations, including changes in management practices and the adoption of market-based mechanisms, are discussed alongside the historical background of NPM, the introduction of NPM, the diffusion of NPM and the critiques of NPM. Finally, this section will discuss the concept of New Public Governance (NPG) which has been acknowledged as a successor of NPM.

2.2.1 Historical background of New Public Management

Neoliberalism and NPM are both economic and political ideologies that have influenced the shaping of government policies and practices. The dominant economic ideology of Neoliberalism emerged in the seventies and eighties as a reaction to perceived failures of Keynesian economics and the welfare state. Neoliberalism emphasises the importance of free markets and minimal government intervention, while NPM is an approach that emphasises the

use of private-sector management techniques and outsourcing of public-sector services (Hood 1991; Alonso et al. 2011). The dominance of NPM as an area of research is highlighted in a systematic study undertaken by Funck and Karlsson (2020), which found 299 academic articles were published between 1991 and 2016.

The NPM approach has influenced public sector management and the market-based delivery of public services (Drechsler 2005; Osborne 2006; Pollitt 2007; Lapsley 2008), have been the subject of several studies. Osborne (2006) argues that NPM has brought about a fundamental shift in how public services are managed and delivered, focusing on efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability. Similarly, Pollitt (2007) highlights the impact of NPM on public sector organisations, including changes in management practices and the adoption of market-based mechanisms. Drechsler (2005) and Lapsley (2008) explore the effects of NPM on public sector accounting and financial management practices. Overall, the diverse range of academic research on NPM reflects its continued relevance and influence in public sector management and governance.

Further analysis by Pollitt (2007) found that NPM was a “*two-level phenomenon*” (p.110), where the high-level government approaches to reforms are implemented through a range of practices at a lower level. Similarly, De Vries and Nemeč (2013) identify NPM as having two objectives, which were to reduce civil service numbers and to improve service delivery for customers. This was marketed by Governments as being a citizen first approach by introducing a private sector-style of management and competitive contracted-out services which would improve service delivery for customers.

2.2.2 Introduction of New Public Management in the UK

Historically, the downsizing of public service staff as a way to make efficiency savings was a vital component of the Conservative Government's approach to reform the provision of public services (Thatcher 1979). The Weberian Public Administration (PA) processes in place at the time was seen by the Conservative Government as being overly bureaucratic, inefficient, and bloated (Broadbent and Laughlin 1997; Drechsler 2005; Höpfl 2006). Hyndman and Lapsley (2016) further observe that the socio-economic landscape of the time was characterised by high inflation rates and strong trade unionisation which paved the way for the intensification and justification of NPM in the 1980s.

A critical study published by Du Gay (2008) explored the rise of the term “*the establishment*” (p.83) in the eighties to describe the civil service mandarins in Whitehall. The research used

historical events and government publications, to identify that Thatcher's perception of 'over government' was based on her belief that many senior civil servants had privileged backgrounds. The study explores the narrative surrounding the negative portrayal by the Conservative Government of overly bureaucratic processes which enabled the change from PA to NPM and reforms to public service delivery and the public sector. Interestingly, the perceptions and use of the term "*the establishment*" continue in recent political discussions albeit surrounding Brexit and echo political discussions of the past. Some forty years later, several media articles have argued that Brexit was a revolt against "*the establishment*" by parts of the British public against the Conservative Government who were proactively campaigning to remain in the European Union (BBC 2016; UK in a Changing Europe 2019; Mitchell 2019).

2.2.3 Diffusion of New Public Management

Both globally and in the United Kingdom (UK), components of NPM have been implemented by governments over the last four decades. Globally, studies by Cabrero (2005) and Osbourne (2010) highlight that whilst the NPM approach has been prevalent in the UK, it is also dominant in Australia and New Zealand who each have a background of Weberian influenced Public Administration (PA). Globally, the NPM ideology was gaining momentum, most significantly in the United States of America upon the publication of "*Reinventing Government - How the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the Public Sector*" (Osbourne and Gaebler 1992). The authors presented a solution to address the issues facing the American government during a period of low public opinion and perceived mistrust by proposing a reversal of fortune through the creation of a new public service model. Osbourne and Gaebler (1992) posited that NPM was a popular choice for Governments as it would garner public support and opinion which in turn would open the gates to radical reform. Similarly, Hyndman and Lapsley (2016) concluded that NPM is not restricted solely to one country but is a worldwide trend.

To date, several studies have argued that the social, political, and economic landscape influences the diffusion of NPM and the extent to which it is activated by Governments (Christensen and Lægreid 2001; Pollitt 2007; Hyndman and Lapsley 2016). Hyndman and Lapsley (2016) demonstrate that the implementation of NPM components undergoes distinct cycles influenced by political interventions, changes in governments, or policy decisions. During the process of mutation and translation, the authors posit that NPM adapts and aligns to the needs of the organisation. Freeman (2009) concludes at the translation phase; it is dependent on the situational context in which policies are introduced. Similarly, Yanow (2003) concurs that while organisations operate at a "*rational and technical*" level, that "*local*

knowledge" (Freeman 2009, p.3) intrinsically influences behaviours. Whilst prior studies by Pollitt (2007) and Lapsley (2008, 2016) have argued that NPM components exist in organisations to some degree, they question to what degree these are operational. Therefore, the evidence suggests that the adoption of NPM components is contingent upon a combination of political, social, and economic factors and influenced by local knowledge, geography and organisational locations which exert some influence.

2.2.4 Critiques of New Public Management

Hyndman and Lapsley (2016) argue that NPM remains a dominant approach that the UK Government use to deliver public services. However, earlier research by Lapsley (2009) found that evaluating NPM performance remains challenging. Previous studies have shown that NPM views the state as a business and that the focus on efficiency and cost-cutting ignores the Government's broader social and political goals. The lack of empirical studies and the evaluation of a market-based approach and outsourcing was raised by Pollitt (2007) and Lapsley (2008) as being due to the interpretation of NPM components. Similarly, Drechsler (2005) argues that the lack of empirical studies about the effectiveness of NPM has not led to any significant productivity increase or welfare maximisation. Furthermore, Pollitt (2007) attributes the difficulty in securing empirical evidence to the ever-changing boundaries of NPM, where research needs to explore the reality in practice.

In addition to the critiques about the difficulties in evaluating NPM, Bevan and Hood (2006) and Lapsley (2008) argue that using statistics to manage performance have adverse effects when reporting back on target-driven results. The study by Lapsley (2008) on data published by Health Care Trusts found that the performance indicators of hospitals were manipulated, leading to inflated results to avoid being put under remedial measures or closure. Whilst Hood and Dixon (2016) provide an overall assessment of NPM, stating that research has been "*sector-specific*" (p.412) due to the particularities of NPM and the specific reforms it instigated, with no international comparative statistics available. As previously discussed, De Vries and Nemec (2013, p.6) observe NPM as having two objectives which are to "*improve*" service delivery for customers and to "*downsize the public service*". However, who the customers are is a question for debate, are they users of the service, the UK Government or British taxpayers who already have a negative opinion of the unemployed (Deeming 2015).

2.2.5 The rise of New Public Governance

Latterly, Osborne (2006) raised questions about the continued dominance of New Public Management (NPM) and posits that the successor to NPM is New Public Governance (NPG). According to the study, NPM was a temporary phase that bridged the gap between the traditional Public Administration (PA) and the emergent area of NPG (Bingham et al. 2005; Sorrentino et al. 2018). NPG is a more recent management philosophy that emphasises the need for greater collaboration and partnership between the public sector, private sector, and civil society (Osborne,2006; Pollitt and Boukaert 2011; Torfing and Triantafillou 2013; Sorrentino et al. 2018; McMullin 2021).

Osborne (2006) posits that NPG can be traced back to “*organisational sociology and network theory*” (p.382) and has the potential to draw on the strengths of both PA and NPM. However, the study also acknowledges that PA, NPM, and NPG are overlapping administrative models, and to assume clear start and stop dates for each of them would lead to oversimplifying the processes. This is further supported by Wiesel and Model (2014), who argue that PA is not a linear process and that there is no defined transition between one model to the other. Subsequent studies by De Vries and Nemec (2013) and Hyndman and Lapsley (2016) found that NPM remains a dominant approach in public administration. Dunleavy (2005) proposes that digital-era governance practices will also evolve the traditional NPM practices by streamlining government operations, improving decision-making processes, increasing transparency and accountability, enhancing citizen engagement and participation. Similarly, Lindsay et al. (2013) argue that “*evolving NPG-style relationships*” (p.205) promote collaborative partnerships across organisations. Nonetheless, cautions that these relationships operate within the ongoing regime of NPM that is characterised by applied contractual agreements and performance measurements.

2.2.6 Multi-level Governance

Multi-level governance (MLG) is a concept that was first introduced in the nineties by Marks (1993) which explored European integration and policy cohesion across the governments of member states (Fuentes and McQuaid 2013). Marks (2003) identified four levels of governance which were supranational, national, regional and local. However, whilst these governance levels are horizontal, Marks (1996) further recognised that the decentralisation and devolution of authority also meant that decision-making is equally delegated vertically leading to collaborative engagement (Sicilia et al. 2016; Eadson 2021; Lindsay et al. 2021) and co-production (Liddle 2018; Lindsay et al. 2018) across levels.

Bache and Flinders (2004) posit that the traditional Westminster Model (WM) as a comparative tool to understand policy implementation has slowly eroded due to the increased devolution of powers and the decentralisation of policy in the United Kingdom (UK). The research argues that whilst the WM remains culturally embedded as a hierarchical model, that MLG more accurately represents the current heterarchical landscape within the UK. More recently Russell and Serban (2020) found that the meaning attached to the WM has evolved over time and argue that term is now outdated and the language of the WM should be “retired” (p.761).

Devolution within the context of the UK has led to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland being responsible for policy development and implementation in several devolved areas. The Smith Commission (2014) resulted in the agreed devolution of employability support to Scotland. Applying the devolution of employment support policy to the MLG levels, this suggests that both the UK and Scottish Governments are national, Prime Contractors as regional and local, whilst sub-contractors are local. This illustrates both the overlapping functions of horizontal and vertical governance with the devolvement of decision making (Marks 1993, 1996). However, Lynch (2001) highlights that the UK and Scottish Governments responsible for policy implementation whilst in the European Union were “*not equal actors in the political process*”(p. 147). This somewhat contradicts the Bache and Flinders (2004) assumptions that the MLG approach supports a heterarchical approach as opposed to the hierarchical approach of the WM. Therefore, this would suggest probable tensions between the UK and Scottish Government due to the potential of inequality surrounding authority, control and decision making.

2.2.7 Summary

Neoliberalism and New Public Management (NPM) has influenced government policies and practices which have brought about a fundamental shift in how public services are delivered, such as focusing on efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability. The history of NPM in the UK has also been discussed, focusing on the Conservative Governments approach to downsizing public services during the seventies and eighties. The degree to which NPM is adapted to suit the organisation is further explored, which found that this depended upon political interventions, changes to governments, or policy decisions. This highlights the continued relevance and influence of NPM in public sector management and governance.

2.3 The marketisation of employability programmes

This literature review section examines the move towards a marketised and contracted-out business model for employability services offered to unemployed welfare recipients. The marketised and contracted-out business model for employability services for unemployed welfare recipients can be traced back to the Freud report '*Reducing Dependency, Increasing Opportunity: Options for the Future of Welfare to Work*' (2007). The report suggested that the private sector would provide better solutions than the public sector (Kaufman 2019) and considered as a catalyst to promote marketisation and public/private partnerships. This approach enabled the contracting out of employability support to external organisations to deliver "*state or state-funded services*" as part of ongoing welfare reforms (p.2). As a result, Private and Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) were invited to tender for Work Programme (WP) regional contracts and referred to as Prime Contractors (Finn 2010).

2.3.1 Marketisation and the Work Programme

The WP was the last major Welfare to Work (WTW) scheme fully implemented by the Coalition Government and launched in Great Britain (GB) between 2011 to 2016 (Finn 2010; DWP 2011; Pattison 2012). Prospective organisations, known as Prime Contractors, were invited to tender bids for contracts based on regional areas known as 'lots' and responsible for sub-contracting to specialist organisations when required (DWP 2011; Rees et al. 2013; Egdell et al. 2016). Prime Contractors delivered the WP from the private, public, and third sectors which used a payment by results model that was based on job outcomes (DWP 2011).

To fulfil the 'Big Society' vision, the Coalition Government aimed to enhance the involvement of the public, private and third sectors in the bidding processes for contracts to create a quasi-market for the delivery of employment support services (Alcock 2010; Daly 2011; Bartels et al. 2012; Curley 2013). However, this approach contradicted the original policy intent that emphasised the involvement of the private sector as "*the overwhelming majority*" of prime contractors (DWP 2011, p.3). The favouring of private sector organisations was realised when the WP was awarded to fifteen private sector organisations, two from the voluntary sector and one from the public sector to deliver.

2.3.2 Procurement and Third sector involvement

Research into the involvement of the Third Sector in the tendering process has highlighted complexities, as Rees et al. (2013) found. The study argues that Third Sector organisations (TSOs) were initially being used as "*bid candy*" (p.16) to strengthen submissions from larger private sector organisations who were hoping to win a contract as a Prime Contractor.

However, in a report commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) this was contradicted by Lane et al. (2013) and found no evidence to suggest that TSOs were used in this way.

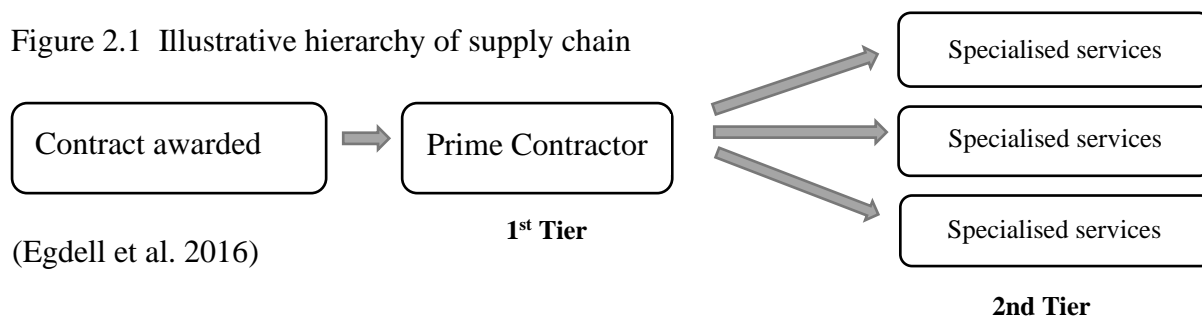
Research on the tendering process shows that TSOs operating in a business capacity faced new challenges in producing competitive bids or working in partnership with the UK Government. Aiken and Bode (2009) found that TSOs, even in partnerships with public bodies, suffered from a loss of identity and trust, as they were not considered independent of government influence. This was further highlighted by Damm (2012) during the WP, which found low levels of Third Sector engagement in public sector partnerships, particularly in Scotland and Wales. These findings were supported by Egdell et al. (2016) which questioned whether the absence of TSOs, particularly in Scotland, resulted from them being underprepared in reacting to the changes introduced by the WP business model compared to their English counterparts. These findings suggest that the involvement of TSOs in the tendering process did not fully achieve the desired outcome of enhancing the 'Big Society' vision promised by the Coalition Government.

Several studies, including Davies (2008), Aiken and Bode (2007; 2009), McMillan (2010), Damm (2012), Rees et al. (2013), and Egdell et al. (2016), have examined the involvement of TSOs to deliver employment support services as part of the WP. Heins and Bennett (2016) concluded that the quasi-markets created by the WP resulted in TSOs having to adapt and diversify to meet contractual requirements, which undermined their not-for-profit status and ethos of primarily providing services free of moral judgement (Davies 2011; Rees et al. 2013; Harrits 2018). Similarly, the findings of Egdell et al. (2016) support these concerns and that TSOs found that WP involvement changed their relationships with clients and that the focus shifted from the customer experience to organisational job outcomes.

2.3.3 Supply chain management

The creation of a marketised environment where public services have been contracted out to external providers has resulted in the creation of supply chains. This led to the development of the DWP Merlin Standard for Prime Contractors delivering the WP to promote excellence in supply chain management (DWP 2012a, p.11). An example of a supply chain is illustrated at Figure 2.1 highlights that tier one contractors could use tier two sub-contractors in their supply chain to deliver specialised services (Egdell et al. 2016)

Figure 2.1 Illustrative hierarchy of supply chain



DWP (2011) encouraged successful organisations to operate within a ‘black box’ approach which was designed to encourage innovative and flexible approaches to addressing unemployment. However, Finn (2013) argued that this was more of a “*light touch*” (p.7) approach, as Prime contractors were still required to report changes to service delivery and supply chains. Considine et al. (2018) argue that the ‘black box’ approach failed to deliver “*some key benefits*” such as flexibility and resulted in “*undesirable side-consequences*” (p.249). Therefore, the extent to which this approach presented a ‘black box’ is questionable based on findings published.

2.3.4 Supply chain and Third Sector involvement

Research has explored the challenges faced by Third Sector Organisations in Scotland when operating within supply chains, as highlighted by Damm (2012), Rees et al. (2013), and Egdell et al. (2016). Due to having more control over referrals, Damm (2012) found that TSOs were more successful when subcontracted in tier one, providing end-to-end services, as opposed to those operating in tier two (Bovaird 2014). Rees et al. (2013) found that the low level of referrals was due to the design of the WP rather than the sector in which the organisation operated. However, Egdell et al. (2016) also found that TSOs in Scotland had not recovered their capital investment during the initial phases of implementing WP policy and this was not helped by the “*low level of client referrals*” (p.8).

2.3.5 Market share

The Market share was influential in the involvement of Prime Contractors and determined the size of the market and potential consumers of services. According to the ONS (2020), between 1999 to 2007 unemployment remained stable at just over 5%. However, after the Global crisis 2008, unemployment steadily increased, reaching 8% in 2010 and 8.5% before the WP was introduced. The impact of the market share and potential contracting-out arrangements concerning the WP is highlighted by the DWP (2011) who raised the risk of providers withdrawing services if they were not making a profit. This underscores the importance of considering the financial viability of providers in the tendering process (DWP 2011).

According to Freud (2007), unskilled individuals were more likely to be unemployed, an assertion Grover (2009) disputed by highlighting that the demand from local labour markets had not been factored into the report. Webster and Harding (2001), Davies (2008), and Grover (2009) examined the delivery of services within the quasi-market created. They found no evidence to suggest that the private sector was superior to the public sector in delivering public services. Initially, people receiving unemployment benefits and not employed were mandated to attend the WP. However, with the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) in 2013, part-time workers were now included and mandated to attend the WP also. More recently, the Home Secretary, Priti Patel, proposed using the 8.5 million economically inactive individuals to fill vacancies created by Brexit (BBC 2020). If this were enacted, the challenges would be identifying adults capable of employment, addressing regional skills shortages and whether additional funding would be provided to cope with an evolving market.

2.3.6 Payment by results

Implementing the payment by results system raised several concerns regarding the risks and unintended consequences of this business model. Finn (2011) identified several risks that could be learned from other countries, including the potential for "*creaming and parking*" (p.17), market failure, negative service user experience, the use of the Non-Profit sector, and accountability. However, Pattison (2012) argues that the payment by results model would provide "*high quality, innovative and holistic*" (p.473) service delivery and would address the challenges faced by the UK labour market at that time.

The terms *creaming and parking* have become synonymous with the WP and the potential for Prime Contractors to game the system for profit (Pattison 2012). Koning and Heinrich (2013) explain that 'creaming' can be defined as Prime Contractors who focus predominantly on work-ready clients and will receive quicker payments, as opposed to 'parking' those with additional complex requirements. Rees et al. (2014) provide empirical evidence of these practices among Prime Contractors, where frontline advisers parked claimants to meet organisational targets or cream those that are work-ready to ensure continued funding. The study found that disabled and lone parents were treated differently, leading to less successful job outcomes than other client groups.

2.3.7 Differential payments

The payment by results model enabled the implementation of differential payments that are based on the level of support required by the individual. Rees et al. (2013) and Egdell et al. (2016) assert that higher levels of investment and support required would result in higher

remunerative payments. Finn (2011) and Rees et al. (2013) argue that the differential payment system aimed to address the risks associated with Prime contractors by discouraging quick job outcome wins and promoting quality outcomes. However, Carter and Whitworth (2014) found that differential payments were "*designed in*" rather than "*designed out*" of the system, resulting in Prime contractors concentrating on quantity rather than the quality of job outcomes. Carter and Whitworth (2014) and Rees et al. (2014) also highlight that the differential payments offered did not align with the level of investment made by organisations, leading to a disparity between risk and reward.

2.3.8 Summary

This section considered the involvement of private, public, and third Sector in the WP. In particular, it examined the complexities of Third Sector involvement in the tendering process and the impact of supply chain management on the organisations delivering the WP. The literature review highlights concerns that the quasi-market created by the WP resulted in TSOs having to adapt and diversify to meet contractual requirements, undermining their not-for-profit status and ethos. Additionally, the focus on outcomes rather than the customer experience is discussed, along with the impact of the WP on the supply chain.

2.4 Personalisation and Public Services

This section examines the concept of personalisation in public services, specifically employability support programmes implemented by successive New Labour, the Coalition Government and Conservative Government. since the early 2000s. The concept of personalising public services was introduced to the UK Parliament by New Labour in 2004 through the paper "*Putting People at the Heart of Public Services*" (Gov. UK, 2004). This paper proposed introducing high-quality and personalised care for the National Health Service (NHS). The importance of personalised public services has been acknowledged in Scotland, particularly in the face of fiscal restrictions that require public services to do more with less. The Christie Commission report on the future delivery of public Service (Christie 2011) recommended a shift towards more personalised and community-based services that would promote improved outcomes for citizens. The delivery of personalised public services has evolved over the years and has become prevalent in various public sector areas such as health, education, and welfare.

2.4.1 Defining personalisation

Needham (2011) and Meager et al. (2014) found that personalisation is a complex concept that can be interpreted differently. Needham (2011) and Meager et al. (2014) define personalisation as being “*multi-interpretable*” (p.61), not a “*worked out set of policy prescriptions*” (p.55) and “*personalisation is a subjective notion that means different things to different people*” (p.24). Needham (2011, p.54) identified five key themes of personalisation based on the work of Leadbetter (2004), Beresford (2008) and Carr (2010).

- (1) “*personalisation works, transforming people’s lives for the better*”
- (2) “*person-centred approaches reflect the way people live their lives, rather than artificial departmental boundaries*”
- (3) “*personalisation is applicable to everyone, not just to people with social care needs*”
- (4) “*people are experts on their own lives*”
- (5) “*personalisation will save money*”

The themes highlight the transformative potential of personalisation, the importance of person-centred approaches, the universality of personalisation, the recognition of individuals as experts in their own lives, and the potential cost savings associated with personalisation. Moreover, personalisation is viewed as a way to save money on public services, often subject to financial constraints due to demographic changes, such as an ageing population (Scottish Government, 2011).

Newton et al. (2012) agree that personalisation is multi-interpretable but notes that the interpretation varies depending on the level of policy adoption, organisational, operational, and customer levels. The study also found that personalised services operate on two different levels: procedural and substantive personalisation:

- Procedural personalisation refers to the “*personal interaction between officials and individuals*” and the extent to which they “*are treated as individuals with sensitivity and respect*” (p.101),
- Substantive personalisation is “*support and services tailored to individual needs and wishes of people*” (p.101).

The evidence suggests that personalisation is not a defined or rigorous set of policies, but a varied approach designed to meet an individual’s needs by providing non-tangible (procedural)

support and tangible (substantive) services to improve the quality of life of certain groups and individuals.

2.4.2 Personalisation in practice

Procedural personalisation

The objectives identified by Needham (2011) highlight the importance of procedural personalisation to create person-centric and transformative services. However, Meager et al. (2014) suggest that procedural personalisation is subjective and influenced by the perceptions of users. These perceptions are shaped by the interactions between frontline advisers and users, as well as the choice of services offered, internal organisational factors and external factors may influence. Therefore, the success of procedural personalisation is contingent on the quality of interactions between users and advisers to identify the services required.

Substantive personalisation

Substantive services and their impact on certain groups of society have been explored in the public sector areas of Health, Education and Welfare. In healthcare, Cutler et al. (2007) questions if personalisation has resulted in services being truly built around the individual or merely those already available. In education, Pykett (2009) concluded that the limited choice of services was influenced and impacted by “*gender, class and social position*” (p.27). Whilst Williams et al (2017) found that whilst personalisation is the goal in adult residential care, there needed to be more clarity about what it means and how to implement it. The study further explored if direct payments to residents helped give them choice and control of personalised services. However, some doubts were raised by those implementing direct payments, if it was the best way to achieve personalisation and this depended on available services. The studies highlight the tensions between the policy intention to personalise versus the availability of services, resources and funding. The tension between policy and resources also carries through to how substantive services are specifically targeted towards groups. For example, the lack of specialised counselling and how this is provided to people facing substance abuse (Newton et al 2012) or the use of personalised messages to encourage the take-up of services, for example to encourage vaccination uptake (Gofen et al. 2019).

Personalisation is a complex and subjective concept, evident from the number of qualitative studies conducted using data, documents, and semi-structured interviews to explore implementation in various contexts. Table 2.1 provides examples of literature published in this area, noting the public service areas examined, the services offered, and the research methods used.

Table 2.1 Personalised services delivered to comparative and specific groups

Public service	Areas/Groups	Author	Method
Education	Learning disabilities (Adults)	Mansell and Beadle-Brown (2005)	Qualitative
Education	School age children	Johnson (2004)	Qualitative
Education	School age children	Pykett (2009)	Qualitative
Education	School age children	Kaminskienė, and Khetsuriani (2019)	Qualitative
Health	Offenders	McGuire (2010)	Qualitative
Health	Dementia patients	Rippon (2010)	Qualitative
Health	Obesity patients	Needham and Kelly (2010)	Qualitative
Health	Adult Social Care	Ellis (2011)	Qualitative
Health	Adult Social Care	Williams et al. (2017)	Qualitative
Health	Parents of Children	Gofen et al. (2019)	Qualitative
Welfare	JSA Claimants	Manning (2005)	Quantitative
Welfare	Lone Parents	Lindsay et al. (2018)	Qualitative

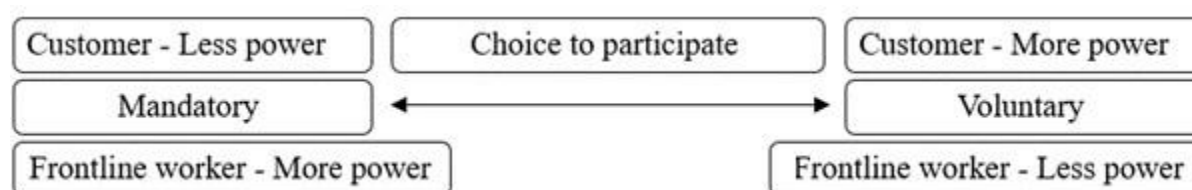
Source- Business source complete: Research published on substantive services in specific areas

The literature demonstrates that personalisation and the provision of personalised services are delivered across a wide range of groups, such as adults and children, or targeted in the specific areas of dementia and obesity. Furthermore, these demonstrate the diverse ways in which procedural and substantive personalisation is interpreted and implemented, as well as the challenges faced in providing services to meet the needs and preferences of individuals.

2.4.3 Personalisation, power and choice

This literature review reveals two crucial themes related to personalisation: having the power and choice to participate, whether voluntary or mandatory. The spectrum of power and choice is crucial to the effective provision of personalised support or services, with the balance shifting depending on the sector in which personalised services are provided. Figure 2.2 visually represents these themes.

Figure 2.2 - Spectrum of power and choice.



Source: adapted from Gofen et al. 2019

The concept of participation and choice is further explored in the literature; for example, in the health sector personalised services to tackle health-related issues are done through consent. For instance, Gofen et al. (2019) conducted a comparative case study across three countries, examining the use of personalised messages to encourage vaccination uptake. They found that where participation was voluntary, frontline workers needed more resources to address noncompliance. Most recently during the Covid-19 pandemic, positive messaging was used by the UK Government and other devolved nations to encourage vaccine take-up. However, in a comparative study of eight countries, Lindholt et al. (2021) found variations in the vaccine take-up, that was due to a lack of trust in scientific or Government messages, influenced by conspiracy theories or were not concerned about infection. Therefore, encouraging a participant to participate voluntarily appears to be influenced by a ‘carrot’ approach rather than the ‘stick’. However, external influences appear to influence participation and the perception of benefits have to outweigh the negatives associated with the initiative.

In contrast to healthcare, a refusal to participate in the UK Government's Work Programme (WP) could result in the threat of punitive actions being taken. This is known as welfare conditionality where a failure to meet certain work requirements may result in benefits being sanctioned (Manning 2005; Lindsay et al. 2018). A sanction to the claimant's welfare payment will result in a percentage reduction over a designated number of weeks, such as failing to attend an appointment or being late for an appointment could be considered by the Jobcentre Plus Work Coach as not meeting work commitments. However, regardless of the transformative nature of personalised support, the mandatory requirement to attend appeared to negatively impact welfare benefit claimants leading to increased anxiety and depression (Dwyer et al. 2020); Williams 2020) and was a barrier to finding employment. (Wright et al. 2020). In a longitudinal study, Wright et al. (2020) found that the fear of losing benefits can deter people from participating in programmes that provide personalised services, and the power balance between frontline services and users can vary depending on the sector.

The evidence suggests that personalisation has different meanings for different people and may lead to varying outcomes when implemented without specific guidance. However, guidance would be difficult to produce for all scenarios as the evidence shows that personalisation is subjective and multi-interpretable. Therefore, in considering the overarching principles that directly relate to the procedural and personal aspect of tailored support, Needham (2011) highlights four points. These are transformative potential of personalisation, the importance of

person-centred approaches, the universality of personalisation, the recognition of individuals as experts in their own lives

Within the context of employability support and specifically the WP, the literature suggests that the paternalistic approach of Welfare to Work (Considine et al 2018) and welfare conditionality (Wright et al 2020) influences on what degree people fully buy into the service. Examples that contradict personalisation in employability support discuss the use low-level interventions instead of skills development (Carter and Whitworth 2014; Johnson et al. 2021), standardised tools to assess a participant (Rice et al 2018) and measuring success by job outcomes (Considine et al. 2018; Kauffman 2019).

Much of the research on employment support programmes have examined the impact of mandatory attendance. To a lesser degree there has been few studies that have considered voluntary participation and how this affects their engagement with frontline advisers employed by Prime Contractors. The next section will shift the focus from personalisation and personalised services in the general domain to how personalised services were facilitated through recent Government employment programmes.

2.4.4 Personalised employment support programmes

Toerien et al. (2013) discussed that before the WP, employment support was multifaceted with a range of Government initiatives. Studies by Stares (1982), Dutton (1984), and Main (1985) explored early employment initiatives such as the Youth Opportunities Programme (1978) and the Youth Training Scheme (1983). Although the term personalisation was not used in these initiatives, participants were offered a 'suitable' placement. However, as highlighted by Dutton (1984), jobs in the service sector were made more readily available by employers in that sector rather than those in more highly skilled trades. Therefore, the level of suitability was somewhat dictated by the job placements available rather than the personalised choice of the participant and long-term development of specialised skills. Early studies were primarily quantitative and focused on outcomes such as job placement, training or education, which were used to address youth unemployment in the 1980s.

Personalisation and New Deal 1998-2010

In 2007, Borghi and Berkel conducted a case study to explore the provision of personalised services in the UK, Netherlands, and Finland under the New Labour's New Deal initiatives. The study examined how much customer choice was factored into offering personalised services to unemployed job seekers in Great Britain over the last two decades. Concluding that

employment support has shifted over the years to a workfare approach, latterly through the introduction of the New Deal and a stricter benefit regime (Dorstal 2008; Lindsay 2014; Deeming 2015). A tentative finding of the research was that the stricter benefit regimes and the “*dominant social policy discourse on responsibilities and obligations of the unemployed*” contradicted the customer-centric approach of personalised services. Additionally, that Jobcentre Plus staff offering personalised services treated job seekers in a ‘traditional’ way rather than “*competent customers on a competitive service market*” (p.422). However, the study is based on governance reforms, and it does not explore personalisation in practice, which is raised by the author, who highlights this is a complex area and there is a lack of comparative studies.

Personalisation and the development of personalised action plans for job seekers through face-to-face meetings with Jobcentre Plus coaches was explored in a qualitative study conducted by Toerien et al. (2013). The study found that the approach of the coaches differed, with some using open questions to establish goals and needs while others used standardised scripts. However, the study concluded that their approach was secondary if the services required by the job seeker were not available.

Personalisation and the Work Programme 2011

The WP was introduced in 2011 and replaced various New Deal programmes under one umbrella initiative (Hill 2013). Iain Duncan Smith the then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, announced that the WP will provide “*targeted, personalised help for those who need it most*” (Duncan Smith 2010). This appeared to consolidate a shift towards a more person-centred and citizen-focused approach. Whereby, Considine et al. (2018) argued that the influence of New Public Management (NPM) governance was evident in the introduction of personalised support in many public service policies, such as care, education, and health.

A significant change to the implementation of the WP was the transfer of delivering personalised employment support from the public sector to external providers. This provided external organisations with more flexibility, reduced the interference from the DWP (Fuertes et al. 2014; Fuertes and McQuaid 2016) and facilitated a 'black box' approach (DWP 2012a; Considine et al. 2018). The introduction of the WP meant that Jobcentre Plus would only deal with benefit related administration and “*early job matching*” (Hill 2013, p.6) prior to eligible benefit recipients being referred to WP providers. Early evaluation from Newton et al. (2012) found that “*nearly half of participants felt a ‘push’ from Jobcentre Plus to join the programme*” (p.19). However, it notes that Jobcentre Plus coaches already had negative views

of the WP ranging from it being a replacement to their services or it did not provide the appropriate support.

2.2.5 Personalisation, New Public Management and New Public Governance

As previously discussed at 2.2 New Public Management (NPM) emphasises performance measurement, efficiency and customer centric approaches (Hood 1991). However, New Public Governance (NPG) supports a more interorganisational approach that promotes collaboration, networked governance and a focus on public value (Lindsay et al. 2018).

NPM has shaped and facilitated the provision of personalised employment support is with the introduction of contracting out services and the ‘black box’ approach which had become synonymous with the Work Programme (WP). The approach advocated that contracted out organisations would have a greater degree of flexibility and autonomy to provide a personalised service (DWP 2012a) which was perceived as being in contrast to the more regulated public sector departments. However, Carter and Whitworth (2017) found that with the introduction of this approach that services provided were “*minimal, generic and patchy*“ with “*low-cost provision*” (p.81) being favoured over “*appropriateness, intensity or specialization*” (p.81). This would appear to suggest that the approach to both procedural and substantive personalisation was inconsistent across Prime Contractors.

Similarly, Considine et al (2018) discussed that frontline advisers in contracted out organisations were given the freedom, flexibility and autonomy the ‘black box approach’. The research found that the autonomy of frontline advisers had increased due to the reduction in standardised tools. However, it also found that even with the increase in autonomy and flexibility, that overall, this had only marginally increased the provision of an individualised service to job seekers. However, as previously highlighted by Finn (2013) contracted out organisations were still accountable to the UK Government and regulatory requirements were in place, so the ‘black box’ approach still had constraints.

The NPG approach has some similarities to the hierarchical nature of NPM (Howlett and Ramesh 2017) such as providing public value (Liddle 2018) and performance measurement (Micheli and Needy 2010). However, the NPG approach differs as it focuses on collaboration (Eadson 2021), co-production, and a person centric approach as mechanisms to enable the effective delivery of public services. Within this, these approaches help to shape the provision of personalisation by encouraging networking, developing partnerships and building positive relationships between service providers and users.

2.4.6 Enablers of personalised employment support

Rice et al. (2018) provide a more detailed explanation of how personalisation can be achieved through a four-world heuristic to help overcome potential constraints. According to the authors, the effective delivery of personalisation is enabled by low caseloads, guided discretion, and problem assessment tools in conjunction with a broad range of service networks. Conversely, ineffective delivery is associated with high caseloads, no discretion, and no assessment tools in combination with a narrow range of service networks. However, there may be cases where problem assessment tools can mitigate the constraints of high caseloads, although their effectiveness may be limited due to the time required to use them properly. Furthermore, the level of discretion may be influenced by the Government or Prime Contractor's application of rigid or unrealistic performance targets.

The effectiveness of the four-world heuristic examined three different organisations in distinct countries to determine how governance regimes impacted the delivery of procedural and substantive personalisation to the long-term unemployed. Three primary findings emerged in that financial investment was needed in both staff and services, case workers need discretion, flexibility, time and investment in the training of case workers. While the analytical framework developed by Rice et al. (2018) is relatively new and has not been applied to similar organisations or countries delivering employment support, the study's rationale was not to describe countries or employment systems but the *"interplay between governance conditions and individualization practices at street level"* (p.96).

2.4.7 Constraints of personalised employment support

Newton et al. (2012) found that procedural personalisation was more prominent than substantive personalisation, meaning that frontline advisors focused more on procedural interactions than on meeting the individual needs of participants. The authors also observed that advisors expressed regret that they could not provide more tailored training opportunities. This suggests that while interactions between advisors and participants were personalised to a certain extent, the level of personalisation was limited in terms of meeting specific needs.

Difficulties in building relationships and variation of services

Despite the efforts to provide personalised support in the WP, studies conducted in both Jobcentre Plus (Toerien et al. 2013; Wright 2016) and external organisations (Newton et al. (2012; Kauffman 2019) suggest that the ability to form a working relationship between Jobcentre Plus coaches, frontline advisors and users of the services poses a constraint on delivering procedural personalisation.

A qualitative study undertaken in eight Jobcentres in England by Toerien et al. (2013) found that procedural personalisation varied between Jobcentre Plus coaches providing New Deal programmes and depended on their interpretation of realistic job-seeking goals for their clients. This does not align with the themes identified earlier by Needham (2011), which places the person as the expert and suggests that personalised support was directed by what advisers believed to be the best for their clients.

Furthermore, an early study to evaluate the WP, Newton et al. (2012) found that, as with Jobcentre Plus coaches, frontline advisors in external organisations provided varied services to participants. Some participants responded positively, expressing satisfaction with the help and support they received, while others responded negatively. However, the same report also highlighted where participants had expressed that “*their barriers had not been addressed*” (Ibid 2012, p. 104) they appeared to have not received a personalised provision.

In a recent study by Kaufmann (2019), the provision of personalised support by frontline advisers delivering the WP was heavily influenced by the behaviours and interactions between themselves and the job seeker. Kaufmann (2019) added that external economic and organisational culture also impacted the effectiveness of personalised support services, either enhancing or diminishing the experiences of those using the support. However, establishing personal relationships with clients was difficult due to the mandatory requirement to attend and the threat of imposed benefit sanctions, leading to a lack of trust by job seekers. The study concluded that behaviours and interactions could significantly influence the provision of personalised services in this area. Moreover, racial and class bias was found to have influenced the perceptions of those delivering services internationally. For example, in the US, Epp (2014) explored racial stereotyping of the police force, whilst Jilke and Tummers (2018) found that judgment-based decisions were made on what student deserved support. In Denmark, Harrits (2018) found in Danish healthcare that class stereotypes were a dominant factor in deciding on the services provided.

Limited resources

The availability of local services and resources may determine the quality of personalised services offered by frontline advisers. Finn (2011) and Carter and Whitworth (2014) highlighted that a lack of access to resources could be a constraint to the delivery of new, innovative and flexible approaches. Rice (2018) further investigated the issue and concluded that financial investment is required for Prime Contractors to effectively deliver personalised

support. Therefore, the level of investment and access to local services and resources could potentially affect the quality of service provided by frontline advisors.

Although Rees et al. (2014) maintain that lone parents and people with disabilities are the most disadvantaged, the landscape is more nuanced. Carter and Whitworth (2014) argue that the level of assistance and job outcomes vary greatly even within the category of people who are deemed to be disadvantaged from gaining access to the labour market. Furthermore, Lindsay et al. (2018) conducted a recent study that proposed the compulsory work-first approach, benefit conditionality and sanctions to lone parents were ineffective. They suggested alternative methods, such as "*co-production*" and "*social innovation*" (p. 35), to provide a more imaginative way of dealing with this client group. The study concluded that local services were more effective when working collaboratively than competitively in providing personalised services to lone parents.

According to Rice et al. (2018), the WP prioritised investing in counsellors rather than services, with job seekers closer to the labour market receiving more "*intensive counselling than vulnerable ones*" (p.105). This resulted in personalised support being enabled or constrained by certain internal factors such as lower caseloads or discretionary services. Whereas Ceolta et al. (2015) found that claimants with similar health conditions received "*different levels of service*" (p.272) that Prime Contractors subcontracted. This suggests that whilst some degree of personalised support was provided, its delivery was inconsistent, leading to unequal access and outcomes for job seekers.

Standardisation of services

Fuertes and Lindsay (2016) conducted a study that scrutinised how Prime Contractors practiced discretionary personalised support. The findings revealed that the provision of personalised support was becoming standardised due to the pressures imposed by NPM performance-related targets. According to the study, standardised practices were developed to meet the performance targets, which was a series of box-ticking exercises designed to fulfil the organisations contractual obligations. The standardised activities identified by the study included CV refinement, motivation, access to job vacancies, and referrals to specialised subcontracted services for specific interventions (Rees et al. 2013). Fuertes and Lindsay (2016) concluded that the pressure to meet performance-related targets could impede the quality of personalised support, with standardised practices becoming the norm.

Assadi and Lundin's (2018) research found that assessment tools were used to standardise frontline decisions instead of discretionary practices and ensured all participants are treated equally. However, the availability of substantive services identified by a participant could not be controlled. Therefore, Prime Contractors operated a two-tier system, where standardised processes were used at the initial referral stage and only subcontracted third parties would offer personalised services. Borghi and Berkel's (2007) previous study highlights that standardised services are often offered to resolve tensions between policy discourse (intent) and citizens' (choice).

2.4.8 Summary

The literature reviewed indicate two significant themes regarding personalisation in public services, that it is not tangible and internal and external factors could influence the provision of services. Previous studies have identified that personalisation encompasses both procedural support which focuses on personal interactions and substantive support which considers the services available. Therefore, the concept of personalisation is presented as having the overall objective of being transformational, person centred and to enhance the quality of life for specific groups and individuals.

To explore the participant experience to receiving a personalised approach in public services the most common approach adopted by the literature was qualitative analysis. The studies highlighted that measuring the degree of success in providing personalised services is challenging as personal expectations and services offered may differ from each sector and individual. While much of the research has focused on the personalisation of procedural interactions, it was found that the accessibility and availability of substantive services are essential to delivering a personalised service effectively. Therefore, in the absence of appropriate services, alternative services may be offered or none at all which may influence to what degree personalisation has a transformative impact.

The definition of personalisation in the literature that explored employability programmes found the similar overarching themes which was to provide a transformational experience to people who are unemployed. This aimed to move the unemployed individual closer to or into the labour market by addressing and overcoming personal and structural barriers. However, the literature also found that putting this into practice presented several constraints which influenced the level of personalisation and the provision services. These relate to building effective relationships with participants, the availability of local services, the impact of inadequate staffing resources and the use of standardised assessment tools. Furthermore, in a

market-based environment where employment support has been contracted out, there is a tension between the black box approach promised and the enhanced governance requirements in place to ensure the transparency and accountability of public funds.

Therefore, for the purposes of this study the author's working definition of personalisation is that it is a transformational and person-centred approach, which is enabled by the use of building relationships, creating partnerships and proactively listening to the user of the service. Expanding on this further, the next section will explore how welfare benefit claimants access personalised support offered by employment support programmes and who are eligible.

2.5 Accessing personalised employment support

Under the Work Programme (WP), Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches were now responsible for identifying and referring eligible benefit claimants at their discretion to Prime Contractors. As previously discussed in 2.3.3, the referral was a mandatory requirement for claimants to continue receiving in-work benefit payments without facing potential punitive deductions (Dwyer 2018).

2.5.1 identifying participants

Rice et al. (2018) provided empirical data that revealed positive experiences among service users of Prime Contractors. Conversely, the same users related to having negative experiences with Jobcentre Plus personnel and claimed that they did not provide customised support consider external pressures or obstacles to employment such as an ongoing illness or disability (Brown et al. 2018). This suggests that claimants were identified as being fit for work and referred to Prime Contractors, who in reality were not ready for work but identified as being eligible.

2.5.2 Reassessment of participants

The reassessment of individuals who were previously unable to work due to ill health and disability gained momentum during New Labours term in Government. The Freud report, published in 2007, delved into the issue of who should be responsible for assessing a claimants' fitness for work before they were transferred from 'sickness' benefits to Job Seekers allowance (JSA). The report recommended that GPs should not be responsible for assessing their patients as it posed a "*conflict of interest*" (Grover 2009, p. 491). As part of the Welfare Reform act in 2007, the New Labour Government introduced Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and hired an independent private sector healthcare assessment organisation to reassess Incapacity

Benefit (IB) claimants (DWP 2012b). This introduced the Work Capability assessment (WCA), which was completed by claimants receiving ESA. Under the Coalition Government, ESA and the WCA was retained and continued with the reassessment process of claimants receiving sickness benefits or people with disabilities previously introduced under New Labour.

The reassessment of claimants who were found fit for work and referred to the WP has been the subject of several studies. Rees et al. (2014) found differences in how Job Centres and Prime Contractors dealt with clients with mental health issues, which may not have been diagnosed or fully reported. One Prime Contractor questioned whether receiving JSA was necessarily indicative of being job ready, providing an example of a client carrying a mirror “*to ward off evil spirits*” (p. 231), which they deemed as being far from job ready. Ceolta et al. (2015) conducted research into the delivery of health-related services by Prime Contractors and discovered that claimants with similar health conditions received “*different levels of service*” (p.272). Scholtz and Ingold (2021) concluded that the WP had the opposite effect for jobseekers with disabilities, pushing them further away from paid work instead of helping them become included in the workplace.

The absence of an understanding about what may constitute as a health condition between Jobcentre Plus and Prime Contractors indicates there is a disconnect, implying that referrals rely on the discretion and judgement of Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches. Furthermore, Prime Contractors receiving referrals of mandatory claimants with health conditions suggests the higher likelihood of them being parked as the investment in time may not be reflected by the payment. The main civil service union, the PCS voiced concerns that claimants found fit for work, may not be job-ready and services would concentrate on more job ready claimants leading to creaming and parking behaviours (Grover 2009).

2.5.3 inappropriate referrals

Post 2010, the reassessment of claimants receiving ‘sickness’ benefits was heavily criticised due to incorrect decisions by the private healthcare provider and DWP staff that found claimants fit for work. Many of these decisions were appealed from statistics published by the DWP (2019a). The statistics revealed that between October 2013 and March 2019, 65% of claimants successfully appealed against DWP decisions based on private healthcare assessments that found them fit for work. This would imply that numerous individuals who were evaluated during this period were transferred from IB to JSA, thus qualifying them for the WP. This meant that the individuals were reassessed incorrectly and as such subject to sanctions if they declined to participate in the WP. The consequences of welfare conditionality

such as sanctions on individuals with mental health issues was found by Dwyer et al. (2020) to cause “*negative health outcomes and make future employment less likely*” (p. 1).

2.5.4 Summary

The reassessment of Incapacity Benefit (IB) had significant implications for claimants, who were either deemed fit for work and placed on Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or placed on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) in the work-related activity group. As a result, they become eligible for the Work Programme (WP) and could be referred by the Jobcentre Plus to Prime Contractors. However, benefit recipients still face numerous challenges and barriers when trying to secure employment. In the Conservative Party 2017 manifesto, it pledged to increase the number of disabled people in the workforce by 1 million by 2027. The government's report (DWP 2017) on this issue revealed that there were financial advantages to supporting customers who received ESA, particularly the 49% who cited mental health as their primary condition. Latterly Brown et al. (2018) found that for ESA claimants that the influence of age on the ability to return to work (RTW) was significant. Furthermore, that other factors influence an RTW, such as how long someone has been unemployed, managing multiple health conditions, and an individual's perception of their job prospects.

The reassessment of claimants could lead to additional financial obstacles for Prime Contractors as the referrals would be primarily individuals with mental health issues who are not job-ready, thus making immediate remuneration unlikely. Therefore, the clients may be parked due a lack of profit from investment in time, placed in low-paying positions or not receive adequate health support services due to high costs.

2.6 Eligibility to personalised employment support

Many of the initiatives introduced to support unemployed job seekers have focused on their personal attributes such as age, gender or race or circumstances such as a lone parent or disability. This has facilitated the use of disadvantaged groups being identified who are considered by the Government in power at the time as those being furthest away from the labour market. Whilst, the Work Programme (WP), introduced in 2011, shifted the focus from specific disadvantaged groups, the current employment support programmes, the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS) have adopted a similar approach to New Labours New Deal (Gov.Scot 2016b; Gov.Scot 2017b; Walker and Wiseman 2003; DWP 2012a).

2.6.1 Concept of disadvantage

Historically, disadvantage has been associated with the poverty of income (Paterson - Young and Hazenberg 2022) which presents a singular or monism view that disadvantage primarily results from a particular cause such as economic or environmental factors (Wolff and De-Shalit 2007). The monism approach can be useful in highlighting the importance of singular issues and to provide a clear focus for policy and intervention. For example, all forms of disadvantage such as poverty, inequality or access to education can solely attributed to economic factors. Therefore, in addressing the economic factors that create inequality would resolve all other disadvantages. However, the singular view can also be limiting because this may overlook other important dimensions of disadvantage and need to account for the complex interplay between different factors that shape an individual's well-being (Ransome 2010).

In the context of social justice and public policy, a pluralist view of advantage and disadvantage suggests that efforts to promote human well-being should focus on addressing specific areas of disadvantage, such as poverty, discrimination, or lack of access to education or healthcare. The Capability approach is a pluralist view (Wolff and De-Shalit 2007) presented by Amartya Sen in a paper titled "*Equality of What?*" (Sen 1980). It is a theoretical framework for evaluating individual well-being and social justice and emphasises the importance of people's freedom to achieve the goals and activities they value. According to the Capability approach, people's well-being should not be evaluated solely based on their income or consumption but rather on their capabilities or the freedom to achieve valuable functioning. Capabilities refer to the set of valuable activities and states of being that individuals have the freedom to choose. The capability approach of Sen was further expanded on by Nussbaum (2011) argued there are ten core capabilities that are essential to human flourishing and these should be the focus of public policy and social justice efforts (Ransome 2010; Saigaran et al. 2015). Many studies have considered the concept of advantage and disadvantage in social terms and what this means to citizens. Research published by Wolff and De-Shalit (2007) identified that disadvantage is multifaceted, drives inequality and impacts on all areas of society.

Contemporary qualitative studies have considered disadvantage as being linked to singular issues such as family circumstances (Stewart 2016), educational attainment (Exley 2016), income deprivation (Jenkins 2016) and joblessness (Dean 2016). Whilst several studies have explored the dualist aspect of disadvantage, which consider social circumstances alongside personal attributes such as gender (Leon 2016), race and ethnicity (Phung 2011; Phillips and Platt 2016), Religion (Torry 2016) and age (Egdell and McQuaid 2016; Grundy 2016).

Furthermore, in a recent qualitative study, Dougherty et al. (2017) found the stigmatisation of being unemployed varied dependent on social class. The study concluded that when people think of unemployment, they often associate it with lower-class individuals who are perceived to be lazy or not working hard enough.

2.6.2 Disadvantaged groups and UK employment policy

Disadvantaged groups have often been the criteria for accessing employment support programmes (Ingold and Valizade 2017). The studies identified at Table 2.2 have focused on disadvantaged groups which has equally employed qualitative and quantitative approaches. These have placed a focus on three key groups: youth, lone parents, and individuals with disabilities, as well as disadvantaged communities. Qualitative studies have delved deeply into the experiences of these groups within UK-wide employment programmes. In contrast, quantitative studies have used statistics to measure wealth, deprivation, and employment on a national level. The research at table 2.3 examines disadvantage from multiple perspectives, highlighting the lack of education, skills, experience, and job opportunities as critical areas that contribute to unemployment. Furthermore, the impact of poverty and inadequate infrastructure on regional communities and neighbourhoods are included as determinants of disadvantage.

Table 2.2 - Research exploring disadvantaged groups defined by UK employment policy

Disadvantaged	Area	Data collection	Author
Youth	UK	Quantitative	Sloman (2014)
	UK	Qualitative	Egdell and McQuaid (2016)
	Scotland	Qualitative	Egdell and Graham (2017)
Lone Parents	UK	Quantitative	Chowdry (2012)
	UK	Quantitative	Rafferty and Wiggan (2017)
	UK	Qualitative	Lindsay et al. (2018)
	UK	Quantitative	Avram et al. (2018)
Disability/Long term illness	UK	Quantitative	Adam et al (2010)
	UK	Quantitative	Beatty et al. (2010)
	Northern Ireland	Qualitative	Green and Shuttleworth (2010)
	UK	Quantitative	McVicar and Anyadike-Danes (2010)
	Scotland Glasgow	Quantitative	Webster et al. (2010)
	UK	Quantitative	McVicar (2013)
	UK	Quantitative	Canduela et al. (2015)
	UK	Qualitative	Beatty and Fothergill (2015)
	Scotland	Qualitative	Robertson (2018)
UK	Qualitative	Scholz and Ingold (2020)	
Communities and neighbourhoods	Scotland Glasgow	Quantitative	Kearns and Mason (2018)
	Scotland Edinburgh	Qualitative	Titterton and Smart (2006)

Source - Author

2.6.3 Disadvantage as a label

Ingold and Valizade (2017) suggest that the term disadvantage is used extensively in academic literature and labour market policies to describe individuals or groups facing obstacles to employment. However, the term disadvantaged can be problematic, as it is often used broadly to refer to a variety of groups that may experience different forms and degrees of disadvantage. This is highlighted by two studies Ingold and Valizade (2017) and Fackler et al. (2019), which have used different definitions and measurements of what they classify as being disadvantaged groups as a basis for their research,

Ingold and Valizade (2017) explored employers' recruitment of disadvantaged groups via Labour Market Intermediaries between the UK and Denmark. The research lists five disadvantaged groups the short and long-term unemployed, lone parents, disabled people and young people. In a similar study conducted by Fackler et al. (2019), the research used language such as "*so called*" (p.1124) disadvantaged workers. It explored if they were more likely to gain employment with newer start-up businesses or incumbent organisations. However, the use of "*so called*" was not clearly explained as to who identified these groupings or if it was the author's choice of language. As previously discussed, the concept of disadvantage and advantage is subjective based on personal perceptions and societal judgements. Fackler et al. (2019) identifies the disadvantaged groups as older workers, foreigners, low qualified individuals those with unstable employment histories, the long term unemployed and new to the job market.

Table 2.3 below compares the disadvantaged groups used in each of the studies and identifies two different approaches to categorising a disadvantaged worker. Comparing the list, Ingold and Valizade (2017) have defined disadvantaged groups in a broader sense. In comparison, Fackler et al. (2019) has combined similar groups such as foreigners or older workers and individual barriers such as low qualifications.

Table 2.3 Comparison of Disadvantaged groups

Ingold and Valizade (2017)	Fackler et al. (2019)
Short Term unemployed	Older workers
Long Term unemployed	Foreigners
Youth employment	Low qualified individuals
Lone Parents	Unstable employment histories
Disabled	Long term unemployed
	New to the job market

Ingold and Valizade (2017) found that “*the likelihood of hiring from disadvantaged groups was substantially higher amongst large organisations compared with SMEs*” (p.543). This may be due to larger organisations having more vacancies and therefore, the ratio of disadvantaged groups employed would be higher than that of a business under 250 employees. However, Fackler et al. (2019) suggest that “*start-ups are indeed more likely to hire several groups of disadvantaged workers than incumbent firms*” (p.1146). Furthermore, the disadvantaged groups used by Ingold and Valizade (2017) and Fackler et al. (2019) could equally overlap with each other, such as a lone parent may be a foreigner or a young person may be new to the job market. The conflicting results of these studies highlight the risk of solely using the label 'disadvantaged' to describe different groups or individuals.

2.6.4 Disadvantage and barriers

Research conducted in the UK has explored various barriers individuals in a categorised disadvantaged group face to securing employment. Haux (2013) found that lone parents encounter numerous obstacles, such as limited access and affordability of childcare, a lack of skills, and self-confidence. Some studies have focused on facilitating moves from disability benefit recipients into employment and found barriers that included assistance with job search and local initiatives to target localised issues (Beatty et al. 2010; McVicar and Anyadike-Danes 2010; Webster et al. 2010; Beatty and Fothergill 2015).

Additionally, age was identified as a significant barrier, affecting both younger age groups (Sloman 2014; Egdell and McQuaid 2016) and older workers including the over 50's (Brown et al. 2015), highlighting the need for skills, education and training to improve a person's capability. Furthermore, barriers have identified that include educational levels (van Deursen, and van Dijk. 2009), gender (Hargittai and Shafer 2006; Helsper 2010; Holfeld et al. 2013), digital skills (van Deursen and van Dijk 2019), accessible transport (Fransen et al. 2018; Bastiaanssen et al. 2022) and affordable transport (Mattioli et al. 2017).

In the context of youth unemployment, the International Labour Organisation (2011) defined this group as being disadvantaged in three areas: economic, social and geographical. However, within these areas are barriers that may be specific to some individuals and, to some individuals, none at all. Examples of economic disadvantage were given income poverty, lack of education and understanding of the job market. Whilst examples of social disadvantage may be considered as gender, race and disability. Finally, examples of geographical disadvantage were given that include job opportunities, poor transport infrastructure and access to digital

services. Whilst the ILO (2011) examples represent potential and significant barriers, each of these will fall into three categories that are either:

- Static barriers such as disability, ethnicity, and gender (social)
- Non-static barriers such as income poverty, lack of education, understanding of the job market (economic)
- Non- static barrier such as job opportunities, poor transport infrastructure and access to digital services (geographical)

However, the static and non-static barriers identified could be equally applied to any individual within any disadvantaged group, as age is a dynamic and evolving barrier alongside the parental status of the participant. Identifying the individual barriers by the frontline advisers of Prime contractors is important as this will determine the type and level of personalised employment support and the services offered. Therefore, it is essential to understand that some barriers faced by a participant can be more easily addressed than others. For example, static barriers where individuals may face discrimination and frontline advisers are not able to influence potential discriminatory recruitment policies. It is more likely that progress can be made to overcome non-static or evolving barriers that exist by providing access to IT/digital training, advice on claiming benefits or help with literacy and numerical skills.

The increased dependency on accessing information and services through digital platforms has grown exponentially over the decades and led to digital exclusion. van Deursen and van Dijk (2009; 2011; 2019) argue that digital exclusion works on two levels: having access to an internet connection and digital skills. The increased use of accessing services online was further advanced by the UK Government's 'digital by default' strategy, which was rolled out nationally over the period 2013/14 (Cabinet Office 2012; Seddon and O'Donovan 2013; Gov.UK 2014). Issues of connectivity and broad band infrastructure in remote rural areas of Scotland were found to lead to digital exclusion (Williams et al. 2016) alongside the affordability of broadband services which was highlighted as a socio-economic barrier to online access (Selwyn 2004; Fuchs 2009; Weiss et al 2016; Connelly 2019). Recently, Citizens Advice (2021) highlighted that an estimated 2.3 million had fallen behind on the broadband bills and as many as one in three people claiming Universal Credit (UC) do not have access to the internet (Third Force News 2019).

However, as previously discussed, it is important to recognise that at a micro level the needs and services required by disadvantaged groups vary. Rees et al. (2013) argue that lone parents

and the disabled were considered the most disadvantaged. A further study conducted by Rees et al. (2014) identified that younger lone parents were more disadvantaged than older lone parents entering the labour market. Citing possible reasons as the ages of their children and access to affordable childcare facilities. Carter and Whitworth (2014) present a more nuanced perspective, noting that the availability of personalised services and the outcomes of job-seeking efforts vary significantly even within groups classified as disadvantaged. Therefore, the support needed to overcome barriers to achieve employment outcomes varies individually, even within a disadvantaged group. The broad-brush approach to disadvantage places the responsibility on frontline advisers providing personal services to identify the unique barriers individuals face within these groups, as not all barriers will be the same.

2.6.5 Summary

In summary, the distinction between procedural and substantive personalisation has provided greater insight into how frontline bureaucrats operationalise personalised employment support services. Toerien et al. (2013) suggest that the interaction between Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches and job seekers plays a crucial role in determining the level of personalisation experienced by the user. Moreover, the literature shows that the procedural and substantive elements of personalisation are interconnected and impact the types of services offered to users (Ceolta et al., 2015), which relies on fostering trust between both parties (Assadi and Lundin, 2018). However, few studies (Kauffman 2019; Johnson 2021) have explored how frontline advisers of Prime Contractors utilise their skills to establish trust (procedural) with disadvantaged job seekers and identify barriers to allocate services (substantive). The final section of this paper will discuss Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs) who are responsible for delivering government policy.

2.7 Street Level Bureaucrats

Lipsky (2010) coined the term Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs), which has been the subject of extensive research for decades and explored the challenges faced by those responsible for delivering public policy (Bovens and Zouridis 2002; Hupe and Hill 2007; Johansson 2012; Kauffman 2019). According to Lipsky (2010), SLBs are those who “*grant access to government programmes and provide services within them*” (p.3), such as the police, nurses, teachers, and civil servants. However, Lipsky (2010) has updated this initial premise and now suggests that employees of contracted-out agencies delivering policy fit the profile of SLBs (Lipsky, 2010, p. 265). Therefore, in this respect, the frontline advisers of the WHP and FSS

fit the SLB profile as they act as agents for the government and deliver employment support policy (Kaufmann, 2019). The shift to the procurement of external private and third sector organisations has introduced a new type of SLB who are responsible for delivering government policy at the frontline. SLBs are not affiliated with the Civil Service and do not operate in traditional public servant roles. This has led to new variations in the description of SLBs such as street level workers (Kaufman 2019) or, in the case of Rice et al. (2018), SLBs referred to as agency case workers. For the purposes of this research SLBs employed by Prime Contractors or sub-contracted (Service Providers) are termed as managers, team leaders or frontline advisers.

2.7.1 Ideological differences

The research from Grover (2009) highlights the ideological differences between the two types of SLBs, with the focus of profit-driven organisations leading to behaviours such as creaming and parking. Finn (2010) suggested that the Work Programme (WP) payment by results model incentivised providers to focus on individuals who are easiest to help, rather than those with the most complex needs. However, it could equally, be argued that Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches also engaged in a type of creaming and parking to meet covert targets for referrals and sanctions. Although denied at the time, it was latterly acknowledged by the DWP that covert targets for sanctions had been due to a “*misunderstanding*” at a local level and has since been resolved (Domokos 2011). Whilst this may have been the case, according to Redman and Fletcher (2021), there is evidence to support the idea that the policy and methods introduced by the Coalition Government incentivised frontline workers to provide services that ultimately caused negative consequences such as sanctions.

In a study conducted by Svard (2019), the author examined the governance of client information collected by Government services and then handled by outsourced organisations responsible for delivering public services. The research revealed that public service organisations handled sensitive information more securely than those in the private sector. As a recommendation, Svard (2019) suggests that service-level agreements should be established to ensure that claimants do not lose their trust in public services when providing confidential information. This highlights the differing behaviours required of Government Departments and private, public or the third sector to safeguard sensitive information.

Johansson (2012), Hupe and Buffat (2014) argue that SLBs are not a homogenous group and that internal and external factors can impact how they work. Lipsky (2010) agrees that the position of SLBs within an organisation will determine how much influence they have in

implementing policy. However, regardless of context, Lipsky (2010) also identifies key characteristics that all SLBs possess when delivering public services, discretion in decision-making, autonomy and freedom to manage, resources and performance, accountability to stakeholders, and client interaction and management.

2.7.2 Street Level Bureaucracy - Discretion

According to Lipsky (2010), the decisions made by SLBs can significantly impact the individuals affected by government policy, and this is referred to as discretion (Gofen 2013; Raaphorst et al. 2017). Hupe and Buffat (2014) expand on this definition by describing discretion as the "*ways freedom is being used*" or the "*ways this freedom has been granted*" by SLBs (p.551). Therefore, discretion plays a crucial role in the way street level bureaucrats work and what influences the outcomes of their decisions. The following sections will explore literature which discusses how freedom has been granted and how those freedoms have been used to make discretionary decisions by SLBs in the following four areas: autonomy, accountability, resources and client interactions.

2.7.3 Street Level Bureaucracy - Autonomy

Pedersen and Wilkinson (2018) argue that SLBs with limited autonomy and freedom to manage curtailed will have diminished discretionary powers. The autonomy to make discretionary decisions relies on the freedom granted by the organisation to the employee alongside the tools provided and the empowerment of the employee to enable the decision-making process.

The introduction of digitalisation that aimed to streamline processes has limited the autonomy of SLBs to apply a discretionary decision-making process. This can be evidenced in the case of the UK welfare state's 'digital by default' policy in 2012 which provided digitalised online services for customers that assessed benefits and allowances. Bovens and Zouridis (2002) explained that the use of digitalisation would lead to a reduction in autonomy and discretionary power. This would result in policy being enacted using information technology either at the "*screen level*" or "*system level*" instead of face-to-face interactions with frontline staff empowered to make their own decisions.

Lipsky (2010) argues that SLBs operating in a face-to-face environment have greater control and autonomy over the services provided. In the case of welfare benefits, this control involves enforcing welfare conditionality and potentially sanctions that directly impact the recipient's quality of life. The introduction of decisions by IT systems that facilitate standardised practices is further discussed by Fuertes and Lindsay (2016). The study found that caseworkers in the

Welfare to Work (WTW) sector had a certain degree of autonomy when interacting with clients due to the flexible nature of their job. Nevertheless, the autonomy was limited by the organisation's introduction of standardised operating practices to meet contractual requirements and ensure that all participants received the same level of service. However, Assadi and Lundin (2018) found that the length of tenure within the organisation also played a role when applying autonomy to discretionary decision making. Specifically, when a standardised assessment tool was introduced, staff with more experience and confidence exercised greater autonomy by using automated processes less frequently to apply decision making. With the rise of digitalisation (system level) and IT interfaces (screen level), questions have been raised as to the level of autonomy given to decision makers. Pre-programmed algorithms with defined outcomes are based on input information and leave little room for SLBs to apply autonomy and discretion to override the decisions made unless the option is specifically built in by the organisation.

Hupe (2010) adds to this discussion by stating that the level of autonomy in the public sector varies depending on the occupation. In occupations where professional qualifications are more prevalent, such as medicine and education, Hupe (2010) found that SLBs have a more autonomy. In contrast, those employed in occupations where professional qualifications are not a requirement, such as providing personalised support in the WTW sector have less autonomy. Ellis (2011) found that the conflict between managerialism and professionalism hindered the ability of SLBs to demonstrate autonomy when making discretionary decisions, as they will follow rules because of being closely monitored by their managers. Whilst, both Petter et al. (2002), Johansson (2012), Tummers and Bekkers (2014) found that those given a higher-level autonomy were more willing to implement policy objectives on the frontline as they had the flexibility to make discretionary decisions.

This is further supported by Kras et al. (2017), which found that managers enacting policy at the frontline micromanaged staff as a way of exerting power. This was due to their feelings of being constrained by "*organizational hierarchy and management philosophies*"(p.231). Therefore, to achieve autonomy the same managers exerted power over their subordinates led to less co-operation and in turn impacted on the services delivered to the service users. In their study, Gassner and Gofen (2018) focused on managers in senior positions, such as school principals and heads of social services, who are not involved in policy making or frontline service delivery, but still have some degree of autonomy. They found that these managers

played a dual role as state agents, by expressing loyalty to the organisation, and client agents, by ensuring effective policies that support their subordinates.

2.7.4 Street Level Bureaucracy - Accountability

Pedersen and Wilkinson (2018), state that autonomy and freedom to manage are necessary for SLBs to exercise discretionary powers. However, having the autonomy to make decisions comes with accountability. Hupe (2010) found that even the "*traditional professional*" (p.135) is subject to the same levels of accountability as those in semi-professional positions or "*lower levels of the hierarchy*"(p.135). Hupe (2010) concludes that government agents working in various roles, ranging from traditional professionals to semi-professionals who all face the same levels of accountability.

SLBs are accountable to multiple stakeholders, that include Government departments, organisations and even internal teams in which they work (Lipsky, 2010). Those employed in the public sector are also accountable to the public taxpayer. The importance of accountability has increased with transparency and freedom of information, which allows public services to be openly scrutinised. One way to increase visibility is by disclosing performance information, which de Boer et al. (2018) found to positively impact frontline behaviour. However, the same study cautions that future research should consider unintended consequences such as prioritising quantity over quality in order to create a perception of providing value for money, which could result in longer task completion times and neglecting complex cases.

SLBs are fiscally accountable and accountable to internal codes of conduct and professional ethics bodies. Social identity theory suggests that individuals who identify as part of a group will define themselves as such and take on the social identity connected to it (Hornung et al. 2019). In the case of healthcare professionals, Lavee et al. (2018) found that social workers consider themselves accountable to clients through consistent behaviours with professional ethics. However, adherence to delivering policy at the street level is also required, highlighting the tension between being accountable to the public and the Government's policies and professional codes. For example, medical professionals in the public sector must balance meeting government policies regarding the NHS with medical ethics.

However, Lipsky (2010) identifies that SLBs also operate at different levels in the structure and, therefore may have a range of professional qualifications depending on the role they occupy. In the employability realm, there is little research on the requirement of SLBs delivering frontline services requiring qualifications as part of the Public Sector or in Prime

Contractors. In the case of those delivering WTW policy, SLBs are accountable for the decisions made relating to what services are provided. Ulmestig and Marston (2015) explored the perceptions of procedural rights for young unemployed people between Australia and Sweden. In both countries the discretionary power enacted by Government SLBs impacted on the procedural rights of those claiming and receiving benefits. Concluding that “*if a sense of gratitude for unemployment assistance is culturally dominant*” (p.408), it should not be surprising that SLBs will be challenged and accountable for decisions made. However, the research does not explore the link between the accountability of decisions made and the level of awareness given to those using the service such as the appeals process. In the case of the WP and mandatory attendance, the decisions to sanction benefits are ultimately made by Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) based on feedback from Prime Contractors. This illustrates the different levels of accountability when discussing SLBs and demonstrates the differences between those engaged in different fields within the public sector and outside this.

2.7.5 Street Level Bureaucracy - Resources and performance

In his work, Lipsky (2010, p. 30) stresses the importance of resources for SLBs who must manage them to impact decision-making choices and outcomes. These resources can take different forms, such as the number of staff available, accessible accommodation, and private spaces to refer clients to. As well as the tangible resources, adequate training and being allocated a reasonable amount of time to spend with participants. Finn (2011) refers to Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches targeting their resources to achieve performance-related objectives. The study identified that personal advisers frequently felt pressured to deliver on targets and as a result, had limited time to allocate towards more vulnerable clients. Consequently, many advisers reported feeling frustrated about being unable to spend sufficient time with those who require additional support.

Turner and McKinley (2000) demonstrated that a lack of resources and high turnover of Jobcentre Plus staff resulted in negative perceptions among clients, with Work Coaches being unable to provide continuity of service. However, Thomann (2015) identified that output performance is not solely reliant on resources but rather a combination of organisational goals and resources which shape the performance of SLBs. Rice et al. (2018) further indicated that the lack of resources from inadequate staffing and organisational goals could disadvantage those receiving their services. Jilke and Tummers (2018) support this by noting that unrealistic organisational goals create a detrimental environment where SLBS assess the deservingness of clients. Furthermore, the introduction of contracted-out services has complicated the use of

resources and performance measurement. Carter and Whitworth (2017) found that differential payments as a measure of performance, encouraged Prime Contractors to focus on quantity over quality of job outcomes which increased risk rather than mitigating it.

2.7.6 Street Level Bureaucracy - Client interaction

According to Lipsky (2010), SLBs can reward or punish behaviours of non-voluntary clients to ensure compliance with regulations. Lindsay et al. (2018) argued that applying benefit conditionality and sanctions to lone parents is ineffective and more imaginative approaches should be considered. During the New Labour Government, DWP changed the terminology from claimants to customers which aimed to assert that users of the services were not passive but should have a say in how services were delivered (Shaw 2009). However, Rosenthal and Peccei (2006) found that SLBs were uncertain about what this meant in practice, as it suggested choice where none was given, leading to ambiguity for both providers of the services and users. Ulmestig and Marston (2015) quote one subject as feeling like a "*second-class citizen*" when applying for welfare benefits from the government department. Furthermore, a recent study by Kauffman (2019) reveals that the threat of sanctions and conditionality on benefit payments for non-compliance caused tensions between Prime Contractor frontline advisers and participants, knowing that reporting non-compliance will reduce the amount of benefit received.

The complex relationship between SLBs and service users was further studied by Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000), which ascertained that scholarly narratives often focused on SLBs as state agents who deliver policy to the letter. Whereas SLBs often act as citizen agents and use their discretion to make decisions that will benefit their clients. Lavee et al. (2018) supports this finding, stating that social workers act as citizen agents to compensate for the state's perceived shirking of its responsibility. Furthermore, the policies implemented by SLBs which they perceive not to meet the needs of their clients, is a concept referred to as policy alienation (Tummers et al. 2009; Tummers 2012; Tummers et al. 2015; van Engen et al. 2016; Tucker et al. 2022).

Tummers et al. (2009) posit that elements of New Public Management (NPM) such as the constant flux of reorganisation, cost savings and performance management, have contributed to the rising dissatisfaction by SLBs about the policies introduced by successive Governments. Two areas where policy alienation prevails are powerlessness, which refers to the inability of SLBs to have an impact on policy, and meaninglessness, which means that the policy lacks personal significance (Tummers et al. 2015; van Engen et al. 2016; Tucker et al. 2022).

Therefore, to address powerlessness and meaninglessness, SLBs will exercise autonomy and act as citizen agents to compensate for what they perceive to be the shortcomings of the policy (Tucker et al. 2022).

Epp (2014) found that the interaction and application of policy depended on the moral and cultural beliefs of Work Coaches to racial stereotypes and how this impacted those referred to the service. Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) found that this can lead to SLBs acting as either state or citizen agents, depending on the client's appearance. Bias was further discussed by Harrits (2018), which explored class stereotypes and suggesting that to overcome bias could *“be to design public institutions so that they maximize heterogeneous social relations and experience”* (p.101) as SLBs *“use stereotypes when interpreting information and making decisions”* (p.102).

However, Johansson (2012) highlights that in a public service delivery arena, those using the services are not voluntary or geographically selected therefore, exposure to diversity is not controlled. Furthermore, the deservedness of clients was studied by Jilke and Tummers (2018), which explored how SLBs respond to the attributes of clients when assessing who are deserving of help. Finding that within an educational environment that those students perceived as *“needed deservingness”* such as poor academic performance or minority groups factored higher than those with *“earned deservingness”*. This highlights the complex process undertaken by SLBs where social norms, values and personal beliefs impact on the level and in some cases the quality of services provided.

2.7.7 Summary

Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs) are at the forefront of providing public services and are responsible for implementing Government policy and procedures. The discretion applied by SLB's to implement policy is influenced by a range of factors, such as the level of freedom they granted and how this freedom is used. This section highlights that the level of freedom granted may be influenced by the use of IT to make decisions, standardised assessment tools and the culture of trust within an organisation. Furthermore, how SLBs use discretion to make decisions is equally based on their perception of the policy and its effectiveness in meeting the objectives. However, this is subjective as it could also depend on their beliefs, judgements and moral values. For example, an SLB may subscribe to the view unemployed people deserve to be sanctioned and will apply the policy rigidly (state agent). However, another SLB could equally hold the belief that people who are unemployed deserve support and will use their discretion to not enforce these.

2.8 Conclusion

Overall, these studies provide strong evidence that the UK Government have embraced New Public Management (NPM) principles in all areas of public services. The aim of providing personalised services and putting the customer first has led to the creation of a new bureaucratic delivery system by introducing quasi-marketisation. The literature review identified that the complex contractual framework made it difficult for Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) to tender for contracts due to factors such as lack of business expertise and concerns over loss of reputation.

Prior studies have predominantly focused on traditional Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs) in the areas of education, law and healthcare. However, New Public Management (NPM) has enabled the contracting out of some areas within public services which has redefined the idea of SLBs who no longer traditional public sector workers and now come from a range of external private, public, and third sector backgrounds. The studies further highlight tensions between policy delivery in different sectors and the challenge of ensuring consistent services are provided. Finally, the personalisation of public services, including employability support, operates on two levels: substantive and procedural, which has suggested that sufficient resources to provide services is key to achieving positive outcomes and developing trust with service users.

Although there are comparative case studies that examine the provision of employability support programmes between independent countries, no research has yet been conducted that compare two countries with a shared national welfare strategy and provide separate employability programmes. Exploring this phenomenon will contribute to existing literature around the policies in place which provides an in-depth exploration of how the employment support programmes are provided and put into practice. Furthermore, there are a lack of studies which explore the experiences of non-traditional SLBs who are providing employment support programmes. This will add to the existing debates around the constraints of providing public services in a non-public sector domain.

The research will compare the policy, provision and practice of employability support services by Prime Contractors, sub-contractors and Street Level Bureaucrats between England and Scotland. Specifically, the following areas will be investigated:

- What are the employment support programmes in place and how does employment support differ between England and Scotland?
- What personalised employment support is provided and how does this compare between in England and Scotland?

- How do Street Level Bureaucrats put into practice the personalisation of support to job seekers, and how does this differ between Scotland and England?

The next section provides an overview of the national welfare benefit provision which operates in Great Britain and is currently only devolved to Northern Ireland. This puts into context the process participants experience prior to accessing employment support programmes.

Chapter Three: Process from Jobcentre to employability support programme

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief overview of the process in Great Britain (GB) which is the gateway to eligible participants being identified and referred to employment support programmes.

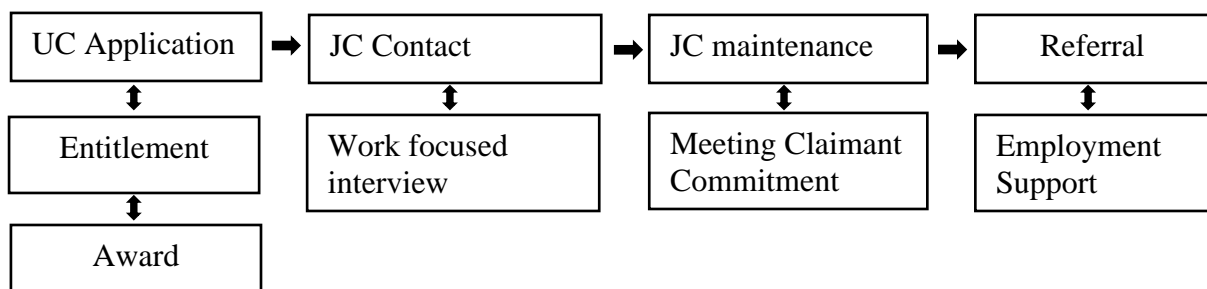
Jobcentre Plus (JCP) Work Coaches are considered traditional Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs) who operate within the confines of Government policy and provide access to public services. As previously discussed in the literature review employment support up to 2011 was provided through the New Deal programmes and the responsibility of JCP Work Coaches. This changed with the introduction of the Work Programme (WP) and the wholesale contracting out of employment support which was the business model initially adopted for the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS).

The following sections will provide further detail about the requirements a person or couple needs to meet to qualify for Universal Credit (UC) and the integral role that JCP Work Coaches play. Prior to an employment support programme referral, this chapter will provide a background and context to why a claimant may be referred by JCP or why an individual may self-refer.

3.1 Universal Credit entitlement

JCP Work Coaches predominantly concentrate on enforcing welfare conditionality, enforcing sanctions and ensuring a claimant is complies with job search activities. Figure 3.1 illustrates the stages and touchpoints a person claiming Universal Credit (UC) will undertake from the application to a potential employment support programme referral.

Figure 3.1 Key touchpoints from application to employment support referral



Source: adapted from Gov.UK 2010

Universal Credit (UC) was introduced in 2010 as part of the Welfare reform agenda and rolled out nationally in 2013 (Gov.UK 2010). UC replaced the following social security legacy benefits:

- Child Tax Credit (CTC)
- Housing Benefit (HB)
- Income Support (IS)
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Working Tax Credit (WTC)

UC is a means-tested social security benefit implemented nationally. All decisions relating to eligibility, rate of payment, how it is paid, and qualifying conditions are reserved to the UK Government (Gov.UK 2021b). The Government pledged to move all claimants on legacy benefits to UC by the end of 2024 (Gov.UK 2023). To be eligible for UC a person or couple should meet the following criteria:

- Be over 18 years and under the State Pension Age (SPA).
- Have less than £16,000 in savings.
- Live in the UK.
- Be unemployed or on a low income.

3.2 Universal Credit application

To claim Universal Credit (UC) an online application has to be made through the nominated Government portal. Once a successful online application for Universal Credit (UC) has been made, the claimant must confirm their identity online or in person at the Jobcentre. The increasing use of digital platforms was discussed in chapter 2, and the potential impact of digital exclusion this has to people accessing vital services. The claimant will be contacted remotely by JCP to arrange an appointment for an initial interview in person. At the face-to-face interview the JCP Work Coach checks the UC application for accuracy, confirm if any evidence is required and arrange the next in person work-focused interview.

3.3 Jobcentre Plus contact

JCP is responsible for ensuring that claimants meet the requirements to continue to be entitled to UC, which usually requires weekly, fortnightly or discretionary visits to their local JCP office (Gov.UK 2011). The most recent iteration of JCP was introduced in 2011, when JCP,

the Pension Service and Disability Carers Service ceased to be executive agencies of DWP and were brought under one Chief Operating Officer (Gov.UK 2011). The restructuring was part of the 2010 spending review (Gov.UK 2011). The core responsibilities of JCP are:

- Helping people move into work from benefit.
- Helps employers advertise vacancies.
- Deals with people who are unemployed or unable to work due to health condition or disability.

3.3.1 Jobcentre Plus access and rationalisation

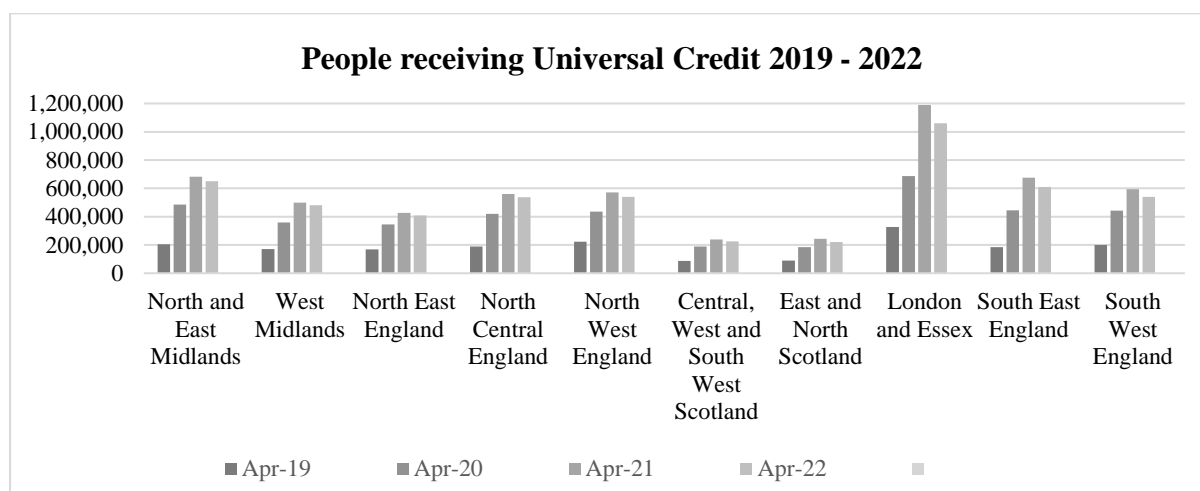
DWP estate rationalisation led to many Jobcentre Plus (JCP) offices being closed and with it a reduction in frontline staff through the digitalisation of UC and falling unemployment rates (Finn 2018). Many DWP estates (including JCP offices) were reaching the end of a 20-year Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract in May 2018 that was previously negotiated under the New Labour Government with Telereal for serviced accommodation (Gov.UK 2015). The 2015 spending review committed the DWP to reduce the size of its estate by 20% through a strategy of JCP closures or smaller offices being merged.

By the end of 2018, the total number of Jobcentre Plus offices in Great Britain was 639 with 105 having been already closed or merged (Gov.UK 2017; Gov.UK 2021a). The consequences of JCP closures meant that claimants faced increased travelling time and travelling costs to access digital devices in JCPs and attend mandatory work focused meetings.

3.3.2 Jobcentre Plus and Covid-19

The pandemic resulted in the number of people claiming UC exponentially increasing from January 2020 to January 2021 which is shown at table 3.1. Initially, the number of Jobcentres and staffing remained at pre-pandemic levels. However, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, 80 new temporary Jobcentres were opened nationwide (Dunton 2021). By April 2022 a total of 194 temporary Jobcentres were opened partly in response to the pandemic and to support the UK Governments initiative ‘Plan for Jobs’ (Gov.UK 2022). Furthermore, Therese Coffey, the Secretary for Work and Pensions announced in July 2020 to double the number of JCP Work Coach capability “to 27,000 by March 2021” (Gov.UK 2020). By March 2021, she reported that DWP had recruited 10,000 Work Coaches and were now operational with a further 3,500 due to start soon (Gov.UK 2021a).

Table 3.1 People receiving Universal Credit pre Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent years.



Source Stat-Xplore Jobcentres/People on Universal Credit.

3.4 Jobcentre Plus and Universal Credit requirements

3.4.1 Employment status

The inclusion of Working Tax Credit (WTC), Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Credit (CTC) meant that people on a low income, working part or full time, were now included with those unemployed and now subject to the same work conditionality rules. The number of hours working was no longer a barrier to claiming Universal Credit (UC) as it was before under the old regime of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). There is no limit to the number of hours worked but UC would be reduced by 0.63p for every £1 earned in 2021 (Gov.UK 2021b) and reduced to 0.55p for every £1 earned in 2022 (Gov.UK 2022). This also meant that people working would now be subject to the same rules and requirements as those unemployed and seeking employment. However, whilst there are no limits to the number of hours a claimant can work to retain UC entitlement, a minimum number of hours is expected which is dependent on personal circumstances such as being single, part of a household or a child's age.

3.4.2 Conditionality

A claimant is allocated to a conditionality regime which specifies the level of work-related activity required that is set out in their claimant commitment. The UC claimant will discuss the work commitment with their work coach during an interview of up to 50 minutes. The Claimant Commitment is an agreement between an individual and Jobcentre Plus, which the individual must accept to receive UC (Gov.uk 2023a). The claimant commitment is customised based on the individual's specific work-related requirements and personal circumstances (Gov.UK 2021c).

This ensures that claimants take ownership of work-related responsibilities and to understand what is required to receive UC. The commitment is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure they remain relevant to their circumstances. Work-related activities are monitored using a variety of channels, with a focus on digital channels such as an online work journal and to-do list. The claimant commitment may include, for example, job search activities, increasing hours of work, contacting employers, updating a CV or attending IT courses. If a claimant cannot meet the responsibilities of their signed claimant commitment, sanctions may be applied by their JCP Work Coach.

3.4.3 Conditionality regimes and benefit sanctions

UC Regulations (2013) states that UC is a sanctionable benefit. A UC claimant is allocated to one of six conditionality regimes shown in table 3.2. Two of the conditionality regimes are not sanctionable whilst four conditionality regimes are sanctionable (Gov.UK 2021d). Chapter 2 has discussed the impact of benefit sanctions and the consequences for claimants subjected to deductions.

Table 3.2 - Universal Credit Conditionality Regime/group and Labour market regime

Conditionality regime	Conditionality Group	Labour Market regime	Sanctionable regime
Searching for work	All work-related requirements	Intensive work search	Yes
Planning for work	Work focused interview	Work focused interview	Yes
Preparing for work	Work preparation	Work preparation	Yes
Working - with Requirements	All work-related requirements	Light touch	Yes
No work requirements	No work-related requirements	No work-related requirements	No
Working - no requirements	No work-related requirements	Working enough	No

Source: Gov.UK (2023)

The placement into the above group depends on personal circumstances as discussed in 3.4.2. However, to determine the categories of ‘intensive work search’ or ‘light touch’ the DWP will apply the Conditionality Earnings Threshold (CET) and the Administrative Earnings Threshold (UK. Gov 2022o). Jobcentre Plus (JCP) will consider a claimant as ‘light touch’ if they have

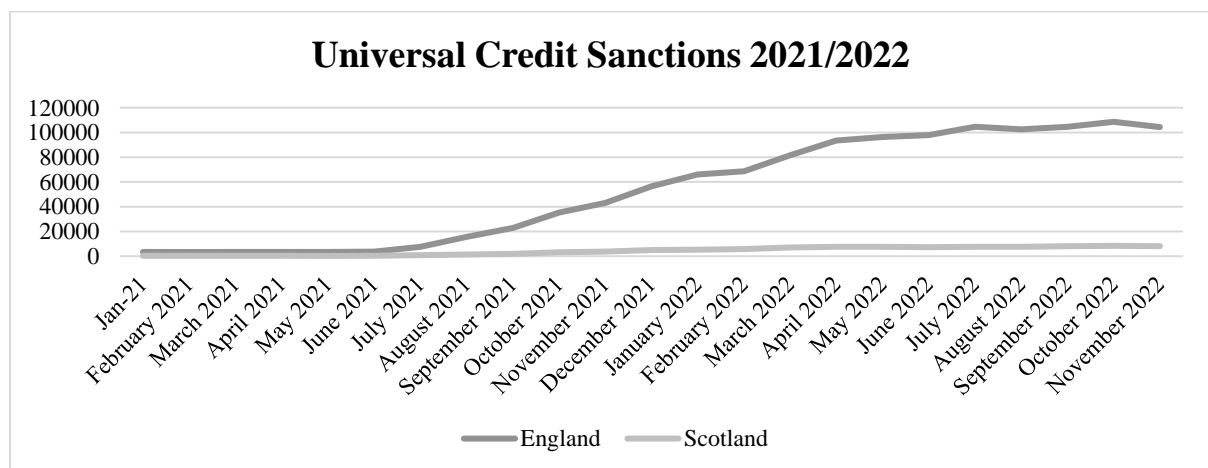
earnings above both the CET and AET. Although the claimant is still subject to a degree of conditionality, the JCP do not require them to attend work-related interviews. In contrast, claimants with a lower income below the AET are placed in the ‘intensive work search’ group who are required to attend work related interviews frequently and increase their working hours, or face benefit sanctions. As of September 2022, if a single claimant is below the AET threshold of £494 per calendar month or below £782 per calendar month for couples, they are categorised in the ‘intensive work search’ regime. The change in the AET moved many claimants from being previously ‘light touch’ to ‘intensive work search’, which increased their contact with Jobcentre Plus and the increased chance of benefit sanctions (ibid).

3.4.4 Benefit Sanctions and Covid-19

The DWP suspended benefit sanctions due to the Covid-19 pandemic on the 30th of March 2020 for three months as JCP staff were allocated to processing UC claims. DWP reintroduced benefit sanctions on the 30th of June 2020 (Gov.UK 2021e).

However, in April 2021 JCP commenced face to face interviews and may account for the exponential increase in sanctions from July 2021 as shown at table 3.3. Interestingly, the sanctions applied in England appear to have increased more than those applied in Scotland. Data from the DWP states that from November 2021 to October 2022, 98.4% of an adverse sanction was a “*Failure to Attend or Participate in a Mandatory Interview*” (Gov.UK 2023) and may be due to the Covid-19 lockdown.

Table 3.3 UC with sanctions applied from January 2021 to November 2022



Source: DWP Stat-Xplore. Sanction rates for Universal Credit GB/Sanction indicator (excluding Wales) -Yes

3.5 Devolved process

The Scottish Government has diverged from the UK Government provides two options to Scottish Universal UC recipients, which are opting to have UC paid every two weeks, instead of monthly or direct payments to landlords where applicable (Gov. Scot 2019a). However, JCP adopts a national strategy to deliver UC which means that the underlying policy objectives remain the same and staff will receive the same generic training. However, the national approach to training JCP staff does not account for varying political discourse or climate between nations as discussed in Chapter 2 or the employment support policy divergence as discussed in Chapter 5.

3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter provides a brief overview of Jobcentre Plus who operate in Great Britain, and specifically between England and Scotland, from where eligible participants for employment support programmes are identified and referred. Three key points are highlighted below which underpin the Universal Credit process:

- Jobcentre Plus offices are responsible for ensuring that claimants meet the conditions of UC, and claimants usually require weekly, fortnightly, or discretionary visits to the local Jobcentre Plus office to remain entitled to UC.
- Jobcentre Plus closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic resulted in the reduction of people being sanctioned.
- Jobcentre Plus commencing face to face interviews from April 2021 resulted in sanctions dramatically increasing from July 2021 due to claimants failing to attend mandatory work interviews.

Understanding the process of UC entitlement and the integral role of JCP Work Coaches is essential as it provides the context and environment that claimants experience prior to an employment programme referral. Employment support policy will be compared and analysed in chapter 5 which compares the policy approach taken between England and Scotland. Whilst chapter 6 and 7 compares and contrasts how frontline advisers from Service Providers who are either Prime Contractors or Sub-contractors engage with the participants referred to them. However, the next chapter will discuss methodological approach taken to engage further research in this area.

Chapter Four: Research design and methodology

This chapter describes, justifies, and applies the chosen research methodologies. It explains the logic behind the selected choices and how were applied to the research. This chapter covers the philosophical and methodological approach taken, how data was collected and includes the analytical approach adopted. Finally, this chapter discusses data retention and the process taken to obtain ethical approval.

The research project will take an inductive and emic approach, seeking to understand the behaviour from a social actor's perspective and in a specific context. This approach aligns with the contributions of previous researchers who have emphasised the importance of advancing knowledge and learning in this area of research (Locke, 2007; Liu, 2016; Bell et al. 2019). By using an inductive and emic approach, this study aims to contribute to literature in the areas of policy and practice to understand behaviours within a specific context while also contributing to also advancing knowledge in this field.

4.1 Introduction

The research project explores how policy and individuals providing employment support programmes in Scotland and England deliver personalised support and services. Therefore, the inductive approach is an appropriate method for this study as it involves identifying patterns, themes, and categories that emerge from the phenomenon being studied. This approach was preferred over deductive or abductive reasoning because it provides detailed insights into the topic. Using the inductive approach, the study develops a comprehensive understanding of personalised services in employment support programmes in Scotland and England. To do this the research objectives are as follows:

To compare and contrast the policies of the two main employability support programmes in Scotland and England.

1. What are the policies regarding employability support programmes in Scotland and England?
2. How do the policies of employability support programmes contrast between Scotland and England?

To compare and analyse the provision of personalised and tailored employment support between Scotland and England.

1. What are the similarities and differences in the provision of employment support programmes between Scotland and England?
2. How do the similarities and differences influence the provision of employment support programmes between Scotland and England?

To compare and analyse Street Level Bureaucrats practices to provide employability support between Scotland and England.

1. What are the similarities and differences in the practices of Street Level Bureaucrats providing personalised and tailored employment support programmes in Scotland and England?
2. How do the similarities and differences influence the practices of Street Level Bureaucrats providing personalised and tailored employment support programmes between Scotland and England?

4.2 Philosophy

4.2.1 Research paradigms

In research, a paradigm serves as a framework that illustrates the philosophical approach and mechanisms applied when undertaking research (Shepherd and Challenger 2012), which Morgan (2007) notes, paradigms have become a “*central concept in social sciences*” (p.49). The research paradigm emphasises a top-down approach and the importance of three components: ontological assumptions, epistemological assumptions, and methodologies for gathering information.

Burrell and Morgan (1979), Guba and Lincoln (1994), and Sale, Lothfeld, and Brazil (2002) argue that separate paradigms are incommensurable because of their differing philosophical assumptions and practical considerations. For instance, Guba and Lincoln (1994) explain that the ontological, epistemological, and methodological choices adopted by a researcher engaged in objective enquiry would be the opposite of those of a researcher engaged in subjective enquiry. However, this stance has been challenged by Hassard and Kelemen (2002) that argues paradigms have common “*concepts, constructs, and practices*” (p. 345). To further understand the philosophical approach and research paradigm adopted for this study the next section will explain the ontological and epistemological direction.

4.2.2 Ontology

According to Burrell and Morgan (1979) and Guba and Lincoln (1994), ontology is the starting point in identifying the appropriate methodology and methods, as the researcher's ontological position influences and informs their epistemological and methodological assumptions to meet the research objectives. Ontology is “*concerned with the theorizing about the nature of reality*” (Bell et al. 2019, p.26) and further expanded by Scotland (2012) who adds that researchers “*need to take a position regarding their perceptions of how things really are and really work*” (p.9). To summarise, ontology relates to the beliefs about the nature of reality and what exists within the world.

Two opposite ontological positions are objectivism and constructionism. Objectivism is the position where things have an “*objective reality independent of our role as observer*” (Bell et al 2019, p.26). The alternative to this is constructionism which adopts the position of things being “*socially constructed entities*” that are “*made real by the actions and understandings of humans*” (Ibid, p.27).

This research project adopts a constructionist ontological position, as opposed to objectivism, based on the premise that social phenomena are constructed and brought to life by people. Social phenomena refer to any observable fact or event that occurs in society and involves human behaviour, interactions, and relationships. It can be a trend, pattern, or process that affects individuals or groups and positively and negatively impact on society.

Constructionism emphasises how social actors create new and meaningful concepts through their discourse and actions (Cunliffe 2010). Gillespie and Cornish (2014) define 'utterance' as spoken, written, or gestured language that constructs new concepts. This position aligns with the objectives of the study, which explores policy discourse and behaviours of social actors who are the research subjects, from which things are “*made real by the actions and understandings of humans*” (Bell et al. 2019, p.27).

4.2.3 Epistemology

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and naturally follows on from ontology (the nature of reality) as this relates to how we gain knowledge of that reality. Scotland (2012) posits that epistemological assumptions lie in how knowledge is “*created, acquired and communicated*” (p.9). Two central epistemological positions are positivism and interpretivism, which are separate approaches to collecting and interpreting knowledge about the nature of reality (ontology). Positivism is concerned with the objective; empirical investigation of the world

using quantitative methods to measure and predict phenomena (Lacity and Jansen 1994). In contrast, interpretivism emphasises the subjective, meaning-laden interpretation of social phenomena, using qualitative methods to understand the experiences and perspectives of individuals within the context of their world (Buckley et al. 2014).

The research gained an in-depth understanding of how individuals provide personalised employment support through their discourse, actions, and behaviours. The study adopted an epistemological interpretivist approach aligned with the ontological approach of constructionism. The interpretivist approach emphasises the involvement of the researcher and acknowledges the subjectivity of knowledge and focusing on the meaning people assign to their actions and experiences.

The approach is particularly suitable for exploring complex social phenomena, such as the provision of personalised employment support, shaped by multiple perspectives and context-dependent factors. This approach also recognises the importance of understanding the perceptions and experiences of social actors which influence actions and behaviours (Sandelowski 2010). Therefore, adopting an interpretivist approach enabled the study to answer the constructs of “*social interaction*” (Bell et al 2019, p.31) and gained a deeper understanding of how social actors influence their environment.

The ontological position of constructionism posits that social phenomena are constructed and brought to life by people. The epistemological approach of interpretivism aims to understand the subjective experiences and meanings of individuals within a social context. These two approaches are considered the most suitable to achieve the research objectives (Burrell and Morgan 1979; Guba and Lincoln 1994). However, it is important to acknowledge the approach taken could be subject to bias and interpretation due to the nature of human behaviour and social interactions. As discussed in section 4.10 of this chapter, steps were taken to mitigate potential biases and to ensure the rigour and validity of the study. (Gillespie and Cornish, 2014). By adopting this stance, the methodological approach to research will be qualitative and discussed in the next section of this chapter.

4.3 Methodology

4.3.1 Methodological approach

A crucial decision that a researcher makes is to select the appropriate methodology to answer their research questions. The methodological approach to this study will espouse a qualitative research methodology based on the ontological and epistemological assumptions discussed in the previous section.

Qualitative research is about interpretation and understanding.

(Aspers and Corte 2019, p.147)

Furthermore, it allowed the researcher to delve deeper into the subject matter through the collection of interviews (Alasuutari 2010) and document analysis. By adopting this approach, the researcher gathered detailed insights into the personal experiences of the participants who are frontline advisers and their environment. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2006), Park and Park (2016), and Idowu (2017) posit that qualitative research can provide insights and a deeper understanding of underlying behaviour, language, and actions.

Qualitative techniques are essential in providing researchers with the flexibility to interpret and examine the perceptions and values a diverse society (Lacity and Janson 1994; Sofaer 1999). This approach is well-suited to the research objectives, as it aims to understand how actors provide personalised employment support, which is highly subjective in nature and previously discussed in the literature review. By adopting a qualitative approach, the research gained an insight into the underlying behaviour, language, and actions of the social actors involved.

4.3.2 Methodology critiques

Qualitative methodology is subject to criticism, and it is essential to ensure that the research conducted is trustworthy. Guba and Lincoln (1994) identified four components of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, which are essential. The application of these is explained in the next section and includes the methods chosen for data collection. It is crucial for researchers to practice self-reflection, maintain transparency and record the decision-making rationale throughout the process (Aspers and Corte 2019). Qualitative research offers flexibility in gathering data, which can be both a benefit and a downside. The naturalistic way of collecting data through qualitative methods can create challenges in measuring “*ethical, practical, or epistemological reasons*”, Idowu noted (2017, p.180). To address those challenges, the research design has discussed the

protocol for selecting participants, ensuring transparency and justifiability in the selection process.

4.3.3 Methodology in practice

Over the last two decades, research on the impacts and delivery of personalised services in public sector areas such as health, education or welfare have used a quantitative or qualitative approach, which was discussed at table 2.3 (Bazeley 2018). The use of qualitative studies was evident where it specifically concentrated on how personalised services have influenced disadvantaged groups, for example, lone parents, younger people or people with disabilities. The studies using a qualitative research strategy have emphasised “*words and images, rather than quantification*” (Bell et al.2019, p.35). Whereas quantitative studies identified in the literature review focused on the analysis of statistics and illustrated the results of where and what personalised services impacted on the overall health and wellbeing of adults and children.

The primary objectives of the study explored how employment support was provided and practised on two levels that involved understanding how policy differed between Scotland and England and how personalised employment support was put into practice. This was achieved by adopting a qualitative research approach as it provided a deeper understanding of social phenomena by analysing words and actions (Venkatesh et al. 2013; Aspers and Corte, 2019). Therefore, the benefit of using this approach is that it allows the flexibility to perform an in-depth investigation and is considered the most appropriate way to address the subjectivity and interpretation of actions, behaviours and the discourse of designing and delivering personalised services.

In this section, the rationale and decisions made to advance the research design have been presented. In the following section, the research methods and the process for selecting the data sample will be discussed in detail. It is essential to consider the research design and the methods used to collect data when researching as it can significantly impact the validity and reliability of the study. The next section will outline the steps taken to ensure that the research design is rigorous and that the data sample represents the research question.

4.4 Data Sample

The study explored the policies introduced, provided and practices of Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs) in the context of employability support programmes in Scotland and England from 2018 to 2021.

The research used two types of data:

- Published Government documents that relate to the development, provision and financial payments of the two employability Support programmes currently in place.
- Semi-structured interviews with employees of Prime Contractors or sub-contractors (Service Providers) contracted by the Government to deliver personalised employment support.

4.4.1 Scottish and UK Government document sample approach

The sampling approach to the selection of documents used a non-probability approach as not all published policy documents were selected. Tables 4.1 and 4.2 provide the details of the published Government documents selected to analyse the different policy approaches between England and Scotland. It is important to note that the documents and information derived from them and used in this study were not used to compare or contrast individual Prime Contractors.

4.4.2 Prime Contractor and Subcontractor sample approach

The sample of organisations were Prime Contractors awarded contracts by the Scottish Government or UK Government to deliver employability support programmes from 2018 to 2021. The non-probability sampling technique is a common approach used in qualitative research and does not involve the random selection advocated by probability sampling. This approach offers several advantages, including flexibility, convenience, and lower financial costs for data collection (Sarstedt et al. 2018). In the current climate of uncertainty, restrictions, and the impact of Covid-19, the flexibility of the non-probability sampling method allows for adaptations to be made as necessary without losing the focus of the research (Scotland 2012).

A form of non-probability sampling is purposive sampling, also known as judgement sampling which involves the researcher deliberately selecting a sample appropriate for the research questions (Rahi 2017). Although purposive sampling may limit the generalisability of the findings, it is often used in qualitative research to gain a more in-depth understanding of a specific population or phenomenon. Having contacted Prime Contractors, several participants provided internal contacts for Prime Contractors and email addresses for potential contacts. Further details about the data selection, the impact of access and interviews can be found at

sections 4.6 and 4.7. Whilst it was intended that purposive sampling would be solely used, due to the fluctuating circumstances created by Covid-19 and the restrictions imposed, snowball sampling naturally occurred during interviews with participants.

4.4.3 Scope of study

This section discusses the different programmes and contractors responsible for employment support in Scotland and England. According to Gov. Scot (2020b), the Scottish Government is responsible for Fair Start Scotland (FSS), which has nine geographical job lots and 5 unique Prime Contractors. In contrast, the UK Government is responsible for the Work and Health Programme (WHP) delivered in England, which has five contract package areas (DWP 2020a) and 5 unique Prime Contractors. Wales and the devolved deals operating in Manchester and London are not in scope. The study did not include Wales and this was deemed out of scope for this study, as the research aims to compare employment support programmes in Scotland and England. The devolved areas were not selected as they have a different procurement process as those areas choose their own providers instead of the UK Government.

There are 10 unique providers, known as Prime Contractors, operating in regions between Scotland and England, with one company, Remploy, operating in both countries. Appendix 1 provides a full list of Scottish and English Prime Contractors, including geographical contract areas and website details for each of these. How the Prime Contractors are chosen for the purposes of this research will be discussed at 4.5.

Table 4.1 Work and Health Programme documents

Work and Health Programme	Available (2023)
Work and Health Programme provider guidance (DWP 2022a)	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/work-and-health-programme-provider-guidance#full-publication-update-history
Public Procurement Policy (DWP 2022b)	https://www.gov.uk/guidance/public-sector-procurement-policy#public-contracts-regulations-2015
Universal Credit statistics: background information and methodology (DWP 2020b)	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-statistics-background-information-and-methodology/universal-credit-statistics-background-information-and-methodology
Work and Health Programme statistics to May 2022 (DWP 2022c)	https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/work-and-health-programme-statistics-to-may-2022/work-and-health-programme-statistics-to-may-2022

Table 4.2 Fair Start Scotland programme documents.

Fair Start Scotland Programme	Available (2023)
Fair Start Scotland action plan	https://www.Gov.Scot/publications/fairer-Scotland-action-plan/
Fair Start Scotland evaluation report 1: implementation and early delivery review (Gov. Scot 2019b)	https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-start-scotland-evaluation-report-1-implementation-early-delivery-review-june-2019/pages/1/
Fair Start Scotland evaluation report 2: overview of year one (Gov.Scot 2019c)	https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-start-scotland-evaluation-report-2-overview-year-1-november-2019/pages/1
Fair Start Scotland evaluation report 3: Overview of year 2. (Gov.Scot 2020e)	https://www.Gov.Scot/publications/fair-start-scotland-evaluation-report-3-overview-year-two/
Fair Start Scotland: evaluation report 4 – Overview of year 3. (Gov. Scot 2021d)	https://www.Gov.Scot/publications/fair-start-scotland-evaluation-report-4-overview-year-3
Fair Start Scotland: Annual Report Year 1. Scottish Government. (Gov.Scot 2019d)	https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-start-scotland-annual-report-year-1/
Fair Start Scotland: Annual Report Year 2. Scottish Government. (Gov.Scot 2020a)	https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-start-scotland-annual-report-year-2/
Fair Start Scotland Annual Report Year 3. Scottish Government. (Gov.Scot 2021a)	https://www.gov.scot/publications/fair-start-scotland-annual-report-year-3/

4.5 Data selection - pre Covid-19 pandemic

This section will detail the original rationale and systematic approach to selecting the Prime Contractors in matched areas. Section 4.6 discusses the modified approach taken due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the different restrictions in place between England and Scotland.

4.5.1 Selection criteria

To identify matched areas, the Travel to Work Areas (TTWAs) were selected instead of Local Authority (LA) areas for the study. The LA areas were not selected as they were geographically larger areas and overlapped the geographical coverage of Prime contractors providing employment support. TTWAs are data commonly used to analyse the labour market at a regional level (Culora and Van Stolk 2020) and in particular, to examine labour supply and demand (Webster 2000; Dewhurst and McCann 2002; Coombes 2016).

TTWA's are defined by Coombes (2010, 2016) as areas "*derived to reflect self-contained areas in which most people both live and work* (p.2). The most recent data recording TTWA and labour market variables were published in February 2021 (Watson 2021). The data reflects the most recent TTWAs derived from the 2011 census and shows 149 areas in England, 45 areas in Scotland and do not overlap with boundaries.

To identify matched TTWA's two variables of supply and demand were taken from the LI03 Regional labour market: Local indicators for travel-to-work areas (Watson 2021). This contains published statistics related to population society and the labour market. The claimant count and job density provide information on the supply and demand for labour in TTWAs.

- Claimant count (Supply)

This measures the number of people for the period October 2019-September 2020, claiming unemployment related benefits from DWP (Clancy and Stam 2010).

- Job Density (Demand)

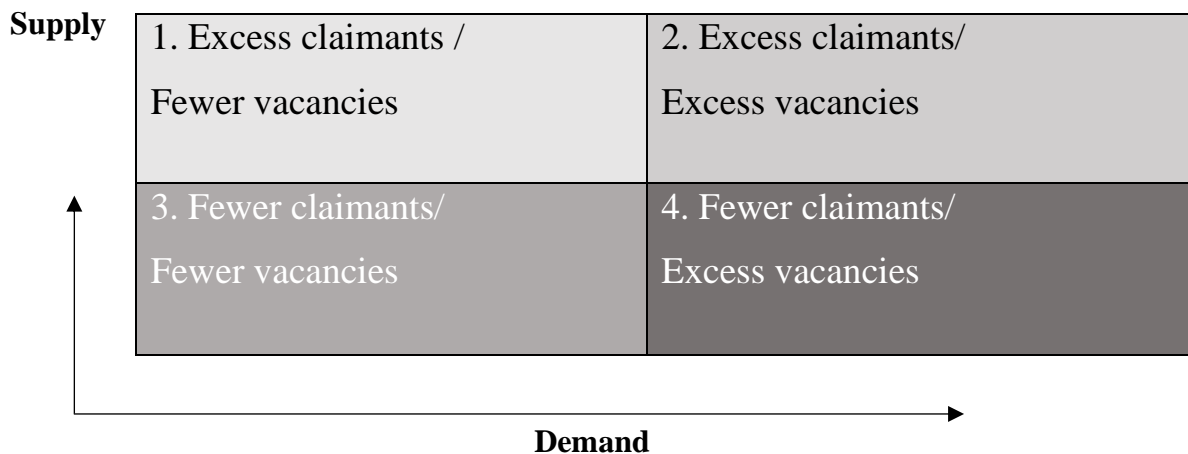
This measures the Job density for 2019 and defined as the number of jobs in an area divided by the resident population aged 16-64 in that area. For example, a job density of 1.0 would mean one job for every resident aged 16-64. The total number of jobs is a workplace-based measure and comprises employee jobs, self-employed, government-supported trainees and HM Forces (Nomis 2020).

A systematic criterion to identify matched areas is essential to ensure a targeted and accurate approach. Therefore, the selection criteria will incorporate the TTWAs, claimant count and job density as indicators of the local labour market. By utilising these indicators, the study will

identify matched areas more likely to have similar labour market characteristics, allowing for more meaningful and accurate comparisons between Scotland and England.

Using TTWA, claimant count and job density, the next step was to apply a methodological approach to find common trends to supply and demand within the TTWAs. To carry this out four categories of supply and demand were applied in the context of the claimant count and job density.

Figure: 4.1 Supply and Demand framework



Category 1 – Excess claimants/Fewer vacancies

This is when the area has more job seekers than vacancies available. For example, a higher ratio of job seekers per vacancy. Therefore, personalised employment services are effective in this category as the support provided would enhance the chances of the job seeker to compete against other applicants.

Category 2 - Excess claimants /Excess vacancies

This is when the area has a large number of claimants and many vacancies. This signifies a lack of job seekers to fill employment vacancies. Therefore, personalised employment services would be in demand to enhance skills which overcome barriers to employment as there is a high rate of potential job seekers and a high rate of vacancies to be filled.

Category 3 – Fewer claimants /Excess vacancies

This is where the area has fewer claimants and fewer job seekers competing for vacancies. Personalised employment services for this category may be aimed at job seekers already in part-time work looking for additional work. This is also a stipulation to receive Universal Credit and where, appropriate, part-time workers may face sanctions if they fail to increase their hours to reduce dependency on state benefits.

Category 4 – Fewer claimants /Fewer vacancies

This is where the area has fewer claimants and fewer vacancies. This means that personalised support services may not be in demand unless those already in employment require additional assistance to move within the labour market.

To identify TTWAs into the four categories, the averages for each country was used from Nomis data published February 2021. This was used instead of the Great Britain average as Wales is out of scope (Watson 2021).

Scotland:

- Average Claimant Count 4.6 - number of people for the period October 2019 to September 2020, claiming unemployment related benefits from DWP.
- Average Job Density 0.82 - The number of jobs in an area/by the resident population aged 16-64 in that area.

England:

- Average Claimant Count 4.5 - Number of people for the period October 2019-September 2020, claiming unemployment related benefits from DWP.
- Average Job Density 0.88 - The number of jobs in an area/by the resident population aged 16-64 in that area.

The breakdown of these four categories for Scotland can be found at appendix 2 and for England at appendix 3. Selecting the top TTWAs in each of the categories for Scotland and England will allow for in-depth analysis on how Prime Contractors design and deliver personalised support services at a regional and local level and how this may address specific labour market supply and demand. Using the results of this process, the top four TTWAs from Scotland and England were identified at table 4.3 alongside the corresponding Prime Contractor delivering personalised support services in this area.

Table 4.3 Prime Contractors identified.

Category	Scotland TTWA	Prime Contractor responsible for the TTWA	England TTWA	Prime Contractor responsible for the TTWA
1	Kilmarnock and Irvine	Start Scotland Limited	Hartlepool	Reed in Partnership
2	Dunoon and Rothesay	People Plus Ltd (Private)	Manchester	Ingeus and The Growth Company
3	Falkirk and Stirling	Falkirk Council (Public Sector)	Mansfield	Reed in Partnership
4	Ullapool	People Plus Ltd (Private)	Ashford	Shaw Trust (Third Sector)

The Prime Contractors included in the study were selected based on their location within the identified travel to work areas (TTWAs) using the criteria of claimant count and job density. The TTWAs were defined by the 2011 census and the data used for claimant count and job density was published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for 2019/2020 and 2018 respectively. However, it is important to note that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the labour market since the data was collected and is discussed at 4.6.

4.5.2 Selection of frontline advisers

This section discusses the sample selection related to the employees of prime contractors and sub-contractors who provide personalised services. The study was not based on age, religion, race, or gender-based; therefore, these variables will not factor into the selection (Aspers and Corte 2019). The sample selection process is a crucial step to identify the target population for the study which were frontline managers, team leaders or advisers providing personalised support to participants referred either to Fair Start Scotland or the Work and Health Programme.

According to Lavrakas (2008), this approach may lead to selection bias, as the contractors may feel pressured to select participants who are unwilling to participate or who might offer biased opinions. This could impact data collected, as participants may be reluctant to provide accurate answers to questions and lead to a potential bias in the data. Moreover, selecting participants who best represent the organisation in a positive light can also impact the accuracy of the data collected. This approach can lead to the information gathered not fully reflecting the actual

situation or circumstances. Therefore, it was crucial to consider these limitations when identifying and selecting participants for the study.

To avoid the possibility of bias, potential participants were provided with the researcher's email address, and all communication was directly between the participant and the researcher, which bypassed line managers or third parties in the Prime Contractor. The researcher did not inform the Prime Contractor of the participants names or expressions of interest. Additionally, a participant information sheet was provided, which covered the aim of the research, how data is collected, data storage, and their right to withdraw. Informed consent was obtained to ensure that all the participants who agreed to participate in the study knew that their participation was entirely voluntary and anonymised.

These measures were essential to ensure that the study was conducted ethically and data collected was accurate and representative of the target population. Providing participants with information about the study and obtaining their consent ensured that they were aware of their rights and made an informed decision about their participation.

4.6 Data selection - impact of Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic and the differing lockdown restrictions between England and Scotland presented significant challenges to sourcing research participants and the possibility to travel. Obtaining ethical approval coincided with the introduction of restriction levels in Scotland from 20 April 2021 and step 2 of restrictions implemented by the UK Government.

The change in access impacted on the original TTWA selection of Prime Contractors as they were managing partial returns to the office, navigating hybrid working, organising arrangements for participants, and the resumption of Jobcentre Plus face-to-face contact. This in turn impacted data collection and resulted in delays to obtaining access to frontline advisers in Prime Contractors as they transitioned to new working arrangements.

Due to continual changes, emails and follow-up phone calls were made to all WHP Prime Contractors and FSS Prime contractors over the period May 2021 to March 2022 . A further 114 organisational websites were accessed to identify if they delivered either the WHP or FSS as a sub-contractor. This resulted in 32 organisations being initially contacted alongside additional reminders and phone calls being made at relevant intervals.

4.6.1 Scotland

Despite the uncertainty during this period of time, 21 interviews were secured with frontline managers and advisers providing FSS. The interviews were conducted remotely and the implications of this is discussed at 4.8 of this chapter. The interviews consisted of 13 people employed by Prime Contractors and 8 people employed by a sub-contractor. Additionally, the researcher managed to secure an interview with Scottish Government procurement specialist which provided additional context to FSS policy.

4.6.2 England

Two Prime Contractors in England who were being corresponded with regularly had indicated an interest and requested delaying participation until the Covid-19 situation and staffing had stabilised. However, by January 2022 both organisations had eventually declined, citing organisational pressures and workload. In September 2021, a new English Prime Contractor agreed to take part in the research and permission from the DWP was received in March 2022 for the organisation to take part. This resulted in 11 interviews being undertaken remotely with frontline managers and advisers situated in different geographical locations within the responsibility of the Prime Contractor. A WHP procurement specialist was sourced, however several emails and phone calls to DWP were unanswered.

4.7 Data collection

The study explored the behaviours and actions of employees providing personalised employment support programmes, of which semi-structured interview were undertaken as the data collection method.

This approach was chosen due to its ability to capture rich and detailed data on the participants perspectives, experiences, and attitudes (Bell et al. 2019). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility in the questioning process, allowing participants to express their views in their own words while ensuring that key topics are covered (Braun and Clarke 2006). Overall, semi-structured interviews enabled the study to provide a deeper insight into the perspectives and experiences of employees involved in employment support programmes.

Semi-structured interviews are a valuable tool for collecting in-depth information about the behaviours and actions of employment support employees. Literature discusses that a face-to-face environment allows the opportunity to gain valuable insights, such as non-verbal cues and reactions to questions asked (Venkatesh et al. 2013). However, there are disadvantages to using

this method; for example, in a face-to-face environment, it may be time-consuming and require additional arrangements such as travel, time and place (Park and Park 2016; Idowu 2017). Additionally, creating a conducive environment is critical to ensure that the interviewee is comfortable and confident in being honest with responses. Participants were made aware of why they were selected, the nature of the interview, the format, and that it is entirely voluntary. Whilst the original intention was to conduct the semi-structured interviews in a face-to-face environment, the researcher remotely undertook the interviews due to the uncertainty of the restrictions and travel limitations. In the next section the limitations of the tools used to gather data are discussed.

4.7.1 Limitations

At the time, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the traditional method of conducting face-to-face interviews. Therefore, the semi-structured interviews were not conducted in a face-to-face environment and carried out remotely via MS Teams. However, the option was given to all participants of using a telephone or platforms such as Zoom or Skype. While both methods offer several advantages, there were also some disadvantages.

One significant advantage of using this method for semi-structured interviews was that it enabled the researcher to overcome geographical boundaries, reduced costs and saved time travelling to different locations (Shuy 2003). Given that the current study covers geographical locations between Scotland and England, this was an advantage and pertinent at the time. The option to have a traditional telephone interview also offered the participant anonymity and privacy, whereupon they may feel less self-consciousness and more open in responses (Drabble et al. 2016). This approach was also offered in cases where there may have been a lack of camera, have a poor internet connection or did not have adaptive technology.

The disadvantages using remote methods for data collection was the absence of face-to-face contact as this could limit the rapport between the interviewer and participant (Gaskell et al. 2003). Additionally, technological issues such as internet connectivity, audio, video delays, or malfunctions could disrupt communication (Glogowska et al. 2011). In addition, the lack of visual tools in telephone interviews or voice-only video conferencing means that non-verbal cues cannot be observed, which may limit the depth and quality of the data collected (Cachia and Millward 2011). Furthermore, proficiency in using the equipment may have been an issue for some participants, especially those with disabilities such as visual or hearing impairments (Shuy 2003).

These were considered when contacting participants and alternative options were provided. However, the Covid-19 pandemic increased the use of MS Teams. All participants that agreed to take part in the interviews were already proficient on this platform, used a camera and all but 1 interview had some connectivity issues which were quickly resolved.

4.7.2 Topic guide

The topic guide that facilitated the semi-structured interviews is at appendix 4 in this thesis. The questions were developed to understand how Prime Contractors managed participants and the experiences of the frontline staff delivering the WHP or FSS.

4.8 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyse data collected through semi-structured interviews in this study. The analysis involved identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns developed from the raw data (Braun and Clarke 2006). This method was selected because there is limited knowledge about how Service Providers engage in the provision and practice of employability support between Scotland and England post-2018.

Thematic analysis is a widely used and versatile method which has been applied to various research questions and types of data. It is a systematic approach involving several stages, including familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes and producing a report.

In the context of this study, a thematic analysis enabled the development of common themes and patterns related to the engagement and design of employability support procurement. Using this method, made it possible to explore and gain valuable insights into the processes and practices of Prime and sub-contractors in this area.

However, there was a possibility of deductive disclosure, during the research which presented a challenge. The information provided from the in-depth interviews could inadvertently lead to the identification of a participant (Kaiser 2009). This risked damaging the relationship between the researcher and the participant, causing distrust and eliciting responses that were not open and honest.

The first core principle of ethics is to do no harm. Therefore, it was vital to ensure anonymity and confidentiality to protect both the participants and the integrity of the research. To address this, personal information, such as age or location was redacted which may lead to the participant being deductively identified.

4.9 Data retention

Authorisation was obtained from the participants to record interviews via the consent sheet. The interviews were recorded on a suitable digital device in a private and quiet location. All sensitive data was stored on the University of Stirling one drive, which is secure and encrypted, facilitating access through a multiple-factor authorisation system. The transcriptions were coded appropriately to ensure anonymity, confidentiality (Braun and Clarke 2006) and stored separately to the interviews.

The transcription process is a crucial step in qualitative research, as it allows for the transformation of audio or visual data into a written format that can be analysed systematically. Using appropriate recording and storage techniques ensures the security and confidentiality of sensitive data, while the coding of transcriptions facilitates the identification of themes and patterns in the data (Bazeley 2018).

Currently, all data collected, the nature in which it is used and how it is stored is covered by the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), governed by the European Union (ICO 2020). Both the UK Government (Gov.UK 2020) and the Information Commissioners Offices (ICO) have advised that after Brexit, GDPR will be retained in UK law. However, some amendments may be required to make it functional with UK law such as the transfer of data with other EU countries. The data gathered will not be shared with any EU or other country deemed to be a risk. The participant information sheet stated that the data collected is protected under GDPR as per the UK regulations post Brexit and has ensured that the most up to date guidance was documented to the point when the interview took place (Gov.UK 2020f).

The participants have the right to request their personal information and be provided electronically. Adherence to data protection processes is not only a legal requirement but also contributes to the transparency and integrity of the research. Moreover, by demonstrating a commitment to GDPR requirements, potential participants may have felt more confident about agreeing to participate in an interview knowing that safeguards were in place. Additionally, the data collected were:

- Anonymised to protect the identity of participants.
- Used solely for research purposes and not shared with any third parties.
- Relevant and limited to the nature of the research questions.

These measures ensured that the participants privacy and confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. This was alongside adherence to the legal requirements of

GDPR post Brexit and the Data Protection handbook published by the University of Stirling (2020a) to ensure that data protection rules are observed.

4.10 Trustworthiness of data

Reliability and validity were important aspects to consider evaluating the trustworthiness and rigour of qualitative research. Although the use of reliability in qualitative research is questioned, it is still an important concept to consider (Stenbacka 2001). However, it is acknowledged that qualitative research is more subjective and interpretive in nature than quantitative research, which can make establishing reliability and validity more challenging.

While there are different ways to approach the assessment of reliability in qualitative research, such as inter-coder reliability and member checking, the emphasis is often placed on establishing trustworthiness through strategies such as reflexivity, transparency, and triangulation (Golafshani 2003). Therefore, while the assessment of reliability in qualitative research may differ from that of quantitative research, ensuring the trustworthiness and rigour of qualitative research is no less important.

The reliability of the data used in this research was ensured by following a rigorous methodology that has been described in detail in this chapter. Each stage of the research process, including the selection of participants, data collection, and analysis, was carefully planned and executed to ensure accuracy and transparency. This approach is in line with best practices for ensuring the reliability of qualitative research.

Triangulation in qualitative research refers to the use of multiple data sources to enhance the credibility and validity of findings. In this research data has been collected from official and published policy documents and have cross-validated and explored how these have influenced frontline advisers, team leaders and managers from FSS and the WHP. The data gathered also included an interview with a Scottish Government procurement specialist which further corroborated the FSS policy approach. Triangulation will help to minimise bias and strengthens the overall reliability and trustworthiness of the study's conclusions.

4.11 Ethical considerations

Ethics is a crucial aspect of research that applies to both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Bell et al. 2019). Guillemin and Gillam (2010) present two dimensions of ethics, procedural ethics, and ethics in practice. The study being undertaken does not intend to interview participants who are under the age of 18 or those who are considered vulnerable. This ensures

that the ethical requirements are considered and potential harm or discomfort to participants is minimised. Ethical approval granted April 2021 by the University of Stirling GUEP. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded the research and adheres to the ESRC framework for research ethics (ESRC 2020).

4.11.1 Ethics and secondary data

Data was used from documents published in the public domain and generated independently from the researcher. This means that the researcher could not be critiqued for unduly influencing responses (Ainsworth and Hardy 2009).

Authenticity

To ensure the authenticity of documents used in this study, websites containing the Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS) was used to access and download the documents from the internet.

Representation

The research was not designed to be presented deceptively, and the information concerning the research was transparent and accessible.

Copyright

The research adhered to UK legislation and complied with the various requirements, including General Data Protection Regulations, copyright laws and informed consent. The open license for Government documents, which includes copyright, replication, and reproduction instructions, was also followed to ensure the ethical use of data (UK Government, 2021).

Confidentiality

The documents used in this research were already published in the public domain, they were not open to change or manipulation.

4.11.2 Ethics and semi-structured interviews

Gatekeepers of the selected organisations initially provided access to participants (Miller and Bell 2012). The organisation was provided information about the research in an introductory email, which included an option to discuss the study further face-to-face or via an agreed platform. This approach ensured that the organisations were fully informed and involved in the research process, reducing the risk of harm and deception. Once access was approved and participants identified, the researcher sent correspondence independently of the organisation. It was crucial to treat all participants equally, and the steps taken ensured the protection of their

welfare, respect, and dignity, leading to confidence in the ethical approach and the integrity of the research.

Informed Consent

Informed consent ensured that all participants who agreed to take part in the research were fully informed of the topic and the reason why they were invited to participate. The principles of informed consent were followed, whereby participants were advised and able to make an autonomous decision on participation based on factual information. If participants agreed to take part, they were sent a participant consent form via email, which they were required to read and return to confirm their consent.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

In either qualitative or quantitative research, maintaining the anonymity and confidentiality of participants is key to ethical research practice, and all efforts were taken to ensure this before, during, and after data collection (Wiles et al. 2008). Anonymity was also crucial for legal considerations where participants may be identified and subsequently victimised due to the information they provided. Anonymity was also applied to organisations to protect not only the participants but also from potential legal action where an organisation considers reputational risk should data be published.

The nature of the study was comparative between Scotland and England, so geographical anonymity could not be provided. However, the study did not adopt a case study approach and instead used thematic analysis. The chosen methodology looked for themes rather than how a named organisation operated. In practice, this meant that the data collected from participants was not linear or separated into the specific Prime Contractors or Subcontractors.

4.12 Summary

The Methodology chapter has aimed to provide a comprehensive and detailed account of the philosophical approach, how data was collected and analysed to provide assurance, transparency, and integrity. Applying a systematic approach ensured that the research was both credible in its approach and provided confidence in the results produced. The next chapter analyses the policy approaches taken by the Work and Health Programme and Fair Start Scotland.

Chapter 5 National policy approach to employment support programmes

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the policy structure and approach of the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS). Current policy documents and guidance will inform this chapter. The WHP policy (Gov. UK 2021f) relates to the core service only and not the Job Entry Targeted Scheme (DWP 2020c) introduced in October 2020. The two employability programmes discussed in this chapter are:

- Work and Health Programme (Powell 2020) in all parts of England from April 2018
- Fair Start in Scotland (Gov. Scot 2017) in all parts of Scotland from April 2018

The programmes were chosen as they are the primary employment support initiatives introduced to replace the Work Programme (WP). Both programmes have been operating for the same period of time and the publications assessing their respective performances are over the same period. The first objective is covered in section 5.2, which establishes and compares the purpose, procurement, providers and procedures of the two programmes identified.

To compare and contrast the policies of the two main employability support programmes in Scotland and England.

1. What are the policies regarding employability support programmes in Scotland and England?
2. How do the policies of employability support programmes contrast between Scotland and England?

From 5.3 the second objective details the stages of provision which compares and analyses the programme approach taken by the WHP and FSS.

To compare and analyse the provision of personalised and tailored employment support between Scotland and England.

1. What are the similarities and differences in the provision of employment support programmes between Scotland and England?
2. How do the similarities and differences influence the provision of employment support programmes between Scotland and England?

5.2 Programme approach

This section will compare the programme approach of four areas: purpose, procurement, providers and procedures. This section will conclude with a comparison of the two programmes in these areas.

5.2.1 Programme purpose

The Work and Health Programme (WHP) was implemented nationally in April 2018 and part of a wider strategy that aimed to tackle unemployment. The Conservative Government were returned to Government in 2017 and pledged to “*give unemployed disabled claimants or those with a health condition personalised and tailored employment support*” (The Conservative and Unionist party manifesto 2017, p.57). The WHP was introduced in the in the White Paper titled ‘*Improving Lives The Future of Work, Health and Disability*’ (DWP 2017) which aimed to provide participants with tailored and personalised support. This would address personal and/or structural barriers that prevented unemployed job seekers from gaining access to the labour market (Powell 2020). The UK Government chose to contract out the provision of employment support to Prime Contractors operating in the private, public and third sectors.

Fair Start Scotland (FSS) has three underlying and fundamental principles: fairness, dignity, and respect (Gov. Scot 2019). The programme aims to provide customised, adaptable, and individualised pre-employment assistance and in-work support to participants.

“the primary purpose of any Employability programme isn't to find people a job that bit gets confused is to give people the skills and the tools to help find that job and also to compete effectively in the labour market”

Scottish procurement specialist (17)

To effectively deliver employability services, FSS has developed a strategic employability journey that outlines various stages ranging from being not job ready to job ready (FSS 2022a).The next section will discuss the mechanisms in place to provide the employment support programmes.

5.2.2 Programme procurement

Work and Health Programme procurement

Whilst a member of the European Union (EU), the UK Government worked within the procurement frameworks and incorporated EU directives into UK law. The predominant Public Contracts Regulations are within the Public Contracts Regulations of 2015 (Gov. UK 2021b).

On leaving the EU, the procurement process in the UK is undergoing reform with a new Procurement Bill currently at the committee stage (UK Parliament 2022a). Therefore, the following discussion will be based on the regulations as of 2022 and before the new Procurement Bill gains Royal Assent (Gov.UK 2022n).

The Crown Commercial Services (CCS) is an executive agency sponsored by the Cabinet Office that is responsible for policy, advice and guidance to businesses searching for public sector contracts and tender bids. Access to this information can be found on the CCS website (Gov. UK 2022d; Gov.UK 2021h). Additionally, the contracts finder portal for contracts over £10, 000 and the Find a tender service for high value contracts usually above £118,000 is available via an electronic portal (DWP 2022b) and locked unless users register. However, this service is to provide information only as each UK Government Department is responsible for its own procurement process. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) approach is exclusive only to the WHP as the Scottish Government is solely responsible for procuring services through a separate system discussed further in this section.

The DWP are solely responsible for procuring services to deliver the WHP in England and originally put out to tender in October 2015 (Powell 2020). Prime Contractors were invited to tender under the DWP Umbrella agreement to deliver the WHP which is currently being proposed to be extended until September 2024 (Gov. UK 2023).

Fair Start Scotland procurement

The Scottish Government have a separate procurement process from the UK Government as laid out in the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 (Gov. Scot 2022d) the Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015 and Amendment Regulations 2016 (Gov. Scot 2022e).

“The procurements one of the devolved powers. So, it is not at the UK minister’s behest it is ours and there’s a Scottish approach to procurement”

Scottish procurement specialist (17)

Instructions on submitting a bid for a public sector contract in Scotland are carried out through an electronic procurement portal launched in 2008 and has since become the default requirement for all Scottish public sector bodies to submit a bid from 2016 (Gov. Scot 2022f). Procurement is the responsibility of the Scottish Procurement and Property Directorate and responsible for facilitating the procurement of services to meet public service needs (Gov. Scot 2022f).

“The procurement journey is very transparent and it sets out all the stages that need to be done in any procurement process”

Scottish procurement specialist (17)

The procurement journey has three routes which businesses can access to bid on public sector contracts in Scotland (Gov. Scot 2022g) and is dependent on the value of the procurement contract, which is:

- Route 1 - Low value/risk/non-repetitive and under 50k.
- Route 2 - Regulated procurements between 50k and under the threshold*.
- Route 3 – Regulated procurements and above the threshold*.

**The threshold is based on the Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA) and revised every two years (Gov. Scot 2022g)*

“So, under £50000, that's unregulated procurement. So actually, it's not going to be worth advertising across the whole of Europe”

Scottish procurement specialist (17)

Scottish public procurement has committed to including a Fair Work First approach, which has advised Public bodies to pay the real living wage for workers on public contracts and is *“incorporated in all relevant procurement processes in financial year 2022/23”* (Gov. Scot 2021b). Additionally, Fair Work First, which is a Scottish Government policy, has also asked that any businesses bidding for public contracts consider implementing the following:

- Union representation.
- End to precarious working contracts such as Zero hours and fire and rehire practices.
- Create a more diverse and equal workplace.

5.2.3 Programme providers

The Work and Health Programme Service Providers

For the WHP the contracts in England are split into five geographical areas known as contract package areas (CPAs). These are closely matched to Jobcentre Plus groups: the Home Counties, Central, Northeast, Northwest, and Southern England (Powell 2020). Additionally, two areas were further devolved, Manchester and London and referred to as Local Government Partners (LGPS). The two devolved areas of Manchester and London are responsible for their own procurement of services which are managed through their local authorities (Gov. UK 2022e). The successful Prime contractors currently in place at year three of the WHP contract are shown at appendix 1. DWP Procurement guidance stipulates that any suppliers, including

Prime contractors, who use sub-contractors must pay for services procured in 30 days (Gov. UK 2022f).

Far Start Scotland Service Providers

An open procurement process was launched by Public Contracts Scotland in 2017 and concluded with a selection of private, public and third-party Prime Contractors being awarded contracts to deliver FSS employability Services commencing 2018 (Gov. Scot 2018). The contract was initially designed to run until 31/03/2021 but was extended to 31/03/2023 (Gov. Scot 2020d) due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Eight geographical areas were tendered out to Prime Contractors, as the contract for Remploy covering Tayside was deemed reserved because it was a supported provider.

“the Scottish model of procurement, which looks at things like sustainability and supporting supported businesses”

Scottish procurement specialist (17)

FSS have nine geographical areas with employment support services provided currently by five suppliers (Gov. Scot 2018; Gov.Scot 2022c). A list of the providers can be found at appendix 1. A consultation process was carried out by Scottish Government with a wide range of stakeholders to decide on the nine areas that considered health board boundaries, local authorities and Jobcentres but eventually it was agreed on a geographical split.

“So, we floated a number and what we tried to do was to look at a wee bit at travel to work patterns, but also geography and stuff like that. So, what we came up with eventually was a geographical split that got the most votes from a survey”

Scottish procurement specialist (17)

The successful providers will then subcontract specialised services to organisations as part of their supply chain. The supply chain management process is independent to the Merlin standard and regulated through the Scottish Procurement and Property Directorate (Gov. Scot 2022h).

“It was a UK standard. Scottish Ministers wanted this to be very different”

Scottish procurement specialist (17)

Each supply chain partner is provided with a contract that fully outlines their roles and responsibilities and the agreement that providers will pay subcontracted partners within thirty days of providing services (Gov. Scot 2022h).

“We asked for a letter to come in signed by that subcontractor saying they were aware of the terms in the contract they were aware they should be paid within 30 days”

Scottish procurement specialist (17)

5.2.4 Programme procedures

The UK Government have provided regulatory guides online to support WHP Prime Contractors (Gov. UK 2022g; Gov.UK 2022h). These guides outline the minimum level of provision necessary to fulfil contractual obligations and require Prime Contractors to support participants from referral to exiting the programme (DWP 2022a). However, unlike the WHP, regulatory guidance for providers of Fair Start Scotland is not available online and was obtained from Scottish Government published reports, Prime Contractors and latterly a Freedom of Information request sent to the Scottish Government. The FSS minimum service standards were developed based on prior experience of the Work Programme and the black box approach.

“some of those delivery standards. were very clear, they were very SMART, specific and so on. Some of them you could have driven a truck through”

Scottish procurement specialist (17)

To ensure compliance, each contracted out Prime Contractor are required to meet a set of minimum service standards. However, it was also acknowledged that the minimum service standards would be reviewed based on feedback and after a period of FSS being delivered.

“we are looking at the refining some of them they are a wee bit maybe overly prescriptive”

Scottish procurement specialist (17)

Failure to meet these requirements may result in a reduced job service fee or no job outcome payment as this was considered as a mechanism to avoid the parking and creaming of participants.

“if any of those key delivery indicators can't be evidenced, we recover a sum of money against that. That's called a service credit so that was a part of the mechanism for removing the kind of the kind of a temptation if you like to park and cream”

Scottish procurement specialist (17)

5.2.5 Comparison - Programme approach

The WHP and FSS primarily have the same aims and objectives that constitute employment support. Both programmes should provide personalised and tailored services to unemployed people considered to be part of a disadvantaged group and have barriers to accessing the labour market.

Procurement and providers

Both the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS) have adopted the same approach as the Work Programme which contracted out services to providers across geographical areas. The evidence provided demonstrates that both England and Scotland have diverged in their procurement processes and have independent processes accessed through separate portals. Table 5.1 illustrates the key differences in the approaches taken to contracting out that is based on geography and population. Furthermore, alongside the procurement process, a devolved Scotland has diverged with the introduction of supply chain guidance as it does not have the equivalent of the DWP Merlin Standards.

Table 5.1 Common areas of procurement

	The Work and Health Programme	Fair Start Scotland
Devolved	-	Yes
Procurement responsibility	DWP	Scottish Government
Procurement access	Online portal through Crown Commercial Services	Online portal through Scottish Government
Geographical areas for tender	5 areas (excluding Wales) 2 devolved areas (London and Manchester)	9 areas

Summary of section 5.2

Additionally, the WHP introduced a Jobcentre Plus (JCP) comparator, to assess how JCP provided employment support. However, Scotland does not have a public sector comparator because working age benefits are not devolved, and JCP remain under the control of the UK Government.

The Jobcentre Plus comparator was introduced to compare the performance of the public sector against external contracted-out Prime Contractors. However, regarding FSS, there is a question as to what the alternative would be to compare the delivery of employability support as it has limited access to UK Government resources, such as the JCP network or responsibility for

Universal Credit (UC). As the national network of Jobcentre offices remain under the control of the UK Government, the Scottish Government could not adopt this approach. Options to provide employability support through an alternative public sector approach were limited at the time, as the new Scottish Social Security system was not yet in place. While the UK Government have adopted a New Public Management approach reminiscent to the WP, it will be interesting to observe if this approach would be reconsidered by Scotland should Jobcentres be devolved to Scotland.

programme procedures

Both the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS) have a set of minimum service standards that providers must comply. However, there are some differences in the types of actions required and the language used. The minimum service standards are divided into two types of actions required:

- Participant focused, which are those that communicate directly with the participant by the providers.
- Administrative tasks, which are those that require forms or actions to be completed and do not include the participant.

The WHP's minimum service standards are known as Customer Service Standards (CSS), which are Specific, Measurable, Accurate, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART) objectives. In contrast, FSS has more participant-related tasks and fewer administrative tasks, with no target percentages. Additionally, the FSS Key Delivery indicators (KDIs) rarely mention touchpoints with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), for example the types of forms to be completed. Table 5.2 illustrates the differences in the number of administrative and participant touchpoints and includes an example of language used. A complete list of the CSS and KDIs can be found in full at appendix 5 and appendix 6. Section 5.3 will explore the minimum service standards in more detail and how these relate to each of the programmes.

The ownership of the programmes may explain these differences, as the WHP is operated by the DWP, which already had a well-established record of administering employability programmes. This was suggested by a Scottish procurement specialist when discussing the development of FSS KDI's that previous WP minimum service standards were SMART but some were not so strong in compliance. This would suggest that FSS which is operated by the Scottish Government, based their development of the KDI's on the experience of the WP to ensure that compliance was unambiguous. The next section introduces the second objective of

this thesis and will discuss how the minimum service standards influence the WHP and FSS and how Prime Contractors respond to these.

5.2.6 Summary

This section has focused on the approach taken by the WHP and FSS by identifying four key areas: purpose, procurement, providers and procedures. Whilst both programmes have the same objectives and have adopted a similar contracted-out model, the procedural approach taken is different and potentially will influence the provision of the programme by Street Level Bureaucrats. Section 5.3 explores in greater detail the procedural guidance used to guide the provision of the WHP and FSS by Prime Contractors.

Table 5.2 Summary of minimum service standards

	Work and Health Programme	Fair Start Scotland
Regulated tasks	Customer Service Standards (16) (CSS) Participant focused tasks (9) Administrative focused tasks (7)	Key Delivery Indicators (19) (KDIs) 16 Participant focused tasks (16) Administrative focused tasks (3)

Example of an Administrative task and participant focused task.

	Work and Health Programme	Fair Start Scotland
Administrative focused	CSS 1 states: <i>The Contractor must acknowledge 99.5% of referrals on (PRaP) system within 2 (two) working days of receipt of the referral.</i>	KDI 12 States: <i>Procedure for Disengagement by Participant If the Service Provider is unable to engage the Participant within 5 Working Days of disengaging they must contact DWP.</i>
Participant focused	CSS 2 states: <i>The Contractor will attempt to contact a potential Participant within 2 (two) Working Days of receiving a Referral.</i>	KDI 3 States: <i>Induction (Stages 4 and 5) Within one working day following receipt of referral, the Service Provider must notify the Participant and DWP, in writing of the date and time of the Induction Interview</i>

Source: Appendices 5 and 6

5.3 Comparative programme framework

This section discusses the provision of employment support and will identify the key stages of the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS). This will address the second objective and the subsequent questions:

To compare and analyse the provision of personalised and tailored employment support between Scotland and England.

1. What are the similarities and differences in the provision of employment support programmes between Scotland and England?
2. How do the similarities and differences influence the provision of employment support programmes between Scotland and England?

5.3.1 Key programme stages

The WHP guidance and the FSS strategic employability pipeline share the same goal: to provide a personalised and flexible service that caters to the individual needs of participants. The journey of a participant starts with a referral, followed by accessing personalised services, identifying their needs and finally exiting the programme. In order to effectively compare and contrast the participant journey, the WHP guidance and FSS strategic employability pipeline are compared with the key stages identified of the participant journey.

Table 5.3 compares and contrasts the services each Prime Contractor should provide to participants as part of their employability journey. By outlining these stages, both programmes can ensure that their services meet the unique needs of each participant and help them achieve their goals in a tailored and effective way.

Table 5.3 Key stages of the participant journey and programme tasks.

	The Work and Health Programme (DWP 2022a)	Working days	Fair Start Scotland (FSS 2022a)	Working days
Key Stages	Participant Identification, eligibility, and referral. Acknowledging referrals and participant contact.	(4)	Referral, engagement/assessment, Participant contact	(2)

Initial participant engagement and registering a start. Action planning	(20)	Needs assessment	(20)
Collaborating with participants with complex needs/and/or additional support requirements	(326)	Vocational activity, employment engagement and job matching	(261)
Programme completers and early exits	(130)	In work and aftercare	(261)

Source: Taken from the minimum service standards identified for each programme at appendices 5 and 6

Table 5.3 highlights the key stages of the participant's journey which identifies four common stages, which are:

- Access - eligible participants identified and referred to a Prime Contractor.
- Assessment - initial engagement and assessment of participants needs.
- Collaboration - regular meeting between the Prime Contractor or Sub-contractor and participant.
- Support - supporting the participant when in employment.

Expanding on table 5.3, the minimum service standards identified at appendix 5 and 6 have been organised into the four key stages identified at table 5.4. This table shows the number of days a Street Level Bureaucrat (SLB) must action a WHP Customer Service Standard (CSS) or a FSS Key Delivery Indicator (KDI). It also highlights where an SLB or participant has the flexibility and discretion to alter the number of days required to complete the task.

Table 5.4 - Detailed minimum service standards

Key: Acc - Access , Asst - Assessment, Collab - Collaboration and Supt - Support.

CSS - Customer service standard, KDI - Key delivery indicator.

Stage	Summary of Action	CSS/ KDI	WHP (Working days)	Participant discretion	FSS (Working days)	Participant discretion
Acc	<i>Contact participant.</i>	<i>CSS 2/ KDI 3</i>	<i>Within 2 days from receipt of referral.</i>	<i>Fixed</i>	<i>1 day from receipt of referral.</i>	<i>Fixed</i>
Asst	<i>Initial interview/Induction.</i>	<i>CSS 3/ KDI 1,2</i>	<i>Within 15 days from receipt of referral.</i>	<i>Flexible unless mandated</i>	<i>Within 10 days from receipt.</i>	<i>Not stated in KDI</i>
Asst	<i>Courtesy phone call to participant.</i>	<i>KDI 4</i>			<i>2 days before interview/induction.</i>	<i>Fixed</i>
Asst	<i>Segmentation Tool for service strand (FSS Questionnaire)</i>	<i>KDI 8</i>			<i>Within 15 days from receipt.</i>	<i>Not stated in KDI</i>
Asst	<i>Service strand confirmed.</i>	<i>KDI 9</i>			<i>Within 15 days from receipt.</i>	<i>Not stated in KDI</i>
Asst	<i>Copy of Standards to participant.</i>	<i>CSS 6</i>	<i>1 day from acceptance on programme.</i>	<i>Fixed</i>		
Asst	<i>Induction pack and signed participant agreement.</i>	<i>KDI 5</i>			<i>Within 15 days from receipt: Weeks 1-3 Service Provider must demonstrate engagement with the Participant Weeks 4 - PES End Date (20 days)</i>	<i>Not stated in KDI</i>

Stage	Summary of Action	CSS/ KDI	WHP (Working days)	Participant discretion	FSS (Working days)	Participant discretion
Asst	<i>Action plan finalised.</i>	<i>CSS 7</i>	<i>20 days from receipt of referral.</i>	<i>Flexible</i>		
Collab	<i>Action plan reviewed and updated.</i>	<i>CSS 8/ KDI 6</i>	<i>Every 10 days (minimum)</i>	<i>Flexible</i>	<i>Weekly (5 days)</i>	<i>Not stated</i>
Collab	<i>Face to Face review.</i>	<i>KDI 7</i>			<i>Monthly (28 days)</i>	<i>Not stated in KDI</i>
Collab	<i>Referral to specialist support.</i>	<i>KDI 16</i>			<i>Immediate</i>	<i>Fixed</i>
Collab	<i>Vocational Profiling offered.</i>	<i>KDI 18</i>			<i>Not timebound</i>	<i>Not stated in KDI</i>
Collab	<i>Supported Employment Model for disabled people and Individual Placement and Support (IPS) available and offered.</i>	<i>KDI 19</i>			<i>Needs basis</i>	<i>Not stated in KDI</i>
Collab	<i>Participant misses meeting.</i>	<i>CSS 9</i>	<i>Within 2 days</i>	<i>Fixed</i>		
Collab	<i>Contact participant after notified of disengagement.</i>	<i>KDI 11</i>			<i>Within 1 day of being notified participant will not continue on the service.</i>	<i>Fixed</i>
Collab	<i>Exiting the Programme employed or disengaged</i>	<i>CSS 12/ KDI 13</i>	<i>Exit package within 10 days</i>	<i>Fixed</i>	<i>Leavers Plan Within 10 days of participant exit date.</i>	<i>Fixed</i>

Stage	Summary of Action	CSS/ KDI	WHP (Working days)	Participant discretion	FSS (Working days)	Participant discretion
Supt	<i>Attempt made to discuss in work support needs before Job start</i>	<i>CSS 10</i>	<i>Not time bound</i>	<i>Flexible</i>		
Supt	<i>Attempt made to contact, to provide in work support</i>	<i>CSS 11</i>	<i>Remote contact every 10 days</i>	<i>Flexible</i>		
Supt	<i>Job Analysis to inform the In-Work Support Action Plan. (Participant consent, must be agreed with the employer)</i>	<i>KDI 17</i>			<i>Within 10 days of each job start.</i>	
Supt	<i>Produce In-Work Support Action Plan agreed with participant</i>	<i>KDI 10</i>			<i>Within 10 days of job start</i>	<i>Fixed</i>

Source: Adapted from minimum service standards shown at appendix 5 and 6

The following sections 5.4, 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7 have used the four key stages, which are shown at table 5.5 and used these as a comparative framework to analyse the similarities and differences between WHP and FSS policy and how Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs) facilitate the provision of employment support. Chapters 6 and 7 explore the behaviour of frontline advisers and how they influence the key stages of the participant’s journey.

Table 5.5 Comparative analytical framework-Participant journey key stages

Stages	Actions	Policy/Provision	SLB Practice
5.4 Access	Participant eligibility	<i>Based on programme requirements set by the UK and Scottish Government</i>	} Chapter 6 Street Level Practice
	Provider referral	<i>CSS 2, KDI 3</i>	
5.5 Assessment	Provider contact	<i>CSS 3,6 KDI 1,2, 4</i>	
	Participant planning	<i>CSS 7 KDI 5,8,9</i>	
5.6 Collaboration	Participant engagement	<i>CSS 8 KDI 6,7,16,18,19</i>	} Chapter 7 Street Level Practice
	Participant disengagement	<i>CSS 9,12 KDI 11,13</i>	
5.7 Support	Provider contact	<i>CSS 10,11 KDI 10</i>	
	Provider remuneration	<i>Based on programme requirements set by the UK and Scottish Government</i>	

Sources: Participant journey 5.3.1/Minimum service standards table 5.4/Section 2.3 to 2.7

5.4 Programme access

The first section will compare and contrast how participants gain access to the programmes using the following two metrics:

- Participant eligibility
- Provider referral

5.4.1 Participant eligibility

The Work and Health Programme (WHP) is available to participants over the age of 18 with no upper age limit and to people who are receiving Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Income Support (IS), Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Universal Credit (UC) or are not in receipt of benefits. Full details of a participant's eligibility for the WHP and FSS can be found at appendix 7. Additionally, participants must be in one of the following groups as defined by the UK Government (DWP 2017)

- Disability group
- Early access group
- Long-term unemployed (LTU).

The disability group and early access groups do not have to wait for a qualifying period to start on the WHP. The LTU are mandated to attend the WHP if receiving a qualifying benefit for 24 months or more. However, with the introduction a new employability support programme called Restart, where the LTU are now defined as being unemployed for 9 months, it is likely that the LTU who may have previously been mandated under the WHP will be referred to this.

Fair Start Scotland (FSS) is available to participants over the age of 18 with no upper age limit and to people who are receiving JSA, IS, ESA, UC or not in receipt of benefits. Additionally, participants eligible for referral to FSS are people with disabilities, health conditions, carers and other groups considered by the Scottish Government to be disadvantaged in some way such as single parents or minority ethnic groups (Gov. Scot 2019). FSS will also consider participants outside of these groups if they reach 12 months unemployment. Jobcentre Plus will route third party referrals to FSS when the eligibility requirements are met.

5.4.2 Analysis of participant eligibility

The approach to participant eligibility between the WHP and FSS have some similarities, which are shown at table 5.6 and highlights certain key groups who are classed as disadvantaged. The main core group at table 5.6 for the WHP and FSS are similar and align

with programme objectives which is to increase employment opportunities for disadvantaged people furthest from the labour market. For example, people with disabilities or the long-term unemployed.

Table 5.6 Common target groups between the WHP and FSS

Work and Health Programme	Fair Start Scotland
<i>Disabled (as defined by the Equality Act 2010)</i>	<i>Disabled (as defined by the Equality Act 2010)</i>
<i>Carer or ex carer</i>	<i>Carer</i>
<i>Long Term Unemployed over 24 Months</i>	<i>Long Term Unemployed over 12 (was 24 months)</i>
<i>Ex offender/Community service</i>	<i>Person with a conviction</i>
<i>Refugee</i>	<i>Refugees</i>
<i>Care leaver</i>	<i>Care experienced young people</i>

Source: (Gov. Scot 2019; Gov.UK 2022a)

However, there also appears to be a country-centric approach between England and Scotland where the programmes deviate and are shown in table 5.7. This suggests that the groups identified are focused on addressing social issues and are considered to be current and separate priorities between England and Scotland. For example, in the case of the WHP, the inclusion of “*a young person involved or at risk of being in a gang*” highlights the ongoing issues of gang-related violence in inner city areas such as London. However, in Scotland, gang related violence does not appear to be an area that has been commonly reported on over the past five years.

Table 5.7 Uncommon target groups between the WHP and FSS

Work and Health Programme	Fair Start Scotland
<i>A young person involved or at risk of being in a gang.</i>	<i>Lone Parents</i>
<i>Drug and alcohol dependency</i>	<i>Ethnic Minorities</i>
<i>Ex/Armed forces/reservist or partner</i>	<i>Resident in 15% most Deprived areas</i>
<i>A victim of domestic violence</i>	<i>Have a health condition that is a barrier to work</i>
<i>A homeless person</i>	
<i>An Afghan resettler</i>	

Source: (Gov. Scot 2019; Gov.UK 2022a)

Interestingly, the WHP does not include ethnic minorities. However, in 2022 the eligible groups were amended to include Afghan resettlers (Gov. UK 2022h), which reflects the introduction of the UK Government Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme in January 2022 (Gov. UK 2022i). Therefore, this would suggest that the list is not static and may evolve to include current priorities such as immigration initiatives.

In contrast whilst FSS has included refugees and ethnic minorities, it has not explicitly included Afghan resettlers. Therefore, it is likely that this inclusion in the WHP is due to it being a UK policy and not specifically a Scottish Government policy as immigration is a reserved policy. Alternatively, the Scottish Government may already feel that the inclusion of refugees is a catch-all which covers these areas already.

Another example of divergence is in the areas of substance abuse such as drug and alcohol dependency. This has specifically been included in the WHP but not in FSS. Scotland has a well-documented issue with both drug and alcohol dependency, which has led to a range of drug addiction initiatives being implemented and alcohol-limiting policies introduced over the last decade (Gov. Scot 2022a). However, not including these categories may again be due to legislative control where in the case of drug control the legislation is reserved to the UK Government and as such outside the remit of Scottish policy. Having legislative control in policy areas, such as the rationale for targeting specific groups can be further supported when recently the Scottish Government documented that devolution has enabled *“the Scottish Parliament and Government to set policy in areas of fundamental economic, social and cultural importance to Scotland”* (Scot Gov 2021a).

Unlike the WHP, FSS has committed to addressing poverty and deprivation with targeted employment support to those that live in the 15% of the most deprived areas, as reported by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (Gov. Scot 2022b). The Scottish Government has a history of tackling poverty with the introduction of the of a social justice strategy by the Scottish executive in 1999 (Scott and Mooney1999). Before FSS went live the Scottish Government published the Fairer Scotland Action Plan alongside the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill published in 2017 (Gov.UK 2016) and committed to reducing poverty rates and inequality. Having discussed who is eligible to access the programmes, the next section will discuss the referral process to employment support programmes.

5.4.3 Participant referral

A significant similarity is that both programmes are voluntary, which is a fundamental change from the mandatory Work Programme (WP). The mandatory aspect of the WP may have led to participants joining to avoid the negative consequences of benefits sanctions. The divergence from a mandatory to voluntary programme highlights a major change in the approach taken, which could influence the motivation and number of participants who join. The change to a voluntary programme requires participants to give their consent before a referral to the WHP or FSS. Participants can access and be referred to both programmes in three ways:

- The Jobcentre Plus
- Third Party referral
- Self-Referral

The WHP guidance states that “*Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches will use their expertise and skills to perform the key role of identifying eligible Participants*” (Gov.UK 2022b, para 8) but are the final decision makers. Additionally, DWP approved Organisations can signpost individuals to the WHP, but “*the final decision regarding a referral to WHP Core will remain with DWP*” (Gov.UK 2022b, para 24). The guidance does not stipulate whether reasons other than eligibility or suitability would prevent access to the WHP or the definition of expertise and skills. Whilst eligibility is discussed in 5.4.1 and 5.4.2, the Jobcentre Plus (JCP) Work Coach will also consider the claimants suitability based on confirming that they are committed to finding employment in 12 months. Furthermore, suitability will also include the same JCP Work Coach deciding if the claimant will benefit from the help provided by the programme and if they have already completed low level work activities such as completing a CV. Claimants selected to join the programme will have their claimant commitment updated by the JCP Work Coach and the referral recorded on the Providers Referral and Payment (PRaP) system (Gov.UK 2022c).

In contrast, a freedom of information request obtained from the Scottish Government in July 2022 confirmed that there are “*There are no requirements for all referrals to go directly through the Jobcentre*”. However, participants referred through a Third-Party Organisation (TPO) and receiving a working age benefit will only go via JCP for an eligibility check and the referral will be recorded on the Scottish Employability Tracking System (SETS). Where a participant is not in receipt of a working age benefit the Prime Contractor will record this on SETS separately.

5.4.4 Analysis of participant referral

The quarterly percentage of overall referrals for FSS and the WHP is shown in Table 5.8. However, care should be taken to avoid directly comparing the percentages as the base numbers are geographically different in each country. For example, the target population of Scotland is significantly lower than that of England and as such there may be more extreme differences in the WHP percentage changes. Table 5.8 highlights the initial deficit of referrals for FSS at the beginning of the programme compared to the WHP and may be attributed to FSS being a newly devolved initiative. The referral numbers are influenced by several factors that include the claimant's autonomy to participate, the Prime Contractor's autonomy to independently source referrals and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Voluntary participation

WHP participation is voluntary for the disability and early access groups (Gov.UK 2022b). Additionally, people who are not receiving a working age benefit can also request a referral but must satisfy the other qualifying conditions, such as not being employed or in full-time education. The only participants that JCP can mandate to join an employability support programme are the long-term unemployed (LTU) in England. However, the introduction of Restart in England now means JCP will refer participants identified as being LTU at 9 months to the WHP. In the case of FSS, the LTU definition was originally 24 months, but unlike the WHP, FSS never mandated LTU participants. FSS changed the 24 months to 12 months in April 2021 in response to the Covid-19 labour market changes to provide early access to the programme.

In the case of FSS, the programme is voluntary for all participants, including those who are unemployed at 12 months. The entirely voluntary aspect of FSS is consistently referred to in publications released by the Scottish Government as being a key principle.

“Yes, they saw it as an extension of government. That's one of the one of many reasons why the Fair Start Scotland is entirely voluntary and that took quite a lot of manoeuvring with our colleagues in DWP to get that agreement because we're not in charge as you know of the main benefits in Scotland is Still, with DWP and they decide what conditionality looks like, and there was an awful lot of toing and froing to get that voluntary arrangement agreement”

Scottish procurement specialist (17)

Table 5.8 Percentage changes to quarterly referrals

Quarterly Period	FSS	WHP	Key dates
April - June 2018	n/a	n/a	<i>FSS and WHP nationally implemented</i>
July - September 2018	- 41%	17%	
October - December 2018	-13%	29%	
January - March 2019	46%	17%	
April - June 2019	- 7%	- 20%	
July - September 2019	1%	3%	
October - December 2019	- 9%	- 1%	
January - March 2020	10%	- 7%	
April - June 2020	- 40%	- 81%	<i>March to June 2020 - Jobcentre Plus suspend face to face interviews and referrals</i>
July - September 2020	38%	606%	<i>September 2020 - Kickstart launched in England and Scotland</i>
October - December 2020	- 11%	16%	<i>October 2020 - JETS launched in England.</i>
January - March 2021	39%	11%	<i>January 2021- JETS launched in Scotland</i>
April - June 2021	16%	- 5%	<i>April 2021- Jobcentre Plus full services resumed. June 2021- Restart, DWP flagship programme launched in England only.</i>
July - September 2021	- 7%	- 2%	
October - December 2021	- 17%	- 20%	<i>December 2021- applications closed for Kickstart</i>
January - March 2022	20%	3%	
April - June 2022	- 3%	- 19%	
July - September 2022	- 7%	6%	<i>September 2022 - JETS Referrals ceased</i>

Source: Adapted from DWP Stat Xplore Individual referrals on WHP (excluding Wales); FSS (2022c)

Whilst the FSS programme is voluntary and no claimant will be mandated to join, if they are registered with Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and will complete a claimant commitment. As with the WHP, if they fail to meet their work-related activities in the claimant commitment, JCP could apply sanctions to their benefit payments (Gov. UK 2021a; Gov.UK 2021g). Therefore, FSS participants who are subject to JCP regulations may indirectly feel pressured into joining the programme to avoid benefit sanctions and this negates a fundamental FSS principle.

Alternative sources of referrals to Prime Contractors

The official statistics published by the DWP, or the Scottish Government do not provide a separate number of referrals generated from JCP or alternative routes. The closest to determining the ratio of referral routes was recorded in the FSS yearly evaluation reports. The report highlights the decrease in participants being referred by JCP and an increase in participants signposted to FSS by third parties or sourced independently by FSS Prime Contractors. FSS do not face the same constraints as the WHP which is discussed at 5.4.3. Table 5.9 shows that in the years 2018 - 2019 the referrals made by JCP to FSS was 86% but fell to 47% by 2020 - 2021. Furthermore, the increase in the use of non JCP routes does not appear to have been influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic as there was also a significant reduction in the years 2019-2020.

Table 5.9 Fair Start Scotland percentage of referrals from JCP and alternate routes

Year	Evaluation	Job Centre	Non JCP routes
2018 - 2019	First year report	86%	14%
2019 -2020	Second Year Report	55%	45%
2020 - 2021	Third Year Report	47%	53%

Source: FSS Evaluation reports year 1, year 2 and year 3.

A referral made by JCP Work Coach will first consider the eligibility and suitability of the claimant. As previously discussed, the suitability criteria consists of three areas:

- Is the claimant committed to finding employment in 12 months
- Will they benefit from WHP support
- Have they completed low level activities such as completion of a CV

Whilst the eligibility has a clear criterion, the suitability criteria may be open to interpretation by the Jobcentre Plus Work Coach, especially in the area of assessing if the claimant will benefit from the WHP. Furthermore, a participant may say what they think a Jobcentre Plus Work Coach wants to hear and that they are committed to finding employment. This means

that potential participants for the WHP will be subject to an eligibility and suitability check by a JCP Work Coach. Whereas, with FSS, the referrals made through non JCP routes are only subject to the eligibility criteria and are not vetted for suitability by JCP Work Coaches.

Table 5.9 would suggest that FSS Prime Contractors have fully engaged with and utilised their autonomy to source independently of Jobcentre Plus. The potential implication of using a non-JCP route could be that participants referred to FSS meet the eligibility criteria but are not suitable for the programme and rejected by FSS at the initial induction interview. However, as discussed in 5.4.5 the referrals to confirmed starts on FSS do not appear to be impacted by the use of non-JCP routes potentially referring unsuitable participants.

The impact of Covid-19 on referral numbers

The Covid-19 pandemic influenced the referrals made to the WHP and FSS in two ways, which was the suspension of Jobcentre Plus (JCP) face to face interviews and the introduction by the UK Government of three new employability initiatives.

JCP suspended face to face interviews for the period March 2020 to June 2020 which impacted on the number of referrals made for this period and shown in table 5.8 (Gov.Scot 2020c; Gov.UK 2021e). Subsequently, the exponential increase is evident for the WHP when JCP partially resumed their services in July 2020 and the resumption of benefits sanctions. Whereas, for FSS the changes in the percentages are not as extreme, which may be due to the increased number of referrals from non JCP routes which was 53% by year 3 and was minimally impacted by Jobcentre closures.

Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic prompted the UK Government to introduce three new employment initiatives shown at table 5.10 which overlap with the WHP and FSS eligibility criteria as discussed at 5.4.1.

Table 5.10 - New employability initiatives introduced because of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Programme	Commenced	Aim	
Kickstart	September 2020 to September 2022	Funds employers' six-month employment opportunities for individuals aged 16-24 receiving Universal Credit (DWP 2021)	Voluntary
Job Entry Targeted Scheme (JETS)	October 2020 to September 2022	Offers up to six months targeted assistance to individuals 18+ receiving New Style Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit for a minimum of 13 weeks.	Voluntary

Restart (Not in Scotland)	June 2021 to June 2025	Offers twelve months of tailored support for claimants Universal Credit who have been out of work for at least nine months.	Mandatory
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Source: (DWP 2020c; Gov.UK 2020e; NAO 2021)

It is difficult to establish the impact of Kickstart and JETS (DWP 2020c; Gov.UK 2020e) on the referral numbers to the WHP and FSS as there is no detailed statistics available which show if a Kickstart or JETS participant would have been alternatively referred to them. However, the percentage of referrals suggest there was a minimal impact as only FSS had one quarterly decrease in the period October 2020 to December 2020. The next significant employment initiative launched was the mandatory Restart programme introduced in England only, which aimed to target the LTU who have been out of work for at least nine months.

Since the introduction of Restart in England the referral figures for the WHP appear to have decreased. This may be a reaction to a recent National audit office (NAO 2021), which highlighted that for Restart the “*DWP realised that its Work Coaches were referring far fewer people to the scheme than it had expected*” and in response to this the DWP “*widened the eligibility criteria for the scheme to increase the number of people who would be referred*”. The approach taken by DWP may have had an impact on the reduction of numbers for the WHP but not for FSS as Restart is not available in Scotland. The next section explores the number of referrals that convert to actual starts on either the WHP or FSS.

5.4.5 Referral to starts

A start on the WHP or FSS is recorded when a participant who has been referred then engages at the initial induction meeting and agrees to join the programme. Table 5.11 shows the percentages of referrals to starts made by the WHP or FSS. The conversion rate from referral to start is influenced by certain factors, such as the participant being suitable to join the programme, or the participant choosing not to join the programme at the induction stage.

Table 5.11 Quarterly percentage change of referrals converted to starts on FSS or the WHP

Quarterly Period	FSS	WHP
April - June 2018	48%	76%
July - September 2018	59%	71%
October - December 2018	63%	69%
January - March 2019	67%	77%
April - June 2019	69%	82%

July - September 2019	70%	78%
October - December 2019	69%	74%
January - March 2020	71%	82%
April - June 2020	85%	52%
July - September 2020	76%	63%
October - December 2020	72%	65%
January - March 2021	69%	62%
April - June 2021	67%	61%
July - September 2021	66%	61%
October - December 2021	65%	61%
January - March 2022	69%	65%
April - June 2022	68%	64%
July - September 2022	63%	63%

Source: DWP Stat Xplore Individual starts on WHP (excluding Wales). FSS (2022c)

5.4.6 Analysis of referral to start

Key trends from the table highlight that the WHP are marginally higher with the conversion of referrals to starts than FSS up to March 2020. However, at the start of the lockdown and with the suspension of Jobcentre Plus (JCP) services, the conversion rates for FSS were higher than the WHP. This may be due to how FSS was sourcing referrals during this period that targeted non JCP routes, such as successfully networking through social media platforms and Facebook groups (Gov. Scot 2021a). As such the participants may have been exposed to a different dynamic from that of the formal environment of a JCP office and informal environment of a non JCP route. From April 2021 and with the full resumption of JCP services, both programmes have similar conversion rates of between 61% and 69% which are lower than the period before the JCP suspension of referrals.

As discussed at 5.4.3, FSS referrals are not required to be suitable by JCP meaning that FSS Prime Contractors did not face the same constraints as their WHP counterparts to recruit. The number of referrals sourced by FSS from non JCP routes and converted to starts have not gone through a suitability check performed by JCP. Therefore, this raises questions about need for a suitability criterion or how this is carried out by Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches discussed at 5.4.4. The suitability criteria applied by the Jobcentre Plus Work Coach will assess the motivation of the claimant to find a job, if they would benefit from the programme and had completed initial job search activities. If the eligible FSS participant was signposted by a third

party or sourced independently of JCP, then a suitability check is not applied and potentially the participants are not suitable to join.

The suitability of a participant would be established at the induction stage of FSS and if unsuitable to join the programme would mean that the referral would not convert to a start. However, the lack of a suitability check carried out by JCP does not appear to have impacted on the number referrals that have converted to starts on FSS as shown at table 5.11. In fact, where FSS have reduced their dependency on JCP referrals, the conversion rate of starts have increased. This would indicate that the criteria applied by the JCP are not indicators of an eligible participant being suitable or not suitable to join and questions the requirement for it to be applied at all. Therefore, it could be suggested that Prime Contractors, especially for the WHP, are best placed to decide on the suitability of eligible participants and not dependent on discretion of JCP Work Coaches. Additionally, participants may be more motivated to seek employment and join the programme through informal contact made by a non-JCP route as opposed to the formality of visiting a JCP office.

5.5 Programme assessment

This section will cover the second stage of the comparative framework, which is the assessment of participants in the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS).

The assessment is based on the following actions

- Prime Contractor acceptance
- Prime Contractor induction

5.5.1 Prime Contractor acceptance

The Customer Service Standards (CSS) and Key Delivery Indicators (KDIs) are shown at table 5.12 for the WHP and FSS that relate to provider acceptance.

Table 5.12 Minimum service standards for acceptance of referral

Action	CSS/KDI	WHP (Working days)	FSS (Working days)
<i>Contact participant</i>	<i>CSS 2/ KDI 3</i>	<i>2 days from receipt of referral</i>	<i>Within 1 day from receipt</i>

Source: Table 5.4

Work and Health programme

All referrals are recorded by the Jobcentre Plus via the Provider Referrals and Payments (PRaP) with the personal information of the participant and accepted by the provider within two

working days. The WHP guidance states that a failure to refer through PRaP will mean that a start date cannot be recorded and a job outcome payment will not be made to the Prime Contractor (Gov.UK 2022c). A failure to acknowledge the referral could result in financial losses for the Prime Contractor which is discussed in section 5.7.

Fair Start Scotland

FSS has stated the participant is contacted within one working day following receipt of the referral either from Jobcentre Plus (JCP) or a non-JCP route. As with the WHP, a failure to acknowledge the referral could result in financial losses for the Prime Contractor which is discussed at section 5.7.

5.5.2 Analysis of Prime Contractor acceptance

The findings show a similar approach to the acceptance of referrals by Prime Contractors, which are carried out in the case of the WHP within 2 days and FSS within 1 day. The monthly remuneration payment to Prime Contractors does not start until the participant has formally agreed to join at the induction stage. Therefore, the acceptance dates are only recorded to measure the time from the receipt of the referral to participant acceptance.

5.5.3 Prime Contractor induction

The induction meeting is recorded as a start on both programmes and the number of starts for both programmes are shown at table 5.11. Table 5.13 Shows the minimum service standards for each of the programmes that will aim to assess the participants needs and support to overcome barriers.

Table 5.13 Minimum service standards for service provider induction

Action	CSS/KDI	WHP (Working days)	FSS (Working days)
<i>Initial interview/Induction</i>	<i>CSS 3 KDI 1, KDI 2</i>	<i>Within 15 days from receipt of referral</i>	<i>Within 10 days from receipt</i>
<i>Courtesy phone call to participant</i>	<i>KDI 4</i>		<i>2 days before interview/induction</i>
<i>Segmentation Tool for service strand (FSS Questionnaire)</i>	<i>KDI 8</i>		<i>Within 15 days from receipt</i>
<i>Service strand confirmed</i>	<i>KDI 9</i>		<i>Within 15 days from receipt</i>
<i>Copy of Standards</i>	<i>CSS 6</i>	<i>1 day from acceptance on programme</i>	

<i>Induction pack and signed participant agreement</i>	<i>KDI 5</i>	<i>Within 15 days</i>
<i>Action plan finalised</i>	<i>CSS 7</i>	<i>Within 20 Days of receipt of the Referral.</i>

Source: Table 5.4

Work and Health Programme

Once the Prime Contractor accepts a referral, the participant is contacted by them within two days and arranges an initial induction meeting within fifteen days (Gov. UK 2022a). After the induction interview the participant is recorded as a start on the programme and receives a copy of the customer service standards within one day of the induction.

The minimum service standards state that an action plan is developed between the provider and the participant. The finalised action plan will be a two-way discussion with the frontline adviser and signed by the participant, within 20 days of the referral and acceptance onto the programme (Gov.UK 2022k). The frontline adviser evidences all actions taken and where there is any deviation, such as a participant’s missing signature, a failure to do so may impact on delivery fees or job outcome payments.

Fair Start Scotland

FSS have two KDIs relating to the initial interview of participants referred to in the programme. The first KDI sets a target of five working days with a further five days allocated if the FSS frontline adviser does not meet the first target. FSS will contact the participant within one day of the referral and additionally contact the participant by phone, two days before the induction interview to address or alleviate any concerns.

At the induction interview, the participant completes a questionnaire which the FSS frontline adviser uses to determine the allocated strand. The three segments, also known as strands, are core, advanced and intense, which the FSS frontline adviser uses the FSS questionnaire and their own discretion to determine the participant’s strand. This strand that a participant is allocated to will decide the level of job outcome that a Prime Contractor will receive as a participant who in the intense strand will require more support than someone in the core strand.

The allocation of strands is an area that is checked by the Scottish Government when the Prime Contractors are quality assured. If a participant goes into employment within eight weeks, then irrespective of the strand, the Prime Contractor will be paid at the core rate.

“If they move into employment within the first eight weeks, then we will pay them at core, which is the lowest level of payment.”

Scottish procurement specialist (17)

FSS have not published the exact weighting of participants allocated to each of these strands, which may be due to the financial sensitivity of the information. Descriptions of the strands or service groups were extracted from the Fair Start Scotland: evaluation report 4, year 3 (Gov. Scot 2021d) and the economic evaluation report published (Gov. Scot 2022i). Full details of the characteristics of the strands are in appendix 8. At the induction interview for FSS the participant will receive an induction package and sign a participant agreement. At this point, the Prime Contractor will accept the participant onto the FSS programme.

5.5.4 Analysis of Prime Contractor induction

The findings show that the induction process is different between the WHP and FSS. The WHP appear to have adopted a light touch approach with only two CSS at this stage in comparison with FSS which has six KDIs. Only two of the CSS indicators match three of the KDIs relating to arranging the induction interview and providing the participant with details of the providers and their responsibilities.

WHP induction process

However, whilst there is a light touch in respect of the WHP minimum service standards, the WHP frontline adviser is responsible for tailoring their approach towards participants who may be considered as having *“complex needs and/or additional support requirements”* (Gov.UK 2022i). This is a two-way process between the WHP frontline adviser and Jobcentre Plus, identified at the point of referral or when the participant is already on the programme. The WHP guidance discusses that tangible or intangible complex and /or additional needs, such as disability or those detailed in the Equality Act 2010 will require reasonable adjustments and equal access to services (Gov.UK 2022i).

Other tangible factors include the ability of the participant to maintain work conditionality, provide consent, make decisions, or maintain finances. However, outside of the tangible expectations and legal compliance, the language used in the guidance is not specific and it falls upon the WHP frontline adviser to assess the participant through their discussions and interactions to establish if they have complex needs and/or additional support requirements.

Through a discussion with a participant the frontline adviser will encourage them to disclose such needs on the basis that this could be beneficial. The examples provided in the WHP guidance, which states these are not exhaustive and fall into the following categories:

- Mental and physical health
- Mental and physical danger
- Educational skills
- Emotional and physical Behaviours
- Life events

The frontline adviser will apply a certain element of discretion as to how this will be reflected on the work plan and the skills to enable the participant to share personal information.

FSS Induction process

In contrast, the FSS segments participants into core, advanced and intense groups during the induction process. The core group requires less support, while the intense group requires more support. This significant deviation from the WHP approach means that the segmentation of FSS participants directly influences the following.:

- An increased number of minimum service standards allocated at induction
- The level of support a participant may require.
- The Payment amount a FSS provider will receive for a participant (covered in section 5.7)

The completion of a segmentation questionnaire determines the level of support a participant could require. The FSS frontline adviser will determine what group a participant will be allocated to and is based on several characteristics, such as the participants responses, personal needs and in some cases, what benefit they receive or DWP work capability category.

The service groups are a mix of the eligible referral groups and what the retrospective Governments perceive as barriers to employment, which are shown at appendix 8. For example, people with disabilities are in the intense group or the advanced group which is categorised based on the type of disability and support required. Mental and/or Physical health barriers are included in advance however, the behaviours may manifest as the participant having a lack of confidence and resilience which are stipulated as being a core requirement.

The WHP participants are not segmented and are not subject to differential payments, whereas in FSS, a participant is allocated based on the completion of a questionnaire with the frontline adviser. Both programmes identify the needs of participants to determine the support and

services offered. However, the approach taken by the WHP to identify participants with complex needs is not formalised, while FSS follows a formal process. The FSS questionnaire helps facilitate a discussion and ensuring its accurate completion also serves an additional function: determining the payments a FSS provider receives.

The findings highlight two significantly different approaches to the assessment and identification of the support and services a participant may require. The differences in the approach to induction and how this influences the behaviours of the frontline advisers is discussed in Chapter 6. The next section will discuss the CSS and KDIs relating to the collaborative requirements between frontline advisers and participants.

5.6 Programme collaboration

This section will cover the third stage of the comparative framework, which are the minimum service standards relating to the collaborative actions required of frontline advisers with participants who are part of the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS). Collaboration has been divided into two parts:

- Prime Contractor engagement.
- Prime Contract disengagement.

5.6.1 Service Provider engagement

Table 5.14 Show the minimum service standards and how the collaborative actions are carried out between the participant and the frontline worker which includes reviewing the action plan at weekly meetings and referrals to specialist support. Therefore, the Customer Service Standards (CSS) of the WHP and the Key Delivery Indicators (KDIs) of FSS shown at table 5.14 have been divided into two areas which are:

- Reviewing the participants needs.
- Identifying the services required.

Table 5.14 Minimum service standards for Prime Contractor or Sub-contractor engagement

Action	CSS/KDI	WHP (Working days)	FSS (Working days)
<i>Action plan reviewed, discussion-job goals and wellbeing</i>	<i>CSS 8/ KDI 6</i>	<i>Every 10 days (minimum)</i>	<i>Every 5 days (maximum)</i>
<i>Formal face to face review</i>	<i>KDI 7</i>		<i>Every 28 days</i>

<i>Referral to specialist support</i>	<i>KDI 16</i>	<i>Immediate</i>
<i>Vocational Profiling offered</i>	<i>KDI 18</i>	<i>Not timebound</i>
<i>Supported Employment Model for disabled people and Individual Placement and Support (IPS) available and offered</i>	<i>KDI 19</i>	<i>On a needs basis</i>

Source: Table 5.4

Work and Health programme

The CSS shows that the WHP are committed to reviewing the action plan of a participant every ten working days, which will include a discussion on wellbeing and job goals. As discussed in the previous assessment stage, Jobcentre Plus may notify the frontline worker that the participant has complex needs or will require additional support. When completing a personalised action plan, the Jobcentre work coach may identify the need for additional support such as CV completion, confidence building, literacy, or numeracy skills. Additionally, the WHP frontline adviser may identify specialist support, such as health services, or substance abuse counseling.

Fair Start Scotland

FSS does not specifically have a KDI that relates to the development of an action plan. However, KDI six states that the frontline adviser engages with the participant and to review the participant action plan. The FSS evaluation plan report one (2021b) and report four (Gov. Scot 2021c) include questions asked to participants about the effectiveness of their action plan being developed. Therefore, this appears to confirm that a FSS frontline adviser will complete a personal action plan at some point during the first four weeks (twenty days) of starting on FSS.

An FSS participant is required to attend both a weekly and monthly face-to-face review to discuss their personal action plan and update it as required. If the FSS frontline adviser at the review identifies that a participant requires specialist support, it will be referred to specialist support services within one day. Additionally, FSS specifically include the offer of vocational profiling and the Supported Employment Model for people with disabilities and Individual Placement and Support (IPS). The Supported Employment Framework will “*interface with*

other employability services” (Gov. Scot 2010) to primarily support people with disabilities and long-term health conditions into employment of sixteen hours or more. The IPS aims to provide support for participants with “*severe and enduring mental health issues*” (Gov. Scot 2020a, p19).

5.6.2 Analysis of the engagement process

Differences to the action plan review period

The key differences to the collaborative approach are that the WHP has adopted a light touch approach to reviewing a participant’s action plan at a minimum of every ten days, whereas FSS will review it every five days. FSS also require a monthly face to face meeting which the WHP have not included. FSS have also chosen to include the Supported Employment Model and Individual Placement Support based on the client’s needs which were initiatives already in place before the introduction of FSS.

The findings suggest that FSS have adopted a more intensive approach to reviewing a participants progress as illustrated by table 5.14 and has introduced additional KDIs for FSS frontline advisers. This suggests that the caseloads for FSS Prime Contractors maybe less due to it being labour intensive and will be dependent on the number of frontline advisers employed. Whereas the WHP have the capacity to take on potentially double the caseload due to the review period being more flexible and will influence the money received for the support provided.

Additionally, the period a participant may remain in this stage for the WHP is three hundred and twenty-six working days and with FSS two hundred and sixty-one working days. In the case of the WHP this is longer than the support provided when a participant goes into employment. However, for FSS the pre work support is the same amount of time for participants who go into employment. The differences in the periods of time allocated to in work support directly link with the remuneration of the providers for programme services and discussed in greater detail at section 5.7.

5.6.3 Participant disengagement

Table 5.15 shows the minimum service standards that are related to the disengagement of participants from with the WHP or FSS.

Table 5.15 Minimum service standards for disengagement

Action	CSS/KDI	WHP (Working days)	FSS (Working days)
<i>Contact participant if meeting missed</i>	<i>CSS 9</i>	<i>Within 2 working days</i>	
<i>Contact participant after notified of disengagement</i>	<i>KDI 11</i>		<i>Within 1 working day of being notified participant will not continue the service</i>
<i>Exiting the Programme employed or disengaged</i>	<i>CSS12/ KDI 13</i>	<i>Exit package within 10 days</i>	<i>Leavers Plan Within 10 days of Participant service exit date</i>

Source: Table 5.4

Work and Health Programme

A participant can choose to disengage from the WHP at any point due to a change of circumstances or no longer wish to be on the programme. The provider will make contact within two days if a participant misses an appointment to discuss any issues and if adjustments can be made to facilitate staying on the programme Gov.uk (2022m). The participant can choose to reengage with the programme within the 456 days but will be made aware if they do decide to disengage, they will be referred to Jobcentre Plus where benefit sanctions may be applied. The participant will only be permanently exited from the programme if they find a job, die or move to a different country.

Fair Start Scotland

FSS will contact a participant within one day to establish the circumstances of disengagement. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020, FSS extended the period of disengagement from four to eight weeks. This means that an FSS participant can temporarily pause their engagement with the programme due to personal circumstances for a longer period. (Gov. Scot 2020b). Alternatively, participants may choose to permanently exit from the programme due to a change of circumstances. However, the extension allows participants to pause and address any potential obstacles before an FSS frontline adviser permanently exits them from the programme. A FSS frontline adviser will refer a participant back to Jobcentre Plus if they exit the programme which is the same action taken if a WHP participant disengages.

5.6.4 Analysis of participant disengagement

The similarities of both programmes are that they aim to offer tailored and personalised services to participants joining the programme. WHP and FSS frontline advisers and

participants continually review action plans to identify any changes in the participants' needs. However, whilst both programmes are voluntary there is a possibility that a participant could disengage at any point which presents a risk to Prime Contractors as they would not receive a delivery fee or completion payment.

A key difference between the WHP and FSS is that under the WHP if the participant disengages, they remain part of the programme. This means that the remainder of the time allotted to the WHP will continue whether the participant is engaged or not. This contrasts with FSS when a participant exits the programme, the time already spent on FSS is paused. This means that an FSS participant can pick up from where they left off and are not penalised for disengaging.

5.7 Support

This section will compare and analyse the support that participants receive when they move into a job and the consequences of different remuneration models in place between the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS). The two key areas covered are:

- Prime Contractor in work support
- Prime Contractor remuneration

5.7.1 In-work Support

Table 5.16 shows the minimum service standards regarding the support provided to participants when they move into employment.

Table 5 16 Minimum service standards for in-work support

Action	CSS/KDI	WHP (Working days)	FSS (Working days)
<i>Attempt made to discuss in work support needs before Job start</i>	<i>CSS 10</i>	<i>Not time bound</i>	
<i>Attempt made to contact remotely - Provide in work support</i>	<i>CSS 11</i>	<i>Every 10 days</i>	
<i>Produce In-Work Support Action Plan agreed with participant</i>	<i>KDI 10</i>		<i>Within 10 days of job start.</i>

*Job Analysis to inform the In - KDI 17
Work Support Action Plan
(Participant consent, must be
agreed with the employer)*

*within 10 working
days of each job
start.*

Source: Table 5.4

The WHP commits to supporting participants moving into employment by offering in-work support and have adopted a light touch approach to this. Whereas FSS have a formalised approach where a detailed in-work support plan is to be agreed upon with the participant within ten working days before starting employment. Consent of the participant is a requirement alongside the employer’s consent for the FSS in-work support coach to provide job assistance.

5.7.2 Period of in-work support

The WHP state that the period of both pre-work and in-work support is for a maximum of 456 days with up to an additional 182 days if the participant finds employment. No defined period is classed as pre-work or in-work support for the WHP. In-work support can be for any period but cannot exceed 15 months and only in some cases can it be extended by a further 6 months. This is in contrast to FSS which has up to 12 months pre-work support with the option to extend a further 6 months and up to 12 months of in-work support. Table 5.17 shows how both programmes compare in terms of pre and in-work support.

Table 5.17 Comparison of WHP and FSS length of support

Duration of Programme	The Work and Health Programme	Fair Start Scotland
Pre-Work (max):	15 months max (456 calendar days) from the date started on programme	Up to max 12 months (365 calendar days) of support for core and advanced group participants Can be extended up to 18 months for intense group participants
In-Work (max):	Can be extended for a further 6 months (182 calendar days) to a maximum total of 21 months	Up to max 12 months (365 calendar days)

Source: Gov. UK 2022e; Gov. Scot 2021b

5.7.3 Analysis of in-work support

Whilst both programmes provide a period of in-work support, it is interesting to note the language between the minimum service standards of the WHP and FSS. The WHP CSS uses

the words “*an attempt*” will be made to discuss in-work support which implies that contact is not a requirement but that any contact made by the provider should be documented. Also, the offer of in-work support prior to a participant starting employment is not time bound but there is a commitment that every 10 days “*an attempt*” will be made to contact the participant remotely if they need it. In complete contrast, FSS specifically use the words ‘*produce*’, ‘*consent*’ and ‘*agree*’ and suggests that contact is required. Additionally, a job analysis plan ‘*must*’ be undertaken within 10 days of starting employment and will form an integral part of the in-work support plan.

To recap, the in-work support for WHP can be part of the initial 456 days (15 months) and in some cases extended by a further 182 calendar days (6 months). In contrast to this FSS have a defined maximum period of in-work support of 12 months. Therefore, the maximum amount of time a participant can be part of the WHP is 21 months and in some cases, the maximum for FSS participants is 30 months. The length of the programme is significant as this may impact on the amount of in-work support provided to vulnerable participants and to the timing of job outcome payments relating to when a participant completes the programme. This suggests that the WHP model that has no defined periods of pre and in-work support and shorter in length is more financially favourable as job outcome payments could be generated faster.

5.7.4 Prime Contractor remuneration

The funding model for the WHP is based on payment by results and has no price differentiation based on the participant groups who are eligible to join the programme (Gov.UK 2022). The WHP Accelerator Payment Mechanism means that the payments Prime Contractors receive are different because they are based on the performance offer stipulated in the initial contract stage (Gov.UK 2022e: Gov.UK 2022j).

The funding model for FSS is based on payment by results and has factored in a differential payments system based on the early segmentation/strands of participants at the pre-work stage, which are core, intense and advanced. FSS Prime Contractors receive two payments which are shown in table 5.18.

Table 5.18 Remuneration of services

	The Work and Health Programme	Fair Start Scotland
Delivery/Service fee	Based on the services provided for the length of the contract	Based on the services provided to participants for length of contract.
Delivery/Service fee payment period	30% of the total contract value	30% of the contract value
Job outcome period	Triggered during the period of 456+182 days of participant being in employment	Triggered over three sustained job outcome targets of participant being in employment.
Job outcome payment	70% paid when a participant earns the equivalent of 16 hours per week for 182 days at the national living wage.	70% of remaining amount incrementally paid over three periods 13 weeks in 16-week period: 15% 26 weeks in a 30-week period: 35% 52 weeks in a 60-week period: 50%
Job outcome amount	No differential payments	Differential payment based on the participants group – core, advanced and intense.

Source: (Gov.UK 2022j; Gov. Scot 2022i)

Unlike the WHP, FSS does not have access to the HMRC to confirm if a participant remains employed at 16 hours or more.

“What we don't have is access to the HMRC data which maybe what DWP do for the Work Programme so they can do an element of validation”

Scottish procurement specialist (17)

Therefore, the FSS frontline adviser is responsible for confirming if the participant is still employed by manually obtaining proof from the participant and/or the employer. This means that the FSS Prime Contractors during this period have to deploy additional resources to verify and confirm ongoing employment to ensure they will receive a job outcome payment. However, the Scottish procurement specialist (17) confirmed that based on feedback from FSS Service Providers led to this process being *“refined”* and *“simplified”*. Additionally, there is a

responsibility placed on the employer and participant to confirm ongoing employment, which could be perceived as being intrusive. However, the importance of ensuring that the Job outcome is validated was further explained to ensure compliance with the Scottish Office.

“Its public money we are spending so we also have an accountability to the taxpayer”

Scottish procurement specialist (17)

5.7.5 Analysis Prime Contractor remuneration

The payment amount for WHP Prime Contractors is not linked to the length of the in-work support period but to performance and job outcomes. Whereas in FSS, the amount of payment is linked to the length of time participants have sustained employment and also to what group they were allocated to at the assessment stage. This highlights that potentially the capacity to accept new referrals is higher in WHP than in FSS because of the shorter turnover. Tables 5.19 and 5.20 shown the numbers of participants achieving an outcome.

A further key difference is how job outcomes are calculated; for the WHP, this is based on an earnings level of sixteen hours a week over twenty-six weeks at the national living wage to achieve a sustained Job outcome. Whereas, FSS have three points at which a sustained job outcome is calculated, which are thirteen weeks, twenty-six weeks and fifty-two weeks. This suggests that Prime Contractors operating within the WHP will receive a full job outcome payment three to nine months before FSS Prime Contractors.

However, the amount received for a job outcome is not comparable as the WHP calculate this differently for each Prime Contractor based on the contract agreed as opposed to the same payments for those in FSS. Therefore, it is difficult to compare the statistics between the WHP and FSS as each have different points of measurement. Table 5.19 has taken the year commencing April 2018 to March 2019, which was the first year that both programmes were implemented and the following was job outcomes were recorded.

Table 5.19 Work and Health Programme Job Outcome

	Participants achieving a Job outcome				
Reporting Period	Within 6 months from start		Within 12 months from start		Within 24 months from start
Achieving earnings threshold	Yes	No	Yes	No	Overall
April - June 2018	363	1795	1339	819	2155
July - September 2018	461	1723	1319	848	2174
October - December 2018	396	2028	1471	953	2423
January - March 2019	633	2522	2154	1010	3161

Source DWP Stat Xplore: WHP Job Outcome month (Excluding Wales)

Table 5.20 Fair Start Scotland Job Outcomes

	Sustained employment		
	Up to 3 months	3 to 6 months	6 months to 1 year
Confirmed employment	15% of 70%	35% of 70%	50% of 70%
April - June 2018	638	515	405
July - September 2018	466	358	284
October - December 2018	474	388	295
January - March 2019	783	628	485

Source Gov.Scot (2023)

The WHP statistics provide the number of participants that achieved a job outcome from starting the programme. In contrast, the FSS statistics do not show the number of participants who may have started employment during the 12-month collaborative period as they are then transferred to the support period.

For example, if an FSS participant immediately gains employment upon starting the programme, a FSS provider will receive, 15% of a 70% payment after 13 weeks, which will be before their WHP counterparts. Conversely, a WHP provider could receive the full 70% of the contract amount if the participant achieves 6 months in paid employment and reaches the qualifying earnings threshold.

The service and delivery fees introduced has certainly gone some way to addressing the Work Programme issues of Prime Contractors investing human and financial resources upfront and mitigated the risk of smaller organisations not being as financially secure. Nevertheless, the payment model introduced by FSS has meant that Prime Contractors do not receive a full payment until after 12 months of in-work support and as the statistics show, the participant may not achieve this.

5.8 Summary of key findings

The chapter compares the business-as-usual process currently in place for providers of the Work and Health Programme in England and Fair Start Scotland. Due to the demographics, geographical and regional differences between England and Scotland a comparative framework was developed based on the programme deliverables to allow for a systematic comparison of policy.

5.8.1 Participant journey

The key process of the participant journey is similar where a participant is referred on to the programme, goes through an assessment of needs, collaborates with the work coach to identify opportunities and receives a period of support. The differences in approach can be attributed to both the UK Government and Scottish Government prioritising the eligibility criteria and what are considered disadvantaged groups. Whilst both Governments put people with disabilities at the core of the programmes, other disparities are present such as the introduction specifically of Afghan resettlers for the WHP, whilst poverty and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) being a targeted area for FSS. The consequence of this for Service Providers are the challenges for frontline advisers to be skilled in addressing unique and individual needs of a diverse group of people.

5.8.2 Compliance requirements

The findings also demonstrate the difference in compliance between the two programmes and the requirements to meet the minimum service standards. The FSS Key Delivery Indicators are directed to actions that frontline advisers must meet whilst the WHP Customer Service Standards include details of administrative tasks and specific objectives including targets. Whilst the WHP minimum service standards are SMART they also include an element of flexibility and do not appear to be as rigid as the compliance requirements for FSS providers. This would suggest an added degree of bureaucracy faced by FSS frontline advisers alongside stricter governance framework for Prime Contractors. This has introduced a greater risk of

failing to comply with the minimum service standards and will impact on the receipt of a payment.

5.8.3 In-work support

The in-work support period is a point of interest with the WHP provision less than that of FSS by a minimum of three months and maximum of nine months. The consequence of this is that WHP have the capacity to deal with more participants than that of FSS and in turn providers could generate more income as more places will be free on the programme over a shorter period. This also applies to the way in which providers are remunerated with the WHP using an earnings level over twenty-six weeks compared to FSS over fifty-two weeks.

This chapter has provided a high-level overview of the customer journey process by applying four stages that are common across both programmes. Using the four stages, the next chapter will explore how the minimum service standards, which are put into practice by WHP and FSS frontline advisers at a local level and will apply Lipsky's theory of Street Level Bureaucracy. This will be carried out by analysing the themes that have developed from interviews carried out with managers and frontline advisers in the WHP and FSS.

Chapter 6 Access and assessment

6.0 Introduction

Chapters 6 and 7 explore the practices of Work and Health Programme (WHP) and FSS Fair Start Scotland (FSS) and will analyse the first two stages of the analytical framework identified in chapter 5 which are access and assessment. The objective and supporting questions for this chapter is as follows:

To compare and analyse Street Level Bureaucrats practices to provide employability support between Scotland and England.

1. What are the similarities and differences in the practices of Street Level Bureaucrats providing personalised and tailored employment support programmes in Scotland and England?
2. How do the similarities and differences influence the practices of Street Level Bureaucrats providing personalised and tailored employment support programmes between Scotland and England?

6.1 Accessing participants

6.1.1 Source of referrals

The source from which frontline advisers access eligible participants is an essential factor for Prime Contractors as each participant represents a potential source of income. Referrals have the potential to be converted to a start on the programme, which will trigger the first part of the payment process. For the WHP this is a delivery fee and for, FSS a service fee which was discussed in chapter 5.

Jobcentre Plus have autonomy for Work and Health Programme referrals

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) policy states that “*the final decision regarding a referral to WHP Core will remain with DWP*” (Gov.UK 2022b, para 24). Therefore, the WHP does not publish statistics that show the source of referrals, a self-referral or from Third Party Organisations (TPOs). TPOs are noted as being “*DWP approved Signposting Organisations*” (Gov.UK 2022b, para 24) and have the option to direct participants to the WHP. A WHP frontline adviser confirmed that the DWP referral approach was the dominant process in place.

“it's 98 per cent from the Jobcentre, but people can call us, and we can do a self-referral, but it always goes through the Jobcentre anyway, so it's not like they can do a self-referral and come on the programme”

WHP frontline adviser (1)

The same WHP frontline adviser also highlighted that even if a participant was to self-refer and receiving welfare benefits, they would still go through Jobcentre Plus (JCP). The significance of a self-referral going through JCP is further discussed at 6.3.3 alongside participant motivation. However, the dependency on JCP as the sole source of referrals appeared to suggest that there was an inconsistency and was dependent on the JCP Work Coaches.

“It just depends on each different Jobcentre. Some job centres refer a lot. Some don't quite so much. It depends on the individual Jobcentre really and how the referral process works”

WHP frontline adviser (6)

The dependency on WHP referrals from JCP was further highlighted at the start of March 2020 when JCP suspended the face-to-face contact and assessments of eligible job seekers from March 2020 to June 2020 due to the Covid-19 lockdown. This impacted on WHP as they were not being routed through JCP and is reflected in the statistics discussed at 5.4.5. This shows that referrals to the WHP in England reduced by 81% from the previous quarter which was double than that of FSS.

Furthermore, a WHP frontline adviser suggested that the process in place also meant that the opportunity to engage with the wider community was constrained.

“there's loads of early access criteria that we could potentially access in the community that would be far more you know, a greater richness of participants outside of just the bog-standard Jobcentre referral but there isn't the appetite for it”

WHP frontline adviser (7)

FSS have autonomy for FSS referrals

The FSS approach to referrals diverges from the WHP. The statistics published by Scottish Government in their yearly evaluation reports shows the percentage of referrals from JCP and non-JCP routes. The number of JCP referrals to FSS decreased from 86% in 2018/19 to 47% in 2020/21. The Scottish Government confirmed through a freedom of information request, that for FSS there is no requirement for all referrals to go through JCP. Therefore, the evidence suggests that FSS are less reliant on referrals from JCP and have moved towards a hybrid approach. The hybrid approach was across the whole of Scotland and did not appear to be linked to the geographical areas of FSS frontline advisers in terms of rural, rural/urban or urban. However, when asked about referrals, a FSS frontline adviser (11) located in a rural area

explained that referrals were “*almost entirely from the Jobcentre*” but confirmed that other routes were explored. Examples of the other routes used were doctor surgeries, voluntary agencies and a local supermarket. However, the same FSS frontline adviser confirmed that despite the use of other routes, these were not often utilised as the referrals from JCP met their needs. This was similar to a FSS frontline adviser operating in an urban area stating that:

“There has been leaflets left in places, adverts and things like that, but the majority of our referrals do come from the Jobcentre”

FSS frontline adviser (22)

The choices made to recruit referrals to FSS from alternate routes meant that participants in other geographical areas could be passed on to an alternative Prime Contractor. This benefits the participant as they may not have originally been identified by JCP and enables FSS to share resources.

“We also market into the community and we also get referrals from partner organisations. If a participant is not in their area of delivery, they will contact us and we do vice versa.”

FSS frontline adviser (14)

The autonomy to engage with non-JCP referral routes as demonstrated by FSS facilitates the generation of new referrals and identifying participants that may not have previously been recruited. This contrasts with the referral approach used by the WHP, where JCP is the dominant referral route. This would suggest that WHP providers have less autonomy than their FSS counterparts because they are reliant on one referral stream and subject to the discretion of JCP Work Coaches. How this influences the volume and quality of referrals is discussed in the next section.

6.1.2 Volume of referrals

The volume of referrals is an essential factor for WHP and FSS as these generate their potential income and job outcome payments. However, the volume of referrals appears to have been influenced by two dominant themes, which are the Covid-19 pandemic and the devolution of employability support.

Pandemic boost to referrals for FSS

During the initial Covid-19 lockdown for the period March 2020 to June 2020, the hybrid approach adopted by FSS appears to have maintained a regular source of referrals, as discussed in chapter 5. Although both programmes did have a reduction in referrals, it was the FSS frontline advisers who enthusiastically discussed the alternate sources and methods they used to recruit participants, which was in contrast to the WHP frontline advisers.

“But I think also we saw an increase in referrals and that would have been due to many people losing their jobs or being furloughed”

FSS frontline adviser (3)

Additionally, the hybrid approach adopted by FSS frontline advisers meant that social media was utilised to reach out to potential participants during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“We have done really well, we have done amazingly well through this, but it's all down to the job coaches who have been doing Facebook and Twitter and, you know, all this kind of social and marketing and getting referrals in”

FSS frontline adviser (14)

However, the initial boost to referrals due to the initial lockdown period slowed down when JCP partially resumed their referrals. Furthermore, the UK Government also introduced three new employment initiatives which were Kickstart, the Job Entry Targeted Scheme (JETS) and Restart, which were discussed in Chapter 5.

Saturation of New Programmes

In Scotland and England Kickstart was introduced in September 2020 and JETS in October 2020. Restart was launched solely in England and Wales in June 2021 and the reason why it was only been referenced by WHP frontline advisers. Some FSS frontline advisers explained that the introduction of new employment initiatives created an element of confusion and competition.

“There's no one left behind. There's Fair Start, there's JETS, there's Kickstart. There is young person's guarantee and there's loads of other ones in Scotland at the moment, that are just overlapping at each other and they are all battling and its messy. It's really, really, really messy”

FSS frontline adviser (21)

However, it was also recognised that this introduced problems for JCP Work Coaches as additional programmes meant that participants may be identified but referred to the wrong programme.

“(JCP) are also bombed at the moment because they have got Kickstart and they got JETS and they got this and they got that and you know, it’s like the poor job coaches haven’t got a bloody clue where they’re supposed to send everybody”

FSS frontline adviser (3)

The influence of the new initiatives being introduced was also cited as impacting the quality of referrals and that inappropriate referrals were being made to incorrect programmes.

“JETS started last year, so we have seen a dramatic dent in targets in the number of people coming over to us”

FSS frontline adviser (18)

“We do find that we struggle because all the referrals go to JETS, regardless of whether they’re suitable for JETS”

FSS frontline adviser (12)

WHP frontline advisers also raised the issues surrounding the confusion over referrals made to the newer programmes and that participants were often referred to the wrong programme:

“We’ve got three different programmes, so we’ve got work and health, we have got JETS and we have got Restart. You would think they would go to the right programme”

WHP frontline adviser (2)

“On the Work and Health Programme, we have three types of customers that come to us. We have the long term unemployed, but they should be going Restart now, but we’ve still getting them on our Work and Health Programme”

WHP frontline adviser (9)

Kick Start, JETS and Restart were also discussed as having an impact on the volume of referrals to the WHP and it was further speculated by WHP frontline advisers that the introduction of Restart was driving the choices that JCP were making:

“I think maybe what's happening is there's another programme that works in our same office, Restart and that was a newer programme. And I think maybe, you know, the Jobcentre Plus it was all promoted as a new programme and they were putting everyone on that programme. We were the poor cousins and we were not getting so many referrals”

WHP frontline adviser (3)

The introduction of Restart meant that any participants who would have normally been referred to the WHP could now be referred to Restart if they were unemployed for 9 months or more. Furthermore, Restart did not exclude participants who were considered to be on a health journey which included people with an ongoing health condition, disability or waiting for a Work Capability Assessment (WCA). Therefore, it could be suggested that the introduction of the mandatory Restart programme, overlapped with the voluntary WHP, which meant that JCP were handed back control to mandate participants as with the Work Programme.

Target driven referrals

Whilst the WHP frontline advisers have cited that JCP targets may drive the number of referrals, FSS frontline advisers speculate that JCP will place national UK wide programmes over devolved Scottish employability support programmes. For the WHP, the subject of targets was predominantly discussed by WHP frontline advisers as being a determining factor for English Job Centres:

“referrals are poor and they've got poorer as other programmes come in, because other programmes like Restart and JETS, the Jobcentres are targeted with numbers for those, but they're not targeted with numbers for the work and health programme”

WHP frontline adviser (1)

Whilst it was suggested that whilst the WHP may not have official targets that Jobcentre Plus Work Coaches have unofficial targets:

“They are targeted themselves and they have to send over a number of referrals and if they don't, they are pulled in, to say, well, why are you not referring people. This is what you're supposed to be doing, but then they are referring anyone and everyone”

WHP frontline adviser (2)

Additionally, that the pressure to meet those unofficial targets could lead to participants being referred to a programme that would not be suitable for them:

“A lot of the Work Coaches at Jobcentre Plus can be quite open with us as well. We hear quite often we haven't referred enough to the Work and Health Programme, because we're referring them all to JETS or Restart, so we better put some people your way and it's just a waste, a waste of time for everybody.

WHP Team leader (1)

Political aspect in Scotland

An interesting factor raised by FSS frontline advisers was the tension between FSS as a devolved programme and JCP which operates as part of the DWP and UK Government and perhaps indicative of the current political discourse.

“That is a bit of politics there, because Jobcentre Plus is DWP, UK Government and we are funded by the Scottish Government, so, therefore now that there's a UK Government service, all the referrals go to JETS, regardless of whether they're suitable for JETS”

FSS frontline adviser (12)

The preference for JCP to favour referrals to DWP employment support programmes over FSS was raised on several occasions by FSS frontline advisers and how this may disadvantage Scottish participants:

“Literally there's a priority and the priority is JETS because that's obviously a DWP programme and obviously Kickstart is another DWP programme. So, the DWP are not going to be saying to people, oh, put them on Fair Start Scotland when actually you've got your own programmes that you need to do”

FSS frontline adviser (3)

“There is a bit of an anomaly, where we are a Scottish Government contract and the JETS Employability is a DWP and I suspect they will always refer first to DWP services before they will send them to us”

FSS frontline adviser (18)

However, the reduction to FSS referrals due to Kickstart and JETS does not appear to be reflected in the statistics discussed at table 5.8. Whilst there have been fluctuations after the introduction of the new programmes for the WHP and FSS, the statistics also show fluctuations prior to September 2020 when Kickstart was first launched. The WHP and FSS have faced a downward trend in referrals from July 2021 to July 2022. Whilst Restart may be a contributing factor to the downward trend for the WHP, this does not explain the reduction in referrals for FSS in the same period as Restart was not available in Scotland.

6.1.3 Suitability of referrals

Whilst introducing new employability initiatives was discussed by frontline advisers as impacting on referrals, the suitability of participants referred to their programmes was also raised. The suitability criteria were discussed at 5.4.3 which explained that it is the responsibility of JCP to establish if a participant is committed to finding work and will benefit from the help of the programme. In the context of the WHP and FSS the suitability of participants focused on a participant's short- and long-term health conditions and the challenges they faced managing these.

The influence of Health Conditions at the referral stage for the WHP

In the WHP, the findings suggest that health conditions can be categorised into two types:

- Short-term health conditions such as impending operations or pregnancy.
- Long-term health conditions such as mental health or addiction.

Both the WHP and FSS are designed to assist those specifically with health conditions and complex barriers; therefore, both programmes will deal predominantly, but not exclusively, with people who have significant health conditions.

“Absolutely the Work and Health Programme is definitely for people with more health conditions”

WHP frontline adviser (9)

For the WHP, there is an initial screening process where they will make a call to the participant to discuss any potential health conditions. A WHP frontline adviser (2) explained that one of the questions asked was regarding potential operations *“because we have loads of people who are booked into have hip operations, leg operations, heart operations”*. Further adding, if the participants are inducted on to the programme with any of these that they would eventually disengage. Adding that joining a participant may create more stress for the participant.

“This programme going to help them recover or give them more stress, probably more stress, because we have to contact them so often”

WHP frontline adviser (2)

An example of this was given of a referral made where the participant was pregnant and would not be suitable to start on a 15-month programme.

“Well, just as just as a classic example, this morning it wasn't with me, but one of my colleagues. She's got a new young girl on programme. She's now found out that she's pregnant. So obviously now there's not a lot that we can obviously work with her for”

WHP frontline adviser (6)

The impact of health conditions is further elaborated on by a WHP employment adviser (9), who discussed that some in some cases participants are referred where *“their health is too severe at the moment”*. The same advisor further expanded on this by explaining that if this is picked up at the referral stage the participant will be advised to come back at a later stage. However, if this is not picked up there are negative consequences for the participant as the programme effectively starts:

“We onboard them and go through the induction process, then their time on the work and health programme starts and then we're effectively wasting the first few months, waiting for a recovery”

WHP frontline adviser (9)

The WHP has a maximum time that a participant is on the programme, so this delay may result in having less time to focus on job support and the possibility of not securing employment for the participant. Therefore, the time for the participant on the programme will not produce results and the Service Provider will not receive a payment for their time and services invested. This is a potential issue for WHP as the target group for referrals are people with health barriers and could result in the potential creaming and parking of participants at the induction stage.

Not securing employment for a participant due to complex health conditions could also impact on the motivation of a participant and is highlighted by a WHP Team leader (10) who gave an example of a referral being from *“one individual who's not worked since 1990”* and that *“they've also got an abundance of health conditions”*. Concluding that *“It's going to be a massive struggle for that individual”*.

Equally, achieving a job outcome was also a consideration, with a WHP frontline adviser (9) stating that *“even though it is the health programme as well, we would expect anybody that starts the programme to be able to at least prepare for work”* adding that this would include going *“through their CVs”* and to support them with *“covering letters, interview techniques, do courses to upskill”* with the participant to be *“even looking to start employment”*

The influence of Health Conditions at the referral stage for FSS

In Scotland, the findings show that some Prime Contractors will carry out an initial screening of the participant before the induction and have adopted a light touch approach to explain what the programme is and how it will help the participant. However, the findings also suggest that FSS will not refuse entry to the programme and that discussions about health conditions are usually carried out at the assessment stage.

An FSS Team leader (16) confirmed that they *“can only refuse anyone if they are not eligible to come onto the programme”* and that *“We would be silly to refuse people because we need the numbers”* but added they also must be *“realistic”*. A further example was provided, where the length of the support offered by the programme would not be long enough to address an alcohol or drug addiction problem. Adding that it would be likely that the participant is referred to *“to another service that would get them ready to come back”* but acknowledged other services were *“absolutely under extreme pressure now”*. Therefore, due to the lack of available resources such as drug and alcohol services *“those individuals aren't necessarily going to get the other support from other services for any length of time”*. Furthermore, that the Prime Contractor wouldn't refuse them entry on to FSS *“unless they weren't eligible”*.

Additionally, a FSS frontline adviser (14) highlighted the importance of having an effective relationship with JCP where they would *“take advice from the job coaches as well, if there is someone who wants to sign up and I've got my reservations”*. Adding that they would ask JCP to call the participant to have a *“chat with them because ultimately we need them to be moving into work”* because *“realistically and financially, the company has to be getting job outcomes”*

6.1.4 Key Findings

The study indicates that the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS) have diverged in how they access participants. The WHP predominantly receive referrals from JCP, which aligns with the policy approach discussed at section 5.4. However, FSS has reduced its reliance on JCP referrals and now receives more referrals through non-JCP routes.

FSS have a greater degree of autonomy than the WHP to source referrals independently of Jobcentre Plus

The source of referrals was discussed at 6.1.1 where both the WHP and FSS advisers discussed how the Covid-19 pandemic had influenced their source and volume of referrals. This is largely due to JCP suspending face-to-face assessments and the referrals made to the WHP and FSS from March to June 2020, which impacted on the two programmes differently. The WHP frontline advisers discussed how Jobcentre Plus had the final say on referrals which meant that they were constrained, whereas FSS had the option to source referrals from alternative sources. FSS service providers implemented a hybrid approach to referrals during the pandemic, which was well-received by FSS frontline advisers and this led to maintaining and in some cases increasing starts on the programme. In contrast, a WHP adviser stated they would like to see the WHP explore more creative approaches to sourcing referrals and reaching out to early access groups independently of Jobcentre Plus as this would introduce more diversity.

New employment initiatives influenced the referral numbers and participants moved between programmes.

Several WHP and FSS frontline advisers discussed how the introduction of two new UK employment initiatives, Kickstart and the Job Entry Targeted Scheme (JETS), influenced the number of referrals. The referral statistics do not reflect any clear trends that would suggest the introduction of Kickstart or JETS were detrimental to referral numbers. However, there is a possibility that Restart, which was introduced in June 2021, had a bigger impact on the WHP referrals as the same statistics show a decrease. For FSS advisers, a perceived lack of referrals was also attributed to JETS. However, similar to the WHP the referrals for FSS decreased in July 2021 which cannot be attributed to the Restart programme as this was only introduced in England. Additionally, it was also perceived by FSS advisors that JCP was not making referrals for political reasons, which perhaps reveals the current tensions and increased political awareness post the independence or Brexit referenda.

At the referral stage, participants with health conditions are not effectively screened by Jobcentre Plus.

The referrals made by JCP do not always identify participants with short-term health conditions that could result in the WHP programme being ineffective. For example, those with impending operations cannot commit to joining a 15-month programme and this does not appear to be a question asked when discussing the suitability of a participant by JCP. The issue with a participant's health was not raised by FSS advisers, possibly due to the FSS segmentation

process, where health conditions are discussed in greater detail during the assessment stage discussed in 6.2. The next section of the chapter will discuss the experiences that the WHP and FSS advisers have when participants are referred and undergo an assessment.

6.2 Assessment of participants

The second part of this chapter will analyse the assessment stage. This section will explore the themes that developed when discussing the assessment of participants with Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS) frontline advisers. The section will first address what is the administrative process and how the WHP and FSS advisers assess the needs of the participants referred by either Jobcentre Plus (JCP), a Third-Party Organisation (TPO) or a self-referral. Both programmes have adopted a different assessment process which was identified in chapter 5. The assessment process will initially gather information from participants to identify barriers to employment and what support they will require to overcome these. Table 6.1 provides a summary of the WHP Customer Service Standards (CSS) and FSS Key Delivery Indicators (KDI) for the assessment stage of the participant’s journey.

Table 6.1 Minimum Service Standards for assessment

Action	CSS/KDI	WHP (Working days)	FSS (Working days)
<i>Initial interview/Induction</i>	<i>CSS 3 KDI 1, KDI 2</i>	<i>Within 15 days from receipt of referral</i>	<i>Within 10 days from receipt</i>
<i>Courtesy phone call to participant</i>	<i>KDI 4</i>		<i>2 days before interview/induction</i>
<i>Segmentation Tool for service strand (FSS Questionnaire)</i>	<i>KDI 8</i>		<i>Within 15 days from receipt</i>
<i>Service strand confirmed</i>	<i>KDI 9</i>		<i>Within 15 days from receipt</i>
<i>Copy of Standards</i>	<i>CSS 6</i>	<i>1 day from acceptance on programme</i>	
<i>Induction pack and signed participant agreement</i>	<i>KDI 5</i>		<i>Within 15 days</i>
<i>Action plan finalised</i>	<i>CSS 7</i>	<i>Within 20 Days of receipt of the Referral.</i>	

Source Table 5.4

6.2.1 The administrative process

Identifying the WHP and FSS process for assessment and induction

A WHP provider has adopted a process that when a participant initially engages with them, a WHP assistant adviser will undertake ID checks, complete paperwork and carry out a 'better off' being in work calculation. The WHP assistant adviser is the first point of contact with the participant and integral to the first impressions a participant:

“They are the ones that challenge the first barriers, that people have misconceptions, it's like oh you are going to stick me in a cleaning job. I don't want a cleaning job, you know, so they're the ones that challenge and get the trust and rapport first of all”

WHP frontline adviser (1)

The employment adviser further explained that prior experience of employment support programmes has shown that the more engagement made with a participant at the beginning of the programme, means that they are more likely to stay on the programme. Only at the third week of starting on the WHP will a warm handover take place between the assistant adviser and the WHP frontline adviser. It is at this point the participant will complete a self-assessment.

The next stage is the completion of the self-assessment form which was discussed by the WHP frontline adviser (4); when asked how information is gathered to populate an accurate action plan, they stated *“So it's known as the guided self-assessment. but I personally never class it as a guided self-assessment.”* When asked why this was the case, they answered that the name suggested that *“you're going to give someone a computer and say answer these questions”* which did not reflect the interactions between them and the participant. When approaching the assessment, they acknowledged the sensitive nature of this process for the participant and preferred to *“make it so much more conversational”* and to treat the *“guided self-assessment as fact finding”*.

Chapter 5 identified that that the compliance requirements for the WHP assessment process provides more autonomy to the WHP frontline adviser and less accountability than required by a FSS frontline adviser. For example, FSS do not use an assistant adviser at the induction stage and also have an additional number of requirements to assess the participant:

“We have a specific form that we use, so initially we have induction forms, so we kind of get to know what their barriers are initially, what's hanging you up. So, then we have the induction, after the induction, we have a

diagnostic form and after the diagnostic form, if they are an intense client, will be a vocational profile form”

FSS frontline adviser (21)

However, the findings from Scotland suggest that the assessment process is carried out differently depending on the Prime Contractor. An FSS frontline adviser (14) advised that they have introduced their “*own assessment tool and that's going through the registration*” as well as using “*the questionnaires*” from the Scottish Government. Another FSS frontline adviser (21) also highlighted that even within Prime Contractors, different local offices had “*independent ways of measuring*” the effectiveness of services provided.

Furthermore, the findings from FSS also identified that the completion of the diagnostic tool and vocational profile appear to be at the discretion of the Prime Contractor and that the vocational tool and job analysis are carried out for participants in the intense group.

“a lot of the offices, they do all the forms on the first date, they hit them with a vocational profiling and they hit them with the wellbeing start”

FSS Team leader (4)

For the FSS Team leader (4) this appeared to contradict the nature of the programme being a “*person-centred approach*” and that the Scottish Government had key deliverables where “*you have to do this and, you have to do that*”. However, also highlighted that they do have a degree of discretion and advised that in order to mitigate being penalised by not undertaking the required process; the Scottish Government would accept a note to state that the “*Participant did not want to complete these*”.

The initial engagement suggests that the WHP Provider have introduced a two-tier system separating the basic administration and the assessment due to prior experience of employability support programmes. This is in contrast to an increased level of accountability placed on FSS advisors who are required to complete many of the basic administrative processes alongside the completion of assessment tools.

6.2.2 FSS segmentation

A significant difference identified between the WHP and FSS assessment process is the completion of the segmentation tool. The WHP does not categorise participants by the level of support required, this is in contrast to FSS which have defined three categories: core, advanced and intense. As explained in Chapter 5, FSS have introduced a tiered assessment system of core, advanced and intense which influences participant support and the amount of payment a

Prime Contractor will receive. The segmentation process consists of five questions and is carried out the first fifteen days of the participant being inducted on to the programme, but this can be changed within eight weeks. However, the findings suggest that the introduction of segmenting participants raises the risk of the participant being assigned incorrectly and that this would narrow the personalised support and services offered.

Accountability and the risk of assigning a participant to the wrong strand

The segmentation categories will determine the level of support a participant would require and to overcome the possibility of those furthest away from the labour market being ‘parked’ and left behind. However, it was highlighted that placing participants in segments made certain assumptions about their level of job readiness and that the support offered may not be sufficient:

“We always said from the very beginning you could have someone in core that is meant to be much more job ready that isn't you know and needs a lot of time and support and we could have someone in intense that doesn't need that, although they go into these strands it doesn't mean that they're either really job ready, or they're really not job ready”

FSS frontline adviser (22)

The risk of incorrectly placing a participant in the wrong segment at the initial stage and within the first eight weeks of starting the programme has consequences for both the participant and Prime Contractor. The participant will not receive the correct level of support and the Prime Contractor will not receive the appropriate level of remuneration:

“Where Scottish Government assess, are they core, advanced or intense. Again, made it really messy because somebody goes into core you find out about three months down the line that they are intense”

FSS frontline adviser (21)

Lastly, the amount of work required to support participants in one of the three segments and the impact to outcome payments was raised:

“Advanced is the biggest payment because they are the furthest removed, advanced funnily enough, pays less than the core, I've never quite got my head round that”

FSS Team leader (1)

“but the outcome payments go by these strands as well and you can do just as much work or more work with a core person than you can with an intense and payment wise, you're not getting paid the same for that either”
FSS frontline adviser (22)

Although the FSS frontline adviser can reassign the segments within eight weeks, this was challenged in cases where there might need to be more time for the participant to divulge personal and sensitive information. However, despite a participant being placed into a segment, these are not necessarily adhered to.

“The problem is within eight weeks, sometimes you don't know, you don't know that they've got these challenges, you know and again, you are having to work with so much paperwork. It's unbelievable. You just don't get the time to do it and you just leave it because at the end of the day, I'm going to help them regardless of whether they are core, advanced or intense”

FSS frontline adviser (21)

The influence of segmentation on a person-centred approach

The introduction of segmentation was also discussed as contradicting the personalised nature of FSS as participants were not being treated as individuals with different needs:

“Every single person is different and I know it's difficult when you're delivering a program to account for all of those, but I think what we've got at the moment doesn't”.

FSS Team leader (16)

Furthermore, that a personalised service should not be a one size fits all as all participants have different needs specific to them.

It's like these core, advanced and intense strands, it's meant to be and it just doesn't matter how these things are made to fit in this box. They just don't fit in these boxes”

FSS frontline adviser (22)

However, participants may not fit into a ‘box’ and the FSS Frontline adviser will use their discretion to decide what ‘box’ a participant will be put in, which has consequences for the participant and Prime Contractor:

“You can trust it to a certain level, but it doesn't take into all circumstances. So, what I do is base my decision on what's best for that person” FSS frontline adviser (14)

From the findings, the segmentation process is designed to measure and inform the level of support a participant requires and to determine the amount of payment a Prime Contractor will receive for the time invested. What has been highlighted is that there is a level of accountability placed on FSS frontline advisers to ensure that the assessment is carried out in a proper and timely manner. However, introducing a segmentation process could also lead to regional variations of payments who have a higher degree of advance and intense participants, such as those in more socially deprived areas.

6.2.3 Motivation to join

The WHP and FSS frontline employees reaffirm the voluntary nature of the programme.

Participation is voluntary for the WHP and FSS, except for the LTU in England. The Long term unemployed (LTU) were originally mandated after twenty-four months to join the WHP until the introduction of Restart. The introduction of the Restart programme in England meant that claimants who are unemployed for nine months or more can be mandated to join this programme instead. In Scotland no participant is mandated to join FSS and means that the LTU are treated differently by JCP between England and Scotland and perhaps an early indication of an indirect devolvement of welfare policy.

Despite participants not being mandated to join FSS, it would appear that there is still an opinion held by potential participants that, it is a mandated UK Government programme. It was perceived by a FSS frontline adviser that JCP treated the programme as a mandatory service or that people were motivated to join to avoid JCP and potential punitive sanctions:

“We do find that Jobcentre coaches, even though Fair Start Scotland is a voluntary service, treat it as if it's a mandatory service. So, we're speaking to people who have no intention of looking for a job but are playing the game and hiding from the Jobcentre a little bit by coming on the service”

FSS frontline adviser (12)

As previously discussed in Chapter 5, FSS have the autonomy to recruit from alternate sources. However, some of the challenges that FSS frontline advisers faced by doing outreach work were the difficulties of changing people's mindsets:

“it's not just within the Jobcentre, it's just within, like communities because she went to (...) foodbank and was distributing leaflets and everyone she spoke to, thought it was a mandatory service. You'll get sanctioned if you don't come, if you don't attend appointments, etc”

FSS frontline adviser (12)

However, this wasn't the only challenge faced by FSS. Additionally, FSS frontline advisers discussed participants referred by Jobcentre Plus and having to provide reassurance at the initial assessment stage that they are not part of the Department for Work and Pensions.

“The first thing I say is, Look, I'm not the Jobcentre. I'm not going to feedback information that you tell me”

FSS frontline adviser (12)

However, despite the reassurance given by the FSS frontline advisers, many of the participants still don't believe or trust what they think is a government process:

“That was always the kind of first line out of our mouths at induction is that it's voluntary but some of them just don't believe you, they just don't”

FSS frontline adviser (22)

A possible reason as to why there might be a distrust, was the negative reputation of the mandatory Work Programme (WP).

“but we stress it is voluntary, you know, the last, thing we want to do is let people, I think the Work Programme burned people, its ingrained in there and, you know and they are terrified of Employability services now”

FSS frontline adviser (14)

Having to provide reassurance to their participants that FSS was voluntary was discussed more by FSS Frontline staff than their WHP counterparts. This could be due to the WHP having a different approach to their retention of participants. Participants for the WHP commit to joining for the entire period of the programme even if at some stage they chose not to engage with the programme. Whereas in FSS, participants will exit the programme and can re-join at a later date. The disengagement and exit process is further discussed in Chapter 7.

“(I) explain that it's a voluntary programme, but once they come on the programme, it's a 15-month commitment and even if they dis-engage, we

would continue to contact them monthly basis to see whether their circumstances have changed”

WHP frontline adviser (1)

“You (participant) are informed that now you have agreed to the voluntary programme. It's actually mandatory, so, it is sold or discussed as voluntary, but realistically, you know, there is an expectation there”

WHP frontline adviser (7)

The second reason that WHP frontline advisers may not have raised the need to provide reassurance to participants about the programme being voluntary is perhaps that there is no ambiguity of what a voluntary or mandated programme is due to the mandatory Restart programme introduced in England.

“I've seen a few participants on the Restart programme, on the other side, the office that I worked with on the work and health programme they are going round and round the programmes”

WHP frontline adviser (3)

Both WHP and FSS frontline advisers also discussed the punishment of sanctions and the participants fear of JCP as motivating them to join the programmes:

“You do get a few that really worry, where they think if you don't do something that the jobcentre has told you, you will be in trouble”

FSS frontline adviser (22)

“a lot of job seekers find that element of threat in terms of, if I don't do this, there are going to be financial consequences for me”

WHP frontline adviser (7)

The fear of JCP may result in participants treating the WHP and FSS frontline advisers as an extension of the Government agency. As a result, they will not be entirely honest about their barriers, challenges or willing to provide personal information, which will result in not receiving the correct employment support. Furthermore, the fear of JCP may lead to them parroting what they have been told to say to gain access to the programme:

“I think because I've spent a lot of time trying to break down the barriers before them. On the whole, I get a good, honest reception, that's not 100 per cent of the time. A lot of people will sit there and say what they think

they're supposed to say or what Jobcentre Plus has prepped them to say”

WHP frontline adviser (4)

This section has shown that frontline advisers from both programmes are clear with participants about the voluntary aspect of the programme. Whilst it is acknowledged that participants join the programmes to fully engage in the process, the findings also highlight the challenges frontline advisers initially face. These revolve around the dynamics of power and who is perceived by the participant to have control. In some cases, the participants passively join as they accept the overt power that JCP can impose through sanctions. However, some participants actively join the programmes covertly as a way of taking back control, as this will deny JCP the power to impose sanctions. The following section will discuss how frontline advisers from both programmes interact with participants.

6.2.4 Participant interaction

The informal and conversational approach

a WHP frontline adviser (4) discussed the completion a self-assessment form and when asked how information is gathered to populate an accurate action plan, they responded that they preferred to *“make it so much more conversational”* The importance of building trust by engaging in positive conversation is further discussed and in doing so encouraged participants to share information:

“If you show empathy to the situation and you don't force things, normally, it's just a natural progression over a couple of meetings you you'll get quite a bit of information out and I try to keep the meetings very relaxed and really friendly.

WHP frontline adviser (3)

the adoption of having a conversational approach when completing assessment tools to determine the barriers faced by a participant was also raised by a FSS frontline adviser (12) stating *“I try to just ask and keep it as conversational as possible”*. Adding that not directly asking a participant about barriers and encouraging a two-way conversation about their hobbies and interests put a participant at ease.

The adoption of a friendly and flexible nature to gather information is further discussed by a WHP frontline adviser (9), explaining that they would *“try put them at ease and feel comfortable”* and reassured the participant that it could be completed *“at a later time”* or the participant would not *“need to answer certain questions”*.

The importance of creating an informal environment to stimulate conversation is discussed by a WHP frontline adviser (7) who stated, *“I’ve really found a benefit in differentiating myself from the Jobcentre”*. The same WHP frontline adviser explained that they would *“try to have the radio on. So, there’s a bit of background music”* and *“We offer tea, coffee”*. The frontline adviser explained that this helps to get to know the participant better and to *“try to break the ice that way, to kind of get rid of that stigma”*

Both the WHP and FSS advisers talked about treating the participant with dignity and respect. FSS frontline adviser (21) found that the best way to help the participant gain the best support from the programme was to *“talk to them like a human being and get them to express, you know, tell me a wee bit about yourself”*. The same FSS adviser found gaining trust would mean that participants would open up and a greater chance that they would remain on the programme.

Similarly, a WHP frontline adviser (4) talked about being *“Open, honest, transparent and literally attacking it head on”* and adding that *“there’s nothing worse than being spoken at”*. The same WHP frontline adviser explained that they would adapt their tone and language, which would consider the demographics of their participants, who were usually the long-term unemployed, socially deprived or those impacted by generational unemployment:

“So, it’s very much a case of asking a lot of open questions in in the very beginning. I try like to come across as non-confrontational as possible to the point of, I will literally say to people that just level with me, what’s your situation? what do you need help with?”

WHP frontline adviser (4)

Adapting their tone and language was also an approach taken by FSS frontline advisers as they believed that personalising their language and tone for all participants contributed to a person-centred approach.

“you are looking at people who are looking at getting into very high-level jobs, people who have never had a job, people who have been unemployed for thirty years, people with a lot of health conditions. You have to change, even the tone of how you speak to them or what language, what words you are using “

FSS frontline adviser (3)

6.2.5 Key findings

The study indicates that both programmes have different approaches to assessing participants. Chapter 5 discusses that the WHP have a lighter touch with fewer targets than FSS, which has more procedural requirements and largely driven by the segmentation process.

The WHP have a greater degree of autonomy in the assessment process in contrast to FSS who have a high degree of accountability.

The WHP is required to complete an action plan which is populated through two-way discussions with participants and using an assessment form devised by the Prime Contractor. In contrast, FSS has adopted a more formalised approach using a Scottish Government segmentation tool which separates participants into strands depending on how far the participants are from the labour market and the level of support required. The FSS frontline advisers highlighted concerns and challenges to using the segmentation tool, which summarised highlight two areas:

- FSS frontline advisers do not follow the segmentation tool and results in a job outcome payment that does not reflect the investment of time.
- A Participant may be allocated to the wrong strand by the FSS frontline adviser if they do not reveal their barriers at the initial assessment stage.

Some FSS advisers cited that the segmentation tool was not flexible enough as it separated participants into three categories which did not fully represent all the potential circumstances or barriers. Furthermore, FSS advisers also questioned if this worked against the nature of personalisation and their concerns that after eight weeks participants could not be moved between strands.

The WHP and FSS frontline advisers use their autonomy to proactively create an environment that separated them from Jobcentre Plus.

The WHP and FSS frontline advisers identified that during the assessment stage that there was a need to build rapport with the participant. This was done by demonstrating behaviours such as facilitating open discussions and creating a conducive environment for the participant. The findings show many of the WHP and FSS frontline advisers identified the need to separate themselves from JCP as participants did not have positive experiences of the Government Department. The distancing from JCP was to ensure that participants would feel comfortable to discuss sensitive information at the assessment stage and going forward. Furthermore, many WHP and FSS frontline advisers demonstrated a commitment to creating an environment that

would promote trust. Therefore, this would suggest that whilst the policies may diverge, in practice the WHP and FSS frontline advisers treat participants with respect and dignity.

The reassurance of participants that employability support is voluntary, is more prevalent in Scotland than in England.

FSS frontline advisers raised the issue about the importance of the FSS programme being voluntary as opposed to the WHP frontline advisers. However, the introduction of a mandatory programme in England alongside a voluntary programme may have reduced the ambiguity for English participants.

Chapter 7 Collaboration and support

7.0 Introduction

This chapter explores pre-work collaboration and in-work support delivered by Work and Health Programme (WHP) or Fair Start Scotland (FSS) frontline advisers. Chapter 6 explored the first two stages of the participant's journey: access and assessment, whereupon, a participant will then enter the collaborative stage, which provides pre-work support. The participant may also choose to disengage from the programme due to a change in circumstances.

7.1 Collaboration with participants

The first section of this chapter explores the collaboration stage and the themes that have been developed during the interviews with WHP and FSS frontline advisers, team leaders and managers. The collaborative stage is the third part of a participant's journey where frontline advisers and participants work together for a prolonged period. The collaborative for the Work and Health Programme (WHP) up to 15 months, for Fair Start Scotland (FSS) it is up to a maximum of 18 months. Table 7.1 provides a summary of the WHP Customer Service Standards (CSS) and FSS Key Delivery Indicators (KDI) for the assessment stage of the participant's journey.

Table 7.1 Minimum Service Standards for participant engagement

Action	CSS/KDI	WHP	FSS
<i>Action plan reviewed, discussion-job goals and wellbeing.</i>	<i>CSS 8/ KDI 6</i>	<i>- Every 10 days (minimum)by telephone or agreed method, - Booked meeting to discuss action plan flexible.</i>	<i>Every 5 days face to face (maximum)</i>
<i>Formal face to face review.</i>	<i>KDI 7</i>		<i>Every 28 days face to face</i>
<i>Referral to specialist support.</i>	<i>KDI 16</i>		<i>Immediate</i>
<i>Vocational Profiling offered.</i>	<i>KDI 18</i>		<i>Not timebound</i>
<i>Supported Employment Model for disabled people and Individual Placement and Support (IPS) available and offered.</i>	<i>KDI 19</i>		<i>On a needs basis</i>

Source Table 5.4

7.1.1 The administrative process

The collaboration stage provides pre-work support that is guided by the minimum service standards shown in table 7.1 and details the frequency of contact and the flexibility of meetings with participants. This section will explore the accountability imposed by the minimum service standards that WHP and FSS frontline advisers have to comply with and how this influences the quality of contact they have with participants. At the assessment stage, the participant has the option at any point to exit the scheme without going through the disengagement process. However, once they enter the collaborative stage, the participant has signed the agreement to join the programme formally and for Service Providers, this is the most resource-intensive phase due to the length of the pre-work period and the level of participant contact.

Accountability and WHP or FSS participant contact

The minimum service standards provide the WHP and FSS frontline advisers with the level of accountability and detail their collective responsibilities to participants at this stage of the journey. Several WHP frontline advisers confirmed they understood that contact should be every ten (working) days.

“I have to speak to them every ten days”

WHP frontline adviser (2)

However, the frequency of meetings and type of contact diverges between the WHP and FSS. The minimum service standard confirmed by FSS frontline advisers is that weekly contact (every five working days) is made with participants.

“Part of the contract is you need to contact a participant at least once a week”

FSS frontline adviser (15)

As part of the discussion around the participant’s journey, the WHP frontline advisers discussed the contact requirement and did not raise issues around the frequency. The WHP frontline advisers did not perceive their ten-day Customer Service Standards (CSS) requirement as being an issue and acknowledged that it provided them with the flexibility to manage the frequency of meetings. This was in contrast to FSS frontline advisers who did not question the need to contact the participant but questioned the frequency and the non-negotiable requirement of weekly meetings. The weekly meeting for FSS is a prescribed Key Delivery Indicator (KDI) and concerns were raised by FSS frontline advisers, which centred around being held financially accountable for ensuring that weekly face-to-face meetings took place and how productive this was for participants.

The frequency of meetings is not the only difference between the programmes but also the platform through which participants are contacted. The WHP CSS states that contact can be made via telephone/video conference, whereas FSS state that this must be a weekly face to face meeting. Both approaches have positive and negative outcomes for the WHP or FSS frontline advisers and Participants. A WHP participant has less pressure to attend a face-to-face meeting on a weekly basis and as such may consider the programme to be less intrusive and empowering them with responsibility. Additionally, the WHP provider does not require the human or physical resources to meet every participant on a weekly basis. However, the lack of face-to-face contact could encourage procrastination or will not identify potentially fraudulent activities, such as being employed on a casual basis. In contrast, FSS participants face a greater deal of intrusion and a lack of autonomy which they may consider as a barrier and choose to exit the programme.

Accountability and financial consequences for FSS Service Providers

FSS frontline advisers discussed their frustration at the lack of flexibility they had to manage the frequency of meetings with participants and the financial consequences imposed by the Scottish Government if they failed to record these. FSS frontline advisers were critical of what they thought was an unnecessarily strict governance process being imposed by the Scottish Government.

“If they didn't see weekly contact, you would get pulled up for it, why is there not weekly contact?”

FSS Manager (5)

Failure to record weekly meetings with participants would result in the Service Provider being questioned during an auditing period carried out by the Scottish Government.

“In terms of following the KDIs we all need to follow those because you actually get charged if you don't, you get money taken back”

FSS Manager (5)

Similarly, concerns were raised around the financial consequences of being fined by the Scottish Government for failing to meet any KDI and this would result in money being deducted from payments due.

“In essence fined, they take money back off of us, it's called a service credit”

FSS Team leader (9)

The financial consequences of failing to meet the KDI have created tensions between the FSS Service Providers, which resulted in the original contract and Scottish Government guidance being scrutinised for ambiguities. A FSS frontline adviser explained that latterly they had found a loophole in the contract, which stated that they could add notes to a case that weekly meetings were adjusted at the participant's request.

“The KDIs are flexible and can be changed at the request of the participant so what we put in our notes or our coaches put in the notes is that the individual has been receiving one to one weekly support at the participants request this will now change to fortnightly or at the participants request you know things like that”

FSS Manager (6)

Further adding that they had found several loopholes which have mitigated possible financial penalties imposed on the Service Providers by the Scottish Government.

“Over the years we have found wee loopholes”

FSS Manager (6)

The findings suggest that WHP frontline advisers have been given a greater degree of autonomy and flexibility to schedule meetings, which means that there is less of a risk to incur a financial penalty for WHP Prime Contractors. This is in direct contrast to FSS where the KDI is not flexible and perceived by FSS frontline advisers to follow a mandated approach. This has resulted in FSS frontline advisers strictly adhering to the KDI to avoid a financial penalty and one that they considered to be detrimental to the participant. However, this has led to FSS Service Providers studying the contractual guidance for loopholes that they consider should have been included in the original KDI to make it more transparent. The following sections will now explore how the differences to contact and frequency influence the behaviours of the WHP and FSS frontline advisers and participants.

The influence of WHP frontline advisers on a participant's autonomy and frequency of contact.

The WHP CSS wording explicitly states that the participant can change the frequency of meetings with a frontline adviser. The capacity to change the frequency of meetings may be easier to carry out as the contact is made over the telephone. However, in practice the WHP frontline adviser used their discretion to reduce the required frequency of meetings from every ten days to every five days.

“I try to phone my participants on a weekly basis. Just to keep them engaged, we're required to do it fortnightly.....I try to say right at a minimum, I would like to see you once a month and that would be for their action plan, but I will be phoning you each week”

WHP frontline adviser (1)

Whilst the WHP CSS had a minimum of meetings, every ten days there appeared to be a common approach taken by WHP frontline advisers of having weekly meetings with participants. However, as previously discussed, the reduction from every ten working days to every five working days may have less of an impact as these are conducted via the telephone and this does not put additional pressure on ensuring that physical space is available or participants incurring upfront travelling costs. However, there was also the autonomy to change the frequency of meetings based on reasons such as the participant's health or a change in circumstances.

“I like to see or contact my participants once a week if it's doable unless they are going through some massive crisis where they just don't need you or they are on short breaks in engagement because they have changes in their health, or defined limited capability for work so they are deciding what their next steps are”

WHP frontline adviser (5)

Similarly, WHP frontline advisers adjusted their work schedule to ensure that the needs of the participants are also being met and further adds to the degree of autonomy and flexibility enabled by the method of contact:

“you've got to manage your time sufficiently and it might be that, sometimes you need to borrow from Peter to pay Paul. So, if you need to see somebody three times in a week instead of one, then you need to make that happen”

WHP frontline adviser (7)

The WHP frontline advisers acknowledge that in some cases there is a requirement to amend the frequency of contact, albeit it appears to be more at the discretion of the frontline adviser. However, this also highlights that even with the flexibility provided by the WHP CSS, that WHP frontline advisers have chosen to reduce participant autonomy and adopt a common

weekly approach that FSS frontline advisers consider as being punitive as evidenced in the next theme.

The influence of FSS frontline advisers on a participant's autonomy and frequency of contact

The WHP CSS states that the participant has the choice to adjust the frequency of contact with a WHP frontline adviser. This is in contrast to the FSS Key delivery indicator (KDI) which stipulates a weekly face to face meeting with the participant and a face to face four weekly action plan review. As previously discussed FSS have a more prescriptive KDI which does not allow for any frontline adviser or participant flexibility. However, whilst the FSS frontline advisers acknowledged their lack of autonomy and the participants they rationalised this as being positive and focused on the benefits of weekly engagement.

In common with the WHP, the FSS frontline advisers perceived that a weekly meeting contributed towards the participants progress, helped to build relationships and further added to their job satisfaction in the role. Several FSS frontline advisers found that weekly meetings helped show participants of their progress at their four weekly formal reviews, boosted their confidence and motivated them to continue on the programme.

“We will try and understand that journey every single week and how that links in with their four-weekly review. So, we will refer to that four weekly review and say, Yep, we've done your CV. That's it ticked off”

FSS frontline adviser (21)

“This is not just a one-day relationship. You know, we get to see them weekly and with a weekly intervention, the barriers and the whole blocks begin to break down”

FSS Team leader (19)

“All the time you are trying to move them forward, no matter how slow that is, but with reviews sometimes you can reflect back, let them see how far they have moved because sometimes they don't really feel like a lot is happening”

FSS frontline adviser (3)

The benefits of a weekly meeting were also found to help build relationships between the frontline advisers and the participants which created trust and honesty. The building of trust enabled a conducive environment where participants were comfortable enough to also share their non-employment related life experiences.

“I've got another lady who shared the news that she was she had her first grandchild. I had somebody who'd told me that they proposed to their girlfriend and got engaged So, you do really build up a bond with people, especially when you talking to them week in, week out for a year”

FSS frontline adviser (13)

This benefited participants and the same FSS Frontline adviser (13) also discussed that it added to their own sense of job satisfaction and encouraged them to continue in the sector. Finally, a FSS Frontline adviser (11) located rurally explained that although their Prime Contractor expected the KDI's to be adhered to *“within that we have a lot of flexibility”*. An example of this was given when after the first eight weeks of one-to-one weekly meetings that they had the flexibility to diversify and offer a wider range of support.

“Coming in outwith the town who are very socially isolated and very legitimately isolated as well. So, it just became a weekly routine and it was a laugh”.

FSS frontline adviser (11)

Whilst FSS frontline advisers agreed that weekly meetings had positive outcomes, it was discussed that the mandated weekly meetings created negative outcomes. This was in relation to participants being called into an unnecessary face-to-face meeting with a FSS frontline adviser and frontline advisers not feeling they were being trusted to use their discretion.

“It talks about weekly intervention with individuals as well. Not every individual needs or wants that”

FSS Manager (6)

The negative effect of not being able to personalise the frequency of meetings and method of contact was discussed, with an example given of how this impacted on lone parents:

“The Scottish Government had the diktat of you must see every single client face to face on a weekly basis and that was hard especially if you have someone with three kids off over summer and you are trailing them in, you know, three kids, all the hopping coming in for their weekly appointment and you think you really could be doing without this”

FSS frontline adviser (3)

“And I can't imagine being a single mum and thinking, I now need to go to this thing for 11 o'clock for an hour when I've got to fit in all the other things that are going on, it must be more of an inconvenience”

FSS frontline adviser (15)

Although it would appear that weekly contact in FSS did encourage participant engagement, the lack of flexibility created issues for specific groups and the evidence suggests that a one size fits all approach was not appropriate in all cases.

The Influence of compliance and minimum service standards on the providing a person-centred approach

A common theme for WHP and FSS frontline advisers when discussing a participant's journey was the dilution of a personalised service due to the constraints of a strict compliance framework. The introduction of a compliance framework ensures that participants receive the same minimum level of support from all the WHP or FSS Service Providers. However, some WHP and FSS frontline advisers raised concerns that the introduction of a strict compliance framework, which was driven by a payment by results model negatively influenced the nature of the personalisation of support.

“So, in my opinion? Based on my experience, there is a real conflict between the holistic bespoke additional support that these people have been earmarked for and the payment by results nature of the programme”

WHP frontline adviser (7)

Whilst the WHP have fewer compliance targets than FSS, the influence of these were discussed as constraining their ability to provide personalised support to participants. When questioned further, the WHP frontline adviser explained.

“There are time constraints, there are budgetary constraints, there are contractual constraints”

WHP frontline adviser (7)

Similar to their WHP counterparts, the FSS frontline advisers also raised concerns that these constrained their ability to provide a person-centred approach and the lack of participant focus.

“This is supposed to be a person-centred approach and it's not really person centred when we have all of these rules to follow”.

FSS frontline adviser (12)

“I think the KDIs are the thing that staff hate they feel that they’re more working to the KDIs and they want to be doing this with their participants”

FSS frontline adviser (8)

Furthermore, the number of KDI’s attached to FSS was negatively compared to the Work Programme (WP) and this contradicted the programmes voluntary nature:

“You look at the number of KDI's that we have got. You would think it’s a mandated programme I don't think the Work Programme had that many KDI's attached to it”

FSS Manager (6)

Furthermore, whilst the KDI’s require the participant to attend, the FSS frontline advisers felt the pressure to comply but also highlighted that due to voluntary nature of the programme they ultimately had no control over participants.

“It is a voluntary programme, for example and it expects contact, so KDI six is that we contact the participant, but if the participant doesn’t want the contact. We can’t force them it’s a voluntary programme”

FSS Team leader (8)

However, a 2nd tier provider of FSS raised the issue of additional paperwork introduced by their Prime Contractor and perceived this to be more about control and not necessarily best practice. This introduced pressures to not only meeting the KDI’s but added another layer of compliance.

“I think some of the Primes are just maybe overextending what we need to do. It's about control and I don't think this is necessarily the programme, it doesn't suit that control. It's meant to be realistic and it's not holistic if we are, you know, micromanaged”

FSS frontline adviser (3)

7.1.2 Engaging with participants

The next element in this process will explore the engagement and personalisation that are facilitated by the WHP Customer Service Standards (CSS) and FSS Key Delivery Indicators (KDI) as shown in table 7.1.

A common understanding of personalisation at the pre-work stage

Both the WHP and FSS require frontline advisers to complete evaluation tools at the assessment stage, which are used to create a participant’s action plan. Whilst the action plan provides an

initial starting point, this will evolve and change over their time on the programme. The WHP and FSS focus on providing a person-centred and tailored approach to overcome the barriers identified by the participant at the assessment stage. To first understand the review process of the action plan, frontline advisers in both programmes were asked what they considered the concept of personalisation entailed.

WHP and FSS frontline advisers agreed that personalisation is a person-centred approach with commonly used words being ‘bespoke’ and ‘holistic’. The concept was further expanded on by the WHP and FSS frontline advisers who considered that the programmes did not just address barriers specific to employability, such a literacy or numeracy but the whole picture or person.

“I look at the participant three hundred and sixty degrees, so the ultimate aim is to move that person as close to work as possible. The whole person approach”

WHP frontline adviser (1)

“Well, it's about a bespoke service for me, the programme looks at each person as unique with his own choice and their own desire, wishes, needs, goals and assisting”

FSS Team leader (19)

“So, that is very individual and again it is very holistic, so it's not just looking at employability we are looking at the whole picture”

FSS Team leader (2)

Adopting a bespoke and holistic approach to personalised support was further described in the context of the depth and breadth of personalisation using a tree analogy, where a participant may have multiple barriers to address, but each may have several solutions.

“So, it's like a tree. You have to start at the root and then when you go up that tree, it could branch off in so many different places and in so many different ways, mostly because of each person is so different”

FSS frontline adviser (21)

In practice, the number of barriers a participant may have, meant that frontline advisers from both programmes perceived they performed in many different roles to meet their participants needs.

“When you are doing this job, it's so much more than just employability that you end up helping people with, you feel like you're a social worker and a therapist and all of it all at once”

FSS frontline adviser (12)

“But the rest of it, it depends on their situation. So, if they're ready for work, we would get them booked in for job clubs and that type of thing and interview prep but if they are not ready for that, it would be more motivational things”

WHP frontline adviser (3)

Finally, whilst a WHP Frontline adviser (7) explained that *“it's very it's a bespoke, holistic service. That's the dream”*, when asked if this was the reality, stated.

“Of course, it's not because, you know, there are time constraints, there are budgetary constraints, there are contractual constraints”

WHP frontline adviser (7)

The influence of health factors on WHP personalised support

WHP frontline advisers discussed the participant's health as a key element which would influence how the participants existing skills could be developed. Acknowledging a participant's health conditions and concentrating on developing their skills would further motivate a participant into sustainable employment.

“What influences is basically their own health and their own skills, what they are looking for. So, it's very much aimed at something that is going to be sustainable for them”

WHP frontline adviser (3)

Similarly, it was discussed that a participant's capabilities could be developed by focusing on what they realistically could achieve rather than on what they could never achieve:

“You know, people's health also deteriorates, so it's giving them the skills, to look at what they can do and not what they can't “

WHP frontline adviser (1)

Dealing with participants who have complex health conditions or specific needs means in practice that having the autonomy to manage a caseload and make decisions for the participants also carried with it great responsibility.

“We have the autonomy to manage our caseload and to be to make decisions about people's lives actually, which are sometimes quite daunting when you are, making decisions about people who are extremely vulnerable or complex”

WHP frontline adviser (5)

The approach taken by WHP would suggest that participants at the induction stage are continually assessed throughout the pre-work support and that support is reactive to the participant's needs during this period.

The influence of health factors on FSS personalised support

The FSS approach to personalised support for participants with physical and health conditions differs from the WHP as participants undergo the segmentation process at the assessment stage. Participants are segmented into three strands which are core, advanced or intense, which at this stage will determine the support offered to the participant and the length of time in pre-work support.

“We have a diagnostic form and after the diagnostic form if they are an intense client there will then be a vocational profile form”

FSS frontline adviser (21)

The diagnostic form will be used to determine the level of tailored support as it is based on what strand a participant is allocated to and alongside additional vocational profiling forms.

“We look at it across the three cores, the core advanced and intense, those that are intense we know what they need. They need one to one support we can personalise that and those that are core, we know that they need more light touch”

FSS Manager (5)

The segmentation process completed at the assessment stage is subjective as it relies not only on the honesty of the participant but is also open to interpretation by the FSS frontline adviser. If the initial diagnostic tool was inaccurate, then there is a danger that the wrong support may be offered. However, there is an option to move a participant from one strand to another, but there appeared to be some confusion between Prime Contractors when changes to the strands are made.

“We can move them up within the first eight weeks “

FSS Team leader (9)

“We can change the strands throughout”

FSS frontline adviser (3)

Additionally, the strand may impact the length of time for a participant in the pre-work support stage who is allocated to the intense strand, which may be increased from twelve to eighteen months. However, for this to happen, a business case would be required.

“Intense, you can extend the programme by six months so they can be given an extension to 18 months, but the only way, you need to put in a business case for that”

FSS frontline adviser (3)

Furthermore, the cases allocated to FSS frontline workers may be based on the strands a participant is allocated to. This could influence the level of expertise and knowledge that a FSS frontline adviser will have in relation to specialised support.

“So, one of my staff is really good with supported employment, I’ve got one of my staff who is really good with people with learning disabilities, I’ve got another one of my staff who is really good with those kind of quick to move people”

FSS Team leader (2)

However, whilst this may provide the participant with targeted support, concerns were raised about including the Supported Employment Model for those furthest away from the labour market in FSS. This involved concerns about the prescriptive time limits imposed by the Scottish Government and the inclusion of it alongside a payment by results model.

“I really see the good that Scottish government wanted to do, but what they have got so caught up in is numbers, numbers and money, numbers and money. Wrong. Not when you're trying to do a Supported Employment Programme”

FSS Team leader (9)

Additionally, there were further tensions between FSS frontline advisers who had a working experience with the Supported Employment Model and the Scottish Government over the understanding of what it was in practice.

“People like myself and the managers that used to look after the businesses used to stand up and say WTAF, You guys have not got a Scooby Doo, you haven't got a clue”

FSS frontline adviser (21)

7.1.3 Participant disengagement

The final part of the collaborative process concerns the disengagement process. The WHP and FSS are voluntary programmes from which a participant can disengage after starting on the programme, without the threat of punitive action, such as benefit sanctions. The disengagement process is supported with corresponding WHP CSS and FSS KDI, which facilitates contact with the Jobcentre Plus or the provision of a leavers plan, as shown at table 7.4.

Table 7.2 Minimum Service Standards for participant disengagement

Action	CSS/KDI	WHP (Working days)	FSS (Working days)
<i>Contact participant if meeting missed</i>	<i>CSS 9</i>	<i>Within 2 working days</i>	
<i>Contact participant after notified of disengagement</i>	<i>KDI 11</i>		<i>Within 1 working day of being notified participant will not continue the service</i>
<i>Exiting the Programme employed or disengaged</i>	<i>CSS12/ KDI 13</i>	<i>Exit package within 10 days</i>	<i>Leavers Plan Within 10 days of Participant service exit date</i>

Source Table 5.4

Each programme has adopted a different approach to disengaging or exiting a participant from the programmes.

- The WHP a participant can disengage but will never exit for the duration of the programme.
- FSS, a participant can disengage for a set period, or exit completely from the programme, or exit and re-join at a later.

Disengagement and period of contact

The WHP and FSS have compliance targets that relate to the disengagement of participants from the programme, which was discussed in chapter 5. Both programmes must contact the participant to establish the reason for disengagement before reporting this back to the Jobcentre

Plus (JCP). However, the compliance targets do not detail a set period of disengagement as this is based on contractual agreements for individual WHP Prime Contractor's

"So, there's a protocol that we put in place if someone doesn't answer calls answer text messages or emails and there's no communication from them whatsoever over a period of time"

WHP frontline adviser (6)

"So, it's going to be telephone and email. You have to make sure that and the things are time bound"

WHP frontline Adviser (8)

For FSS it is determined collectively by Scottish Government policy.

"You need to attempt them so many times. They need to phone the Jobcentre as that's the referral source and that all has to be recorded and then they can be taken off programme"

FSS Manager (5)

For the WHP, the Prime Contractor's contract defines the acceptable period that a frontline adviser should contact if they have disengaged from the WHP. The general consensus appears to be at four weeks when the participant will be disengaged from the programme. However, the WHP frontline adviser can use their discretion to extend this where they think it is appropriate.

"After four weeks, if we don't hear from them, we are supposed to disengage them, but I like to give people the benefit of the doubt to stay on the programme"

WHP frontline adviser (2)

For FSS, the period a frontline adviser is required to contact the customer was increased from four weeks to eight weeks in 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and has since remained. In the first instance, FSS frontline advisers are required to contact the participants before deciding to exit the participant.

"It could be telephone number changes that (they) have forgot to tell us. Email addresses, maybe they're not using that address anymore, so we wouldn't just close the claim or close the service to the relevant parties who refer them to us"

FSS Team leader (19)

Should an FSS frontline adviser not contact the participant in this period, the participant is fully exited from the programme. Additionally, a participant can pause their engagement with the programme for up to eight weeks due to health or personal circumstances. Due to the differing approaches the next section will compare and contrast the disengagement process adopted by each of the programmes.

The WHP Disengagement process

As previously discussed in the last section, once the decision is made by a WHP frontline adviser, to disengage a participant from the programme, the participant will first be referred to their Team leader for agreement and then onto a separate team.

“We send to our team leader who adds it to a spreadsheet. The disengaged team will pick that up of the spreadsheet and take it on to their caseload and they will try and make contact to re-engage”

WHP frontline adviser (5)

Once the Team leader has agreed to disengage a participant from the programme, JCP will be advised and the participant will be referred to the Prime Contactors disengaged team. However, this approach was criticised as overly bureaucratic by a WHP frontline adviser, as it first had to be justified to their Team leader. This appeared to remove the autonomy to delay the disengagement of a participant from the WHP frontline adviser, to then being accountable to their Team leader for making the decision.

“What we do at the moment is we complete paperwork that is transferred to our team leader. I think our team leaders are told to give us a bit push back, to see how steadfast, you are with it”

WHP frontline adviser (4)

The WHP adviser disagreed with this approach and believed that they should have the autonomy to disengage the participant. They argued that being more familiar with the participant's circumstances, they were better equipped to make these decisions, perceiving a lack of trust in their abilities.

The FSS Disengagement process

FSS define disengagement as either an exit from the programme or a pause:

- The time spent attempting to contact a participant, where no contact is made and removed from the programme (exit).

- A short period of time where the participant has paused engagement on the programme. i.e., for a short health condition or personal circumstance (disengagement).

Unlike the WHP, the end-to-end process of contacting a participant to establish why they have disengaged lies with the FSS frontline adviser.

“Maybe they are unwell in hospital, we don’t know things like that, but what we tend to say is a month, if you are maybe chasing someone for a month or maybe six weeks, who has got that tendency to drop off and disengage then it means that, just do the exit”

FSS Manager (6)

Furthermore, FSS frontline workers have the autonomy and accountability to make decisions about exiting participants based on their knowledge of that person. For example, a participant with a record of engagement would not be exited straightaway and additional information gathered.

“If it is someone who is really good at engaging in the past and you find this change is not the norm for them don't put them off to service, don't exit them from the service”

FSS Manager (6)

It could be suggested that the weekly face to face meetings undertaken by a FSS frontline adviser means that they gain knowledge of the participant and are better placed than their WHP counterpart to make those decisions

The differences between disengagement and exit from the programme

As previously discussed, the WHP and FSS have a different approach to the disengagement process and this also includes the definition of disengagement. Disengagement for the WHP means that participants are continually enrolled in the programme and only ever exited completely for three specific reasons.

” job outcome, relocation abroad or death”

WHP frontline adviser (4)

This means that once a participant has been disengaged from the WHP they will continue to be contacted by both the disengaged team and JCP for the duration left of their 15-month programme. For example, if they state they no longer wish to partake in the programme after 3 months, the disengagement team will potentially contact them for the remainder of the time left.

“We would continue to contact them monthly basis to see whether their circumstances have changed”

WHP frontline adviser (1)

Even if a participant is disengaged from the programme, the 15 months period will not be extended to include any time lost.

“If you disengage.... you're off for a long time and then if we engage again, the clock ticks all the way through, so once you're on, that clock starts ticking and we can't stop it”

WHP frontline adviser (1)

However, for FSS, a participant will exit the programme after eight weeks and will have a choice re-join the programme at a later date. In practice, if a participant exits from the programme if they choose to re-join the programme later, the clock starts ticking from that point. This is contrast to the WHP, where participants who are disengaged, the clock will continue ticking through this period.

However, the approach has raised concerns by FSS frontline advisers about how they balance their behaviours to motivate participants as it was a voluntary programme and being caught in a no-win situation.

“Sometimes it takes making a mistake and realising that, oh, I pushed someone there and now they're going to disengage with the programme”

FSS frontline adviser (10)

Alternatively, the same frontline adviser was also concerned if they did not push a participant, it could mean that very little progress was made.

“They haven't really made much progress because I haven't thought about what they actually need and push them more or supported them more”

FSS frontline adviser (10)

Although an FSS frontline adviser may have exhausted all possible means to communicate with a participant, they can opt out and exit from the programme. The FSS frontline adviser has no influence over the participant's decision to withdraw, regardless of any efforts to mediate or encourage continued engagement.

“You have got procedures you have to carry out for eight weeks trying to get a hold of them. This is voluntary. We don't have anything we can do to make them stay”

FSS frontline adviser (11)

Once more, the significance of documenting evidence requirements for audit trail purposes and compliance was emphasised to validate that the participant independently made a choice to withdraw or ultimately exit from the programme.

“You know, deciding, well, this is not for me. So as long as we can evidence what the situation is and there's really nothing much, we can do to change that”

FSS Team leader (19)

Furthermore, in cases where FSS frontline advisers tried to avoid exiting individuals from the programme by proactively communicating with participants, they found it a challenge to strike the right balance between having too little or too much contact with participants.

“We haven't actually spoken to them it comes a point of we are just harassing you, if you're not answering it doesnae matter it might come to the point I'm going to get a restraining order”

FSS Team leader (2)

7.1.4 Key Findings

The study indicates that the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS) frontline advisers have a similar perspective on what they consider the behaviours and actions that demonstrate personalised support and why it was essential to provide this. However, differences between the two programmes in respect of compliance and the frequency of contact may influence the behaviours of frontline advisers and participants to engage with the programme.

The WHP have a greater degree of autonomy in arranging participant contact and FSS have a greater degree of accountability.

There are differences in the minimum service standards and frequency of participant contact between the WHP and FSS, leading to varying levels of accountability and leading to financial consequences for Prime Contractors. WHP frontline advisers have a flexible approach to scheduling meetings and are less focused on meeting the ten-day contact requirement, whereas FSS frontline advisers have contracted weekly face-to-face meetings with participants.

FSS frontline advisers perceive this as inflexible and potentially detrimental to participants, as non-compliance can result in financial penalties or service credits. Therefore, FSS frontline advisers are more focused on meeting the KDI to avoid financial consequences rather than fulfilling the needs of participants. However, the increased governance imposed has led to unintended consequences which has resulted in FSS frontline advisers searching for loopholes in the operational guidance to mitigate penalties and to provide a more flexible personalised approach.

Both WHP and FSS frontline advisers perform in many roles to provide personalised support
Personalisation in pre-work support is considered by frontline advisers in the WHP and FSS to be a person-centred approach that is holistic and bespoke, addressing the whole picture or person rather than just the barriers specific to employability such as literacy or numeracy. Both WHP and FSS require frontline advisers to complete evaluation tools at the assessment stage to create a participant's action plan. The focus is to provide tailored approaches to overcome the barriers identified by the participant at the assessment stage, which will evolve and change over time. The number of barriers a participant may have meant that frontline advisers from both programmes perceived they performed in several different roles to meet their participants needs, including social work and therapy.

WHP advisers have more autonomy than FSS as segmentation may limit personalised services offered.

Both the WHP and FSS consider that the information a participant provides about their health at the assessment stage is a crucial element and influences how a participant's skills can be developed. The WHP do not categorise participants, which is in contrast to FSS which uses a segmentation tool at the assessment stage that will tailor the support offered to the participant. Although both of the assessment processes are subjective based on the participant's input and open to interpretation, the findings suggest that frontline advisers in WHP greater autonomy. The WHP approach suggests that they are in a position to adapt if participant's health changes, such as improvements in or the deterioration of health conditions. In contrast, for FSS, if the participant does not fully disclose health issues at the assessment stage, they may be segmented incorrectly, which could result in more or less support being offered.

FSS have more autonomy over the disengagement process due to the WHP process in place.

The compliance targets for both WHP and FSS require contact with participants who have disengaged from the programme to establish the reason for this and before reporting it back to Jobcentre Plus. The WHP and FSS frontline advisers appear to have some autonomy over the

period of disengagement and could choose to delay this at their own discretion which is based on the knowledge they have of their participant. However, the decision to disengage a participant from the WHP programme must first be referred to a team leader and then passed onto the Prime Contractors disengaged team, which has been criticised as overly bureaucratic. Conversely, the FSS frontline advisers have the autonomy and accountability to make decisions about exiting participants based on their knowledge of that person which presents the process as being streamlined and more focused on the participant's circumstances. The following section will discuss the final stage, which will discuss the in-work support process and how remuneration is made to the Prime Contractor when participants successfully secure employment.

7.2. In-work support of participants

The final stage of the process will explore the in-work support both programmes provide to participants who gain employment. The Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS) both have minimum service standards associated with the provision of in-work support that are discussed in Chapter 5 and shown at table 7.3.

Table 7.3 Discourse used in the minimum service standards for in-work stage

WHP CSS	FSS KDI	Actions
Whilst the Participant is in employment or self-employment, the Contractor will attempt to contact (via telephone/video conference or any other manner permitted by the Contract) the Participant every 10 (ten) Working Days to offer any necessary support that the Participant may require in employment or self-employment. The frequency of the contact can be amended if the Participant prefers a different arrangement.	A detailed In Work Support (IWS) Plan to be agreed with the Participant within 10 Working Days of job start. Job Analysis must be undertaken for each Participant entering employment within 10 working days of each job start, to inform the In-Work Support Action Plan and with Participant consent, must be agreed with the employer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The administrative process</i> - <i>In-work support provided</i> - <i>Remuneration of services</i>

Source: Appendix 5 and 6

7.2.1 The administrative process

The period of in-work support provided diverges between both programmes. There is no defined pre and in work support period for the WHP as it could be part of the initial 456 days (15 months) and in some cases extended by a further 182 calendar days (6 months). The approach taken was confirmed by WHP and FSS frontline advisers when asked about the support given to participants who had secured employment.

“They get 15 months all in all, but we always say that try to get 12 months to get the job and then you've got that time after to fit in in work support”

WHP frontline adviser (8)

In contrast to this FSS have a defined maximum period of in-work support of 12 months.

“Helping them into employment and then continue working with them for 12 months after they get a job to provide in-work support”

FSS frontline adviser (12)

Whilst the duration of the in-work support is different, the way in which it has been organised by the Prime Contractors is similar in approach. The WHP has a dedicated in-work support team who will contact the participant to ask if they require support whilst in employment. The participant can accept this and make plans with the WHP frontline adviser to agree on the level of contact they wish or have the choice to refuse the in-work support service.

“If it's weekly, fortnightly or monthly, then obviously it's their personal choice if they wish to continue to have in-work support from us because they can at any time refuse to have in-work support”

WHP frontline adviser (6)

FSS have a similar approach where participants are referred to an in-work specialist as part of their organisation.

“I used to do employer engagement and link in with in-work, support, but now I just do in work support”

FSS frontline adviser (13)

The WHP and FSS have a dedicated team of specialist frontline advisers to provide in-work support to participants joining the labour market which is an integral part to support. However, when discussing this in practice with the WHP and FSS frontline advisers the policy approach influences how in-work support is provided and to what level of support is available. Furthermore, the differences to the period of in-work support directly relates to the remuneration of job outcomes based on the earnings threshold for the WHP and the period in employment for FSS. At 7.2.4, the details and implications of these two different approaches are discussed in greater depth.

The following section will explore how WHP and FSS frontline advisers navigate in-work support and network with external organisations to support participants with physical and health conditions.

7.2.2 Supporting participants by networking

The tailored and personalised approach extends to the provision of in-work support with frontline advisers explaining how physical and mental health support is provided to participants.

An integral part of the WHP is supporting participants with physical and mental health issues and removing the barriers preventing them from entering the labour market. Identifying the possibility that a participant will require a reasonable adjustment begins at the assessment stage and carries through until the participant is ready to enter the labour market. There is evidence that the WHP frontline advisers take a proactive approach and networked with specialist organisations to facilitate participants who require reasonable adjustments.

“We do try and support them as much as we can because part of the in-work support we do have another part of the organisation called Work Fit that is something that we started”

WHP frontline adviser (6)

“If I have a new employer, (advises them) I’m like this person’s got mental health issues, but we have Work Fit that will support”

WHP frontline adviser (1)

The partnership with a specialist organisation supports and enables participants to remain in the labour market by addressing situations that will require mental health support or reasonable adjustments.

“they may have been out of work for a while, that they do find it to be quite overwhelming and they could be on the verge of like quitting for whatever reason it may be, but obviously, the Work Fit guys step in”

WHP frontline adviser (6)

For FSS the Supported Employment Model or Individual Placement Support are schemes in place, which will guide the level and type of support provided by FSS frontline advisers. Additionally, the use of Access to Work is discussed by WHP and FSS frontline advisers as another organisation that provides a valuable service to assist a participant.

“There’s obviously things like Access to Work and things to support them in work, but that they’ve got to be happy going into that type of work”

WHP frontline adviser (3)

“So, if you have a mental health condition, I have seen cases where Access to Work sponsored a taxi”

FSS Team leader (19)

The WHP and FSS frontline advisers also highlighted the use of the UK Government scheme, Disability Confident as a valuable resource as this was a way of educating and encouraging employers to take on participants with physical and mental health issues,

“So, I've got quite a lot of employers on board. I encourage them to do the disability confidence”

WHP frontline adviser (1)

“So, it's educating the employers to open their doors to disabled people because we're trying to match up that gap that you have able-bodied people and disabled people”

FSS Team leader (19)

Disability Confident is a UK government initiative that involves developing an inclusive environment that supports the participation and progression of people with disabilities. One WHP frontline adviser explained how they also used this as leverage to encourage employers to become a Disability Confident employer by promoting the positive aspects of this.

“Well, you might be due for renewal, so how many of my participants would you like to take?”

WHP frontline adviser (1)

Although, the Supported Employment Model has not been specifically written into the compliance requirements for the WHP as it has been for FSS, this does not mean that the WHP frontline advisers do not engage with support for people with disabilities or complex needs. The WHP and FSS frontline advisers proactively engage with specialist organisations to facilitate reasonable adjustments for participants who require them.

An example of actively engaging with external organisations to support participants is the use of Access to Work to ensure that participants are comfortable with the work they are being placed in. Furthermore, the WHP and FSS frontline advisers use the Disability Confident scheme as a leverage to encourage employers to become Disability Confident employers by promoting the positive aspects of this service. This would demonstrate that frontline advisers from both programmes not only recognise the value and importance of networking with

external organisations but readily engage with them to facilitate support to enable participants enter and remain in the labour market.

7.2.3 Service Providers and remuneration disparities

The WHP and FSS consider a job outcome as a participant who is employed for 16 hours or more and receiving earnings. This excludes a participant moving from the employability support programme into education or a voluntary position.

For the WHP the technical definition of a job outcome is when a participant reaches a specified earnings level which is the equivalent of sixteen hours a week over twenty-six weeks at the national living wage.

“So, when they get to threshold or outcome, that means that's when they obviously do, then come off the programme”

WHP frontline adviser (6)

However, this is different to FSS where a job outcome would be considered as a participant gaining employment for sixteen hours or more a week over the periods of thirteen, twenty-six and fifty-two weeks.

“You have to be looking into work for 16 hours plus, you know, nothing less than 16 hours”

FSS Team leader (19)

Implications of the Sixteen-hour job outcome rule

The 16-hour rule will determine when the programmes receive a job outcome payment. This means that the WHP will obtain a full job outcome payment before FSS and have a greater capacity to take on new participants. For example, a WHP participant can meet the earnings threshold after 26 weeks and the Prime Contractor will receive a job outcome payment. On FSS the job outcome payments for a participant are incremental over thirteen, twenty-six and fifty-two weeks. Therefore, FSS resources are committed to the in-work support process of a participant over a longer period.

Furthermore, there appears to be no explanation why sixteen hours was considered as the threshold for employment and job outcome payments by both programmes. One suggestion is that it links to older legacy welfare benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), which is the threshold to remove claimants from benefits. However, since the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) in 2013, claimants are permitted to work any number of hours with a tapered threshold of earnings being applied. This contradicts the Administrative Earnings Threshold

(AET) introduced under UC that stipulates a claimant working less than 15 hours is moved by Jobcentre Plus into the intensive work regime and required to seek work. This presents a policy disconnect between the contractual agreement to achieve a job outcome of sixteen hours or more a week and the participant's belief that they will lose their benefits if working more than sixteen hours a week.

"We do still get that from people. We hear them say that, you know, I don't want to do 16 hours, because I will lose my benefit"

FSS frontline adviser (22)

The belief of losing benefits may result in participants being reluctant to either join the programme or taking on employment which is more than sixteen hours. Moreover, given the variety of participants joining both programmes and the range of barriers presented, the WHP and FSS frontline advisers expressed frustration that the sixteen-hour threshold was the only recognition of a job outcome. Many of the frontline workers from both programmes discussed that activities which progressed people closer to the labour market, such as voluntary work or education, should be considered a job outcome.

"There should be something to recognise actually how far this person has come"

WHP frontline adviser (8)

"I think with Fair Start we had always wished they had looked at other things with outcomes"

FSS frontline adviser (22)

The sixteen-hour requirement of a participant entering employment is the measure used by both programmes and when the appropriate target is met will trigger a job outcome payment.

"The only KPI really that they are interested in is the number of people that get a job"

WHP frontline adviser (7)

Confirming a job outcome

Each programme has a different process to quantify and confirm a job out payment:

- The WHP a Job outcome payment will be made when a participant meets the earnings threshold, which is usually at the minimum wage of sixteen hours or more over twenty-six weeks.

- FSS, there is no earnings threshold and the job outcome payments are made when a participant remains in employment sixteen hours or more over the periods of thirteen, twenty-six weeks and fifty-two weeks.

For the WHP, the HMRC is involved in confirming when a participant has met the earnings threshold and then the participant will exit the programme. The WHP have access to HM revenue and Customs (HMRC) data as the programme is delivered on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The DWP and the HMRC have a data sharing agreement to monitor the earnings of people receiving welfare benefits.

“I think we get from HMRC; we get what we call pings that are sent to us. So, they reach one thousand, two thousand and three thousand, so I think once they reached that”

WHP frontline adviser (6)

Furthermore, in the WHP the participant can go in and out of work due to seasonal work but still cumulatively meet the threshold and be considered as a job outcome.

“So, they fall out of work and then I get them back into work, they fall out of work again; I get them back into work. So, some of them are made up by short, choppy jobs”

WHP frontline adviser (8)

Additionally, using the threshold as a calculation to confirm a job outcome for the WHP can lead to the Service Provider receiving a payment in a shorter period of time and may incentivise people being encouraged into higher paid and often better jobs.

“Some can exit off the programme very quickly because it depends if they go into a high-value job they are going to reach threshold a lot more quicker”

WHP frontline adviser (6)

In contrast, FSS do not have access to HMRC data as they are not delivering the programme on behalf of DWP and do not have a separate agreement with HMRC to share data. Additionally, they are also unable to confirm if a participant is still employed for sixteen hours or more with the DWP due to data protection.

“They can't tell us GDPR. its private and confidential. Some of them will though, depending on who it is, but we can't use that as evidence they won't allow us to”

FSS frontline adviser (21)

This has resulted in the perception that the process to confirm a job outcome was bureaucratic and that the Scottish Government had imposed an overly regulated process.

“The gathering of information is the biggest nightmare of our job”

FSS frontline adviser (11)

“So, we get our financials, we get a management fee for delivery and then we don't get any other payments until someone is in, work, at thirteen, twenty-six. in the fifty-two-week milestone. So, I need to do new paperwork for every thirteen, twenty-six and fifty-two milestone”

FSS Team leader (9)

The difference in approach would suggest that there are incentives for WHP advisers to encourage participants into better-paid jobs to meet the earnings threshold quicker, although there is a risk that these could be short term positions. However, for FSS the emphasis appears to be on encouraging a participant into what may be a job paying a lesser amount over a longer period of time and appears to favour sustainability.

The consequences of an overly regulated process for FSS

The process of confirming a job outcome has created additional paperwork for FSS frontline advisers. Additionally, the process of verifying job outcome payments for FSS is also dependent on the honesty of the participant and the accuracy of the information from the employer. The reluctance by employers and participants to confirm employment could impact on a job outcome which, at best could be delayed and, at worst not paid.

“What we said with employers like supermarkets won't complete paperwork because they are too busy. So, it's just, more to make the process as streamlined as possible”

FSS frontline adviser (13)

“I had one person I was trying to get an outcome from her and she said this is ridiculous, this amount of paperwork and this the same thing in 13, 26 and 52 weeks, I was trying to get this and she said I'm not filling in anymore forms”

FSS frontline adviser (21)

Furthermore, in one case, a pay slip was requested as employment verification by a 1st tier Prime Contractor, which was not a Scottish Government requirement and was subsequently challenged by the 2nd tier sub-contractor. This created tension between the Prime Contractor and the sub-contracted organisation who also highlighted the issue of confidentiality and that this could have been a breach of data protection laws.

“that's not a Scottish Government requirement and never was, they have now stopped that because we all fought it for the last three years because actually, I wouldn't give my payslip to someone”

FSS Manager (5)

Another 2nd tier cited the unrealistic requirements imposed by 1st tier Prime Contractors to ensure that all dates were exact. Explaining that the reliance on participants and employers to complete the dates may lead to some minor discrepancies and resolving this created additional paperwork. Furthermore, the level of scrutiny meant that frontline advisers in 2nd tier organisations perceived they were not being trusted to deliver the service.

“It all smarts of we are making these people up we're making these jobs up, you know, they don't take your word for anything”

FSS Team leader (4)

For one 2nd tier organisation, the issues with verifying employment and a delay in the job outcome payment contributed to either being in debt or breaking even. Expanding on this, the FSS frontline adviser explained that a first tier Prime Contractor had chosen to implement a different procedure and this had resulted in a delay to a payment.

“Because up until now, it was sufficient that we had the email trail we could show them”

FSS frontline adviser (11)

Finally, the payment by results model was questioned by a FSS frontline worker suggesting an alternative approach would be to access their salaries, possibly through the HMRC and to simplify the process.

“Why can't we just get the salaries that pay for the work, the pay for the employees that are doing the job and then we can work our way through it and get the outcomes that way”

FSS frontline adviser (21)

7.2.4 Key Findings

The WHP and FSS provide in-work support and are similar in that they utilise various employer networks and also define a job outcome as a participant securing employment that is sixteen hours or more. However, the length of in-work support and confirmation of earnings diverges between both programmes and this has consequences predominantly for FSS frontline advisers.

WHP and FSS use proactive approaches and external organisations for additional participant support.

Both programmes use a proactive approach to identify participants who require reasonable adjustments and engage with specialist organisations to provide additional support. The use of Access to Work and Disability Confidence initiatives is highlighted by the WHP and FSS frontline advisers as being valuable resources that support participants with physical and mental health issues. The use of Disability Confidence is used as leverage by both programmes to encourage employers to become Disability Confident employers and create an inclusive environment that supports the participation and progression of people with disabilities. Overall, both programmes recognise the importance of networking with external organisations to provide additional support to participants and enable them to enter and remain in the labour market.

The WHP and FSS 16-hour job outcome may hinder progress and participation.

The Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS) define a job outcome as a participant employed for sixteen hours or more and receiving earnings, but there is no clear explanation for this threshold. It may be linked to legacy benefits, which are no longer required under Universal Credit. This creates a disconnect with the Administrative Earnings Threshold (AET) introduced under Universal Credit, which moves claimants working more than fifteen hours into the UC light touch regime. Frontline advisers from both WHP and FSS also expressed frustration that activities such as voluntary work or education were not considered job outcomes. Furthermore, the threshold reinforced a participant's belief that taking on employment of more than sixteen hours would detrimentally impact their UC and further created challenges to encourage participants into the labour market.

Employment earnings versus employment duration of as a measure of success

Each programme has a different process to qualify and confirm a job out payment. The WHP uses the earnings threshold to confirm a job outcome, which is usually the minimum wage of sixteen hours or more over twenty-six weeks. In contrast, FSS has no earnings threshold and job outcome payments are made when a participant remains in employment for sixteen hours

or more over the periods of thirteen, twenty-six and fifty-two weeks. The difference in approach could lead to the WHP encouraging participants into better-paid jobs to meet the earnings threshold earlier and regardless of the sustainability of employment. Whereas, for FSS, the emphasis is on the participant sustaining employment for fifty-two weeks and regardless of earnings.

FSS frontline advisers have a greater degree of accountability to confirm job outcomes

Confirming that a participant meets the earnings threshold and leads to a final job outcome for the WHP is less bureaucratic due to data sharing with HMRC. This is in contrast to FSS, where the process of confirming a job outcome has created additional paperwork, resulting in consequences for late payments for Prime Contractors and an overly intrusive process for employers and participants. FSS in-work frontline advisers rely on the honesty of participants and the accuracy of information from employers, which may delay or prevent job outcome payments. The requirements placed on the employers and FSS participants could be perceived as an intrusion of privacy and potentially discourage employers from recruiting participants. Furthermore, evidence requirements and payment delays impact disproportionately on second tier providers who may rely on job outcome payments to remain solvent and continue to provide specialist and outreach services.

Chapter 8 - Discussion

The study has compared and contrasted the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS) by using an analytical framework, which details the four common stages of a participant's journey alongside Street Level Bureaucracy theory introduced by Lipsky (2010). This has focused on three areas which are the policies of the WHP and FSS, the provision of the programmes and how these have influenced the practice of non-traditional Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs).

This chapter will discuss the findings of the research and connect this to the existing body of literature in this field. Furthermore, it will compare the findings with previous studies and theories, to identify similarities, differences and gaps with the aim to contribute new knowledge in this area.

8.1 Employment support policy and discourse

The move towards decentralisation of government, marketisation and contracting out has influenced the delivery of public services across all areas of society since the early eighties (Hood 1991). The New Public Management (NPM) approach continues to be influential in the United Kingdom (Pollitt 2007; Lapsley 2008) in the public sector areas of health, education and welfare. The current political and economic landscape for employment support programmes continue to favour the market-based approach and procurement of external organisations to deliver public services as evidenced by Kauffman (2019). Specifically in relation to personalisation, the study found that the key tenets of NPM as defined by Hood (1991) shapes personalisation by introducing measurable results and performance targets. However, a rigid approach to governance constrains the personalisation of services in the employability sector, predominantly for FSS frontline advisers. However, the study also confirms the findings of Lindsay et al. (2018) and Eadson (2021) which evidences the New Public Governance (NPG) approach, such as collaboration, partnerships and citizen engagement enables the personalisation of services. This was evidenced at both the assessment and collaboration stage, where many frontline advisers worked closely with participants, actively listened to their needs and engaged with local employers to source employment opportunities. Furthermore, this supports the findings from Johnson et al. (2021) where there appears to be a more collaborative approach and signals a change in the provision of employability support due to it being voluntary and targeted.

On a macro level, it is interesting to observe the Scottish Government's adoption of the neoliberal approach despite its dominant discourse advocating for a shift towards a governance system resembling the 'Nordic Model' and emphasising social equality as a solution to counter the neoliberalism endorsed by the UK Government (Paterson 2015; Wiggan 2017). However, the Scottish Government adopted the competition and market-based approach to deliver the newly devolved FSS. On the face of it, this appears to contradict the “*uniquely Scottish*” approach (Scot.Gov 2022) taken to employability support as FSS appears to emulate the NPM inspired Work Programme of the UK Government, which follows a marketised approach similar to the WHP (Powell 2020; Gov. Scot 2022f).

The introduction of two distinct employability support programmes in England and Scotland has given rise to two quasi-markets and separate procurement processes (Gov. UK 2022d; Gov. Scot 2022e). Surprisingly, despite the complexities of navigating these differing procurement requirements, it appears that current Prime Contractors have not been deterred from participating in the bidding process. Their ability to comply with the varying procurement requirements across England and Scotland might indicate the prevailing acceptance and adherence to the principles of NPM. However, the ongoing constitutional debates between England and Scotland, particularly within the context of Brexit, pose a significant challenge to the established status quo. Furthermore, the UK Government's recent proposal of a new Procurement Bill (UK Parliament 2022) introduces yet another layer of complexity to the procurement landscape.

The recent shift in procurement practices presents a significant challenge to the Scottish Government's incorporation of EU regulations that align with the 'Nordic model' and the pro-EU rhetoric discussed by Paterson (2015) and Deeming (2020). This change has already sparked a tension between the UK Government and the Scottish Government, as the latter has opted to maintain their existing procurement policy and reject the new regulations intended to replace the current EU regulations (Stewart et al. 2019). Interestingly, despite the Scottish Government's apparent departure from neoliberal ideologies in favour of a more progressive approach to social issues, both employability support programmes exhibit a similar design.

In the context of employment support programmes, the objectives remain consistent with previous initiatives introduced by UK Governments such as New Deal and the Work Programme. While the overarching objectives may align, divergence occurs during policy design and frontline implementation, particularly in the areas of eligibility criteria, minimum service standards and remuneration. This approach to policy and provision resonates with

Pollitt (2007) suggests the existence of a high-level government approach and a low-level approach responsible for policy implementation. The Scottish Government exemplifies this dual-level dynamic, as services that are "*designed nationally but adapted and delivered locally*" (Scot Gov 2018). However, it is important to note that the policy differences between the Scottish and UK Governments may give rise to "*undesirable side consequences*" (Considine et al. 2018), such as deviations at the assessment stage, collaboration and support by SLBs.

The literature published on Multi-level Governance (MLG) may explain some of the tensions between the UK and Scottish Government as to the policy development and implementation of FSS. Whilst Bache and Flanders (2004) found that MLG was heterarchical the study found that hierarchical areas still reserved to the UK such as Welfare benefits, employment policy and Jobcentre Plus had a direct influence on the devolved employability programme. This supports early findings from Lynch (2001) which found that the UK and Scottish Governments in the EU were not equal actors.

The lack of control over the areas relating to the involvement of Jobcentre Plus, and employability policy by the Scottish Government has had "*undesirable side consequences*" (Considine et al. 2018). Specifically, in relation to evidence where potential participants and some FSS frontline advisers were sceptical of the motivations of Jobcentre Plus to refer participants to the FSS programme. Furthermore, this may explain why the divergence towards a 'Nordic model' as discussed by Paterson (2015) and Deeming (2020) has been constrained due to the hierarchical influences of UK governance.

8.1.1 Third Sector involvement

The study shows a higher involvement of Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) in Scotland and the devolved regions of the Work and Health Programme (WHP) in London and Manchester. Previous research into the provision of employability support programmes have latterly focused on the Work Programme (WP), that was procured by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Damm (2012), Rees et al. (2013) and Heins and Bennett (2016) have discussed that the procurement approach negatively impacted the involvement of TSOs, operating as first-tier providers or those of second-tier providers (Egdell et al. 2016). Some issues cited were the minimal involvement of TSOs in Scotland and Wales (Damm 2012) or a lack of preparedness to produce competitive bids for the WP (Egdell et al. 2016). In contrast, this study presents evidence that there has been a marginal increase in the use of Public Sector and TSOs in Scotland. Previous research had indicated that TSOs might have struggled to grasp the intricacies of the new procurement process under the WP model. However, there is no

indication that the Scottish Government has simplified the procurement process and have provide substantial guidance to all potential organisations who tender. This suggests that TSOs may have instead adapted and acquired greater expertise in submitting competitive bids. One possible factor contributing to this phenomenon is that TSOs possessed prior experience in delivering employability support programmes before the WHP and FSS.

Moreover, this study highlights the positive impact of geographical variations on the involvement of TSOs, likely due to the increase in Contract Package Areas (CPAs) from one in Scotland for the WP to nine under FSS. This change may have mitigated some financial risks for TSOs, as they would have fewer participants who might only be partially invested in their overall activities. In contrast to FSS, the WHP reduced the number of CPAs and expanded the geographical responsibilities of Prime Contractors, potentially favouring larger organisations with greater financial and staffing resources. Interestingly, the study reveals that smaller devolved regions like Manchester and London displayed a more diverse approach to the WHP and increased the TSO involvement (Johnson et al. 2021). This would suggest that devolution and decentralisation that is without the interference from Government Departments may facilitate and encourage the inclusion of public and TSOs. However, concerns previously raised by Heins and Bennett (2016) regarding TSOs adapting and diversifying to contractual agreements remain relevant, particularly in the case of FSS, where some frontline advisers, rather than adapting, scrutinised compliance for potential loopholes.

8.1.2 Payment by results

The Payment by Results (PbR) model is based on the principle of rewarding organisations or individuals for achieving the desired outcomes or results. The study found distinct differences in the PbR models implemented in both the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS).

During the WP, Rees et al. (2014) and Carter and Whitworth (2017) found that the differential payments introduced as part of the PbR model led to what Considine et al. (2018) would suggest was *undesirable side consequences*". A consequence being that differential payments encouraged the phenomenon of participants being "parked", while those closer to the labour market were seen as "quick wins" (Pattison 2012; Rees et al. 2014; Carter and Whitworth 2017). Furthermore, Fox and Albertson (2012) and Carter (2014) found that PbR did not adequately reward the time and effort invested by Service Providers to prioritise the participants requiring a greater deal of time and effort.

Both the WHP and FSS have introduced a delivery or service fee for time spent with a participant, which has addressed the concerns raised by Rees et al. (2014) and Carter and Whitworth (2014) whereby providers were not remunerated for investment of time. Adopting this approach further supports the research findings that TSOs may be more incentivised to submit bids due to the reduced financial risk with the introduction of service fees. However, the second part of the revised P(b)R model relates to the job outcome payment which had been criticised under the WP as influencing the priority frontline advisers attached to a participant's capacity to enter the labour market (Finn 2010). Prior research identified that this had unintended consequences (Considine et al. 2018) as the best job outcomes for participants were not always those that attracted higher financial remuneration. This led to the 'parking' and 'creaming' of participants (McMillan 2010; Heins and Bennett 2016) where quantity was prioritised over the more complex needs of participants.

A positive outcome was that the 'parking' and 'creaming' issues evident in the WP do not appear to be prevalent in the WHP and supports the findings of Johnson et al. (2021) which explored the delivery of the WHP in a devolved region. Two reasons that may explain this are the absence of differential payments and the differences in the eligibility criteria. This appears to address the issues raised by Finn (2011), Koning and Heinrich (2013) and Rees et al. (2014), which found that differential outcome payments encouraged Service Providers to favour (cream) participants for 'quick wins' (Rees et al. 2014). The change to the eligibility of participants for the WHP and FSS and the focus on overcoming health conditions means there is less of a probability that participants will be 'parked' (Johnson et al. 2021) This would suggest that future contracted out public services should consider the eligibility criteria as this appears to be the key to designing out the risks of 'parking' and 'creaming' participants raised by Finn (2010) and Carter and Whitworth (2014).

However, the differential payments system for the WHP is in contrast to FSS. The study found that differential amounts were paid as a job outcome payment that are based on the level of support a participant requires to enter the labour market. The differential payments paid to FSS Prime Contractors do not vary by region and are three standard amounts which is reminiscent of the WP model. Although and unlike the WP, participants are not categorised by what benefit they receive but by the level of support they require and are allocated to a core, advanced or intense category based on a Scottish Government devised participant questionnaire. The participants in the core group are more likely to require generalist support and a lesser job outcome payment than participants in the intense group requiring specialist support which will

attract a higher payment. Whilst the Scottish Government has guided the allocation of participants to the groups, FSS frontline advisers have discussed that not all participants fit neatly into a box and will often rely on their own discretion. Whilst the differential payments for the WP was based on benefit entitlement, which was an objective measurement, it could be suggested that the differential payments for FSS are based on a subjective measurement. This has introduced two potential risks, which are the effective engagement of participants to be open and honest with their responses and the experience and knowledge of frontline advisers to allocate participants to the correct group.

The WHP and FSS frontline advisers adopted strategies to enable effective engagement with participants to facilitate the accurate completion of standardised tools. For FSS this also takes on a greater significance as completing the participant assessment will define the groups that determines the differential job outcome payment. Secondly, the FSS frontline advisers have raised the issue of having adequate knowledge and experience to accurately assess and identify which group a participant should be allocated to. This decision also drives the level of support a participant requires, access to the supported employment model and the availability of resources. Whilst this may be similar to the disparity raised by differential payments introduced during the WP and that participants were ‘parked’ or ‘creamed,’ the differential payments introduced by FSS are far more nuanced. Whilst the findings suggest that the approach has not purposefully led to participants being allocated to groups to attract specific payments it does highlight variables that depend on the participants engagement and the experience of the frontline adviser. Additionally, the geographical locations with specific socio-economic conditions that exacerbate inequality and disadvantage leading to long-term unemployment (Dean 2016) or income deprivation (Jenkins 2016), may increase participants with complex needs and higher remunerative payments.

8.2 Employment support and provision

This study found that the change from the mandatory approach of the Work Programme (WP) to the voluntary approach of the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS) has provided participants with autonomy and choice. However, this study also found that in practice, there still remains an element of control used by Jobcentre Plus (JCP) Work Coaches. In contrast to the WHP, many of the FSS frontline advisers discussed that participant motivation was often due to the belief that the programme was mandatory or were joining to avoid sanctions. The change from a mandatory to voluntary programme appears to have addressed some criticisms centred around the implications of mandatory attendance and the

impact on welfare recipients subjected to non-compliance measures (Rees et al. 2014; McGann et al. 2019; Ingold 2020). However, the study also highlights that despite the positive changes, the involvement of Jobcentre Plus (JCP) Work Coaches in the referral process may still control participants with the perceived threat of benefit sanctions for non-compliance and attendance (Manning 2005; Lindsay et al. 2018).

8.2.1 Jobcentre Plus accountability

The findings from this study present evidence to show that referrals from the endorsed sources which are Jobcentre Plus (JCP), Third Party Organisations (TPOs) and self-referrals differs between the WHP and FSS. In common with the WP, access to the WHP is predominantly through JCP Work Coaches as all referrals even if it is a self or third-party referral are routed through them (Rees et al. 2014). This confirms that the policy approach that states “*the final decision regarding a referral to WHP Core will remain with DWP*” (Gov.UK 2022b, para 24).

This is in contrast to FSS statistics at 5.4.3, which show that the dependency on referrals from JCP have reduced over the three years of the programme. The referrals are now predominantly from self and third-party referrals. The findings suggest that when Prime Contractors have greater autonomy in how and where to engage with potential participants, the preference is to recruit from alternate sources. This approach meant that FSS Service Providers connected with organisations that support marginalised groups such as lone parents (Lindsay et al. 2018) and disadvantaged groups (Scholz and Ingold 2021). However, in having the autonomy to recruit from alternate sources, there may also be a possibility to indirectly ‘cream’ participants if not transparent about the referral sources or diversity in the organisations approached.

Furthermore, the Covid-19 Pandemic impacted the number of referrals to both programmes, which highlighted that the existing approach to recruit participants had to be adapted by the WHP and FSS. The operational changes to JCP during the pandemic meant that the WHP relied on them for referrals which resulted in a significant decrease of referrals, due to the DWP prioritising the processing of Universal Credit (UC) claims. Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic was an extreme event, the reallocation of JCP staff perhaps illustrates, the influences that a gatekeeper can have on the supply of participants and the impact especially for WHP Prime Contractors and their income stream. In not having these constraints, FSS frontline advisers adapted a creative approach by proactively using social media platforms to market the programme to a new demographic.

Interestingly, at the access stage this is where the differences start to appear between centralised Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs) directly employed by Government and decentralised SLBs indirectly employed to deliver policy. This centred around the impact of UK Government policies being introduced nationally and how DWP policy objectives influenced the number of referrals made by JCP Work Coaches. The WHP and FSS frontline advisers evidenced that the referral rates decreased as the other employability programmes overlapped with the WHP and FSS eligibility criteria. Frontline advisers were critical of this and reconciled the decreases due to the newer programmes having less paperwork or that JCP Work Coaches were target driven. In Scotland, it was perhaps not surprising that a reason given for the lack of DWP referrals was perceived by some FSS frontline advisers to being politically motivated due to FSS being a Scottish Government initiative. This may be indicative of the current and ongoing political tensions between the UK Government and the Scottish Government which appear to have created a lack of trust, accountability and transparency issues.

The WHP and FSS assist people with complex requirements of which physical and mental health support is a significant factor for participants accessing employment support. During the period of the WP, Rees et al. (2014) found the mental health of participants was undiagnosed by private healthcare assessments before found fit for work (Grover 2009) This may be indicative of the political discourse at the time which saw the DWP undertaking a wholesale review of people receiving sickness benefits. The focus on health and disability taken by the WHP and FSS has not raised the same issues highlighted by Rees et al. (2014). However, this study found that a participants health conditions were not fully considered by a JCP Work Coach and how these could impact the provision of the service.

The study found that the WHP and FSS diverge in the themes of health-related referrals by JCP. The WHP raised the issues of short-term health conditions where participants were waiting for NHS operations and that JCP would still refer them. This would suggest that either the JCP Work Coach has not asked the person about potential treatment, or the potential participant might not wish to disclose this information. Therefore, whilst a participant may be eligible for support, they could also disengage from the programme before completion and the financial investment made by the WHP would not result in a job outcome. However, FSS frontline advisers raised their concerns about the lack of local specialist support for substance abuse and that the programme was simply not long enough to address complex barriers. These findings are consistent with Johnson et al. (2021) which highlights the pressures faced by frontline advisers to navigate barriers and secure employment within a defined period. Despite,

the maximum period of the WHP being significantly shorter than the FSS. the frontline advisers from both the programmes highlighted this as being an issue and contradictory to the ethos of personalisation. Furthermore, due to the complexities of health conditions there was a greater risk of the participant failing to achieve a job outcome as to do this would require a longer period of support than the programme provides.

8.2.2 Participant autonomy

The study has found that whilst both the WHP and FSS are voluntary programmes there is evidence to suggest that JCP Work Coaches could influence participants through inferring that punitive actions may be taken for non-attendance. This has led to WHP and FSS frontline advisers having to taking action that will be seen by the participants to proactively distance themselves from JCP both verbally and physically.

Gofen et al. (2019) discussed that personalised positive messages could encourage voluntary attendance and the engagement of participants in public services. Positive messages are commonly associated with the nudge theory (Thaler and Sunstein 2008) or the Carrot and Stick approach to motivate participation (Weston 2012). The findings from this study suggests that both theories of motivation are present but dependent on the interactions that participants have with either JCP or the employment support programmes. To expand on this further, the use of positive ‘nudge’ messages are dominant at the assessment stage with the WHP and FSS frontline advisers through the adaptation of language and altering their surroundings. The WHP and FSS frontline advisers discussed that this was to reverse the ‘stick’ process participants discussed being exposed to with their JCP interactions. Previous studies have pointed to the ‘stick’ approach being dominant during the mandatory WP which involved the threat of benefit sanctions and the negative impact this had on participants as discussed by Dwyer (2018), Lindsay et al. (2018), Wright et al. (2020). However, despite the WHP and FSS being voluntary it would appear that the ‘stick’ is still being used in some cases by JCP to encourage attendance which is problematic for WHP and FSS frontline advisers to build trust.

It was established from the study that changing to a voluntary service placed a greater importance on a participant’s motivation for joining and what they expected from the programme. Both the WHP and FSS frontline advisers ask this at the induction stage and expressed their concerns that participants spoke of being pressurised to join the programme by JCP Work Coaches. This is similar to the findings of Newton et al. (2012) which found that participants felt the push from JCP to join the WP programme. However, even before the WP there appears to be a common theme with participants feeling that they are being coerced not

necessarily into employment support but that this was perceived as a conduit into work. Under the voluntary New Labours New Deal for over 50's, Vegeris et al. (2010, p34) found that participants did not join the programme as they "*were concerned they might be 'pushed' into work.*" Therefore, this would suggest that the mandatory or voluntary element does influence the initial choice to participate but equally the reasons for what motivates them to join contributes to their longevity to remain in the programme.

The frontline advisers discussed how participants believed that both the WHP and FSS were mandatory and similar to the WP which would result in sanctions being imposed and this was a motivation to join the programme. The WHP and FSS frontline advisers discussed that participants joined the programmes thinking they could 'hide' from JCP Work Coaches which reduced the potential of sanctions as they would be meeting their claimant commitment. However, frontline advisers from both programmes also excused JCP Work Coaches for incorrect referrals due to a general lack of knowledge about the programmes or confusion with other mandatory employment programmes introduced during the Covid-19 crisis. The challenges faced by the WHP and FSS to deliver employability support to a group of people with complex barriers is further compounded by the negative perceptions participants have of JCP. This has created a challenge for frontline advisers who are called upon to rebuild trust and provide the participant with additional reassurance.

8.2.3 Personalisation and assessment

The research found that the process of providing a personalised service started when participants were inducted into either the WHP or FSS at the assessment stage. The author's working definition of personalisation was summarised at 2.4.7 and considered the overall concept of personalisation (Needham 2011; Meager et al. 2014) and how this was enacted in the employability arena (Sicilia et al. 2016; Liddle 2018; Eadson 2021; Lindsay et al. 2021). This defined personalisation on a macro level as being transformational, person centred and to enhance the quality of life for specific groups and individuals. On a micro-level employability literature explored that to deliver a transformational and person-centred approach the use of co-production and collaboration was important to achieve this. Therefore, whilst the study found differences in the way both programmes operated, there was no difference as to how the study defined personalisation and how the WHP and FSS frontline advisers defined what they considered to be personalisation. Many discussed that it was to provide a bespoke and holistic service which supports the transformational and person-centred approach discussed by Needham (2011).

Furthermore, to provide a bespoke and holistic personalised service many of the WHP and FSS frontline advisers also discussed and highlighted the importance of building trust, adapting behaviours and creating positive relationships with their participants to ensure the effective completion of assessment tools. This approach is reflected in employability literature that highlight the importance of co-production and collaboration, which posit these are effective approaches to assist people into the labour market (Sorrentino et al. (2018) Lindsay et al. (2018); Lindsay et al. (2021) and Eadson (2021).

To further support this the study also evidenced that at the assessment stage WHP and FSS frontline advisers personalised their verbal discussions and made environmental interventions to personalise meeting spaces. These provide tangible examples of the ‘multi-interpretable’ concept of personalisation in practice which Needham (2011) and Newton et al (2012) cite it is a person centric approach. However, it was interesting to note that the WHP and FSS frontline advisers did not define their behaviours or actions as consciously personalising their support and services, but as a key part of their job role. This centred more around the basic values and behaviours such as empathy and respect, which a frontline adviser explained as seeing the participant as a human being and recognising that some may attend who felt stigmatised or anxious as discussed by Dougherty et al. (2017) and (Wright et al. 2020). The understanding of the frontline advisers also supports the findings of Newton et al. (2012), which posit that personalisation aims to treat the recipient with *sensitivity and respect*” (p.101).

The WHP and FSS frontline advisers verbally reassured participants referred from JCP that the programme was voluntary. However, due to the participants distrust of JCP often they did not believe the frontline advisers either that the programme was voluntary. Subsequently, the WHP and FSS frontline advisers had to further reassure participants that their personal information would be safe and not passed to JCP which could result in sanctions. Environmental personalisation involved examples that included the absence of security guards used in Jobcentres and providing refreshments to reduce the formality of the situation. The ability to conduct environmental personalisation by the frontline advisers is enabled by two factors: their non-Public Sector status and external physical locations not associated with Government premises, such as Hospitals or Police stations.

The WHP and FSS frontline advisers provide procedural personalisation and tailored services depending on what stage the participant is at during the process. At the assessment stage, frontline advisers encourage the participant to join the programme by employing strategies to mitigate the barriers and overcome participant resistance (Tummers et al. 2009). This is

important for the participant and frontline advisers as it creates an environment of trust which facilitates open and honest discussions around the type and level of support required.

8.3 Employment support in practice

The purpose of this section is to discuss the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS) in the context of Street Level Bureaucracy theory (Lipsky 2020) and those that “grant access to government programmes and provide services within them” (p.3). In this chapter, Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs) are frontline advisers employed by organisations providing employment support and services.

An integral part of delivering an employment support programme are the frontline advisers who make choices for participants as to what type of support and services they will receive. The decision to grant access to a personalised employment support programme for the WHP is entirely at the discretion of the Jobcentre Plus (JCP) Work Coach. For FSS, the participants have the autonomy to access the programme via alternative routes and it is at the discretion of FSS frontline advisers to accept the participant.

In the context of welfare and accessing employment support programmes, the first SLB a participant will encounter is a traditional public sector (Lipsky 2010) worker who is a JCP Work Coach. Upon gaining access to the WHP or FSS, this study found that participants will encounter frontline advisers employed to deliver Government policy and as Lipsky posits, fit the “*the street level bureaucracy profile*” (2010, p 265). This aligns with the findings of Johansson (2012) and Hupe and Buffat (2014) which found that SLBs are not a homogenous group. It is at the assessment stage, the WHP and FSS frontline advisers begin to use their discretion to decide the type of personalised employment support and services for participants.

The findings from this study also demonstrate that WHP and FSS frontline advisers personalise employment support in two ways through the interactions with participants and the services available. This aligns with the findings of Toerien (2013) and Rice et al. (2018), which found that frontline advisers conduct the personalisation of employment support at both a procedural (interaction) and substantive (services) level. The study identified that the WHP and FSS, frontline advisers personalised their behaviours and actions to help move the participant closer to the labour market. FSS explicitly states that a key objective was “*embedding dignity and respect, fairness and equality*” as part of their approach towards helping people into employment. However, whilst the WHP does not explicitly state this as part of the programme

objectives, the evidence from this study demonstrates that WHP frontline advisers held the same principles.

8.3.1 Personalisation and collaboration

There is a lack of studies (Kauffman 2019; Johnson et al. 2021) in the area of non ‘typical’ SLB behaviours which explore the motivations to engage with participants at each of the levels identified: access, assessment, collaboration and support. At the assessment stage, the WHP and FSS frontline advisers discussed how they personalised their engagement at a procedural level to build trust and mitigate the negative perceptions participants had of Jobcentre Plus. The findings correlate to those of Fletcher and Wright (2018) and Redman and Fletcher (2021) which suggest that the negative reputation of JCP and the behaviours of Work Coaches have been fostered through the coercive nature of benefit conditionality. In some cases, the WHP and FSS frontline advisers acknowledged the difficult job that Work Coaches did but also highlighted that this resulted in them having to work harder with participants to reverse the negative perceptions held by participants.

These were mitigated through the actions taken by WHP and FSS frontline advisers at the assessment stage with reassurance it was a non-mandatory programme, which appear to dissipate during the collaboration stage. This contrasts to Kauffman (2019) who found that the threat of sanctions throughout the attendance of the WP created ongoing tensions between participants and frontline advisers. Kauffman (2019) found that frontline advisers used their discretion not to report sanctionable infringements to JCP to build trust with participants. The findings suggest that removing the perceived threat of benefit sanctions at the assessment stage redefines the interaction between the WHP or FSS frontline adviser and participant from being paternalistic (Redman 2019) to maternalistic.

Collaboration is the stage that combines personalisation and substantive services that aim to support participants closer to or into the labour market. Introducing a voluntary programme and removing sanctions appears to have changed the dynamics from a WP work-first approach to a more integrated and collaborative approach (Johnson et al. 2021). The study found that many WHP and FSS frontline advisers adopted a holistic and integrated approach and considered all forms of personal development for participants. These ranged from socially beneficial courses, educational courses and voluntary work which appeared to combine both a Human Capital Development (HCD) approach (Lindsay et al. 2007; Card et al. 2018) and the Capability Approach (CA) of Sen (1980).

The HCD approach underlines the importance of investing in education, training and other areas of human development to increase productivity, earnings and economic growth (Lindsay 2014). However, the WHP and FSS frontline advisers discussed having to balance the development of the participant and the services available, against the programme's time constraints and job outcomes which again correlates with the findings of Johnson et al. (2021). Additionally, any personal development identified to enable a participant was also found to be influenced by the classification of a job outcome, which has limited the full potential of the HCD approach. The job outcome payment does not consider a move into education or voluntary work, which by default encourages quick-win interventions such as short-term courses, for example, food hygiene, IT learning or construction certificates. The exclusion of entry into full-time education as a job outcome for the WHP and FSS steers the frontline adviser towards shorter term interventions that are more aligned to the CA. Whilst this is a positive way to encourage and enable participants to enter the labour market it could be suggested that it is short sighted and encourages entry into lower paid job roles. However, the introduction of entry into full time education as a job outcome may go some way to promoting HCD in the realms of employability support and further supporting better paid and sustainable employment.

Furthermore, the sixteen-hour requirement, defined as a job outcome, means that the participant will leave the programme and become subject to the UC regime which will sanction a person if they fail to meet the DWP employment threshold of the Administration Earnings Threshold (AET). The WHP and FSS frontline advisers expressed a degree of frustration that paid employment of sixteen hours, or more was the only job outcome, whereas any activity supporting a participant closer to employment, such as full-time education, should be also defined as a job outcome.

8.3.2 State and Citizen agent discretion

The State agent and Citizen agent narrative introduced by Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000; 2003) have used Lipsky's 'traditional' definition of Public Sector employees, such as the Police, Nurses and Teachers to understand how they make decisions. This was situated in the context of decision makers who act as either a State or Citizen agent when applying discretion to rules and regulations that exist. Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000) find that decisions made entirely acting in a State Agent's capacity will rigidly apply the rules and regulations. However, opposite to this is the Citizen agent, who is not rigid in their application of the rules and regulations and will make discretionary decisions that are often advantageous to the person receiving the public services. The WHP and FSS frontline workers are subject to

a set of rules and regulations known as minimum service standards, which the WHP and FSS frontline advisers are accountable to and ensure that participants receive service equity.

Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000; 2003) and Sabbe et al. (2021) posit that Public Sector workers function in both a State and Citizen agent role. Whilst not in the traditional public sector this study also found that WHP and FSS, frontline advisers also acted in the capacity of being a State or Citizen agent, but this was influenced by the potential financial repercussions. One key difference between Public Sector workers and frontline workers is that the minimum service standards also form part of a direct remuneration process as opposed to being indirectly accountable to taxpayers. Therefore, acting in the capacity of a Citizen Agent could have immediate financial repercussions for Prime Contractors or sub-contractors if frontline workers fail to comply and at worst could ultimately lead to bankruptcy. This would suggest that the WHP and FSS frontline advisers should act more in the capacity of State agents and that decisions made would rigidly follow the minimum service standards in order to minimise the possibility of financial deductions. However, the study found that where possible, the WHP and FSS frontline advisers used their autonomy to function as Citizen Agents to make decisions that promoted a “*people first*” approach (Dias and Maynard-Moody 2007). This also supports the previous findings from this study which promotes the inclusion of an HCD approach by frontline advisers that is limited by what they consider to be overly rigid programme requirements for job outcomes.

The State and Citizen agent discretion can also be linked with policy alienation which is described as having two dimensions where SLBs are powerless to change policy and meaningless where it lacks personal significance (Tummers et al. 2015; van Engen et al. 2016; Tucker et al. 2022). As previously shown in the study, the minimum service standards are programme specific and will ensure Prime Contractors comply with the delivery of the programme. The study discussed with the WHP and FSS frontline advisers how the compliance requirements influenced their behaviours. The WHP frontline advisers did not express feelings of being constrained or powerless, perhaps indicative of how flexible the compliance requirements were. Neither did the WHP frontline advisers discuss the policy as meaningless or that they were powerless and in general were positive about the policy intent of providing support. Much of the discussion with WHP frontline advisers was around the less positive areas of the policy that related more to the length of the programme and what was classified as a job outcome. The findings for FSS frontline advisers were similar to the WHP frontline advisers, in that they fully endorsed the policy and the intent which they considered meaningful.

However, whilst they did not express policy alienation, they did express their frustration at the rigid compliance requirements, which led to behaviours such as the interrogation of guidance to establish and utilise ambiguities that were advantageous to participants.

8.3.3 Compliance and autonomy

Lipsky (2010) posits that the discretion exercised by SLBs is influenced by the autonomy they have been afforded to make decisions and internal factors that include their values and beliefs (Johansson 2012; Hupe and Buffat 2013). The minimum service standards for the WHP offer a high degree of autonomy at the assessment, collaboration and in-work stage to both the WHP frontline advisers and participants. In contrast, the FSS minimum service standards offer less autonomy at the assessment, collaboration and in-work to FSS frontline advisers and participants.

For example, the WHP frontline advisers are accountable for ensuring that they meet with participants within the timeframe stated in their minimum service standards. The minimum service standards also provide the participant with the autonomy to decide on their frequency of contact. Moreover, this demonstrated that WHP frontline advisers exercised their professional judgment to enforce a more stringent adherence to the prescribed frequency of contact for the concerned participant in the minimum service standards. The rationale behind their decision was rooted in their strong belief that heightened participant engagement would greatly enhance their overall well-being. Furthermore, the WHP frontline advisers did adjust the contact frequency based on any shifts in the participant's circumstances, rather than solely relying on the participant's initial request.

A notable instance where the discretion of WHP frontline advisers came under scrutiny was when a participant disengaged from the programme. In such cases, the participant would remain part of the WHP but would no longer be eligible for financial remuneration. This involved explaining the decision to the Team leader, which led to frustration and feelings of being micromanaged (Kras et al. 2017) and was perceived to have questioned their knowledge and skills. In line with Lipsky's (2010) findings, the level of knowledge and skills possessed by the advisers directly influenced the discretion exercised in making decisions. However, the frontline adviser recognised that the perceived micromanagement stemmed from enhanced organisational accountability rather than the minimum service standards. This highlights the inherent conflicts between external accountability and the internal accountability imposed by the Prime Contractor to mitigate potential financial losses (Hupe and Hill 2007).

In contrast, the FSS frontline advisers found their discretion and autonomy to be considerably restricted due to the stringent rules and regulations enforced by the Scottish Government in relation to the FSS minimum service standards. Furthermore, minimum service standards failed to offer participants the freedom to determine the means and frequency of contact according to their preferences. This perception of tight governance by the FSS frontline advisers not only curtailed their discretion but also diluted the personalisation aspect of the programme, contradicting its voluntary nature. Consequently, the absence of participant choice undermined the fundamental principles of autonomy and hindered the programme's effectiveness in delivering tailored support. This appears to contradict the findings of Fuertes and Lindsay (2016) where case workers in the welfare to work sector may have a greater degree of autonomy and flexibility in the contracted-out sector. However, it does confirm the findings of Fuertes and Lindsay (2016) and Rice et al. (2018) in that the pressure to meet performance-related targets could potentially impede the quality of personalised support, with standardised practices becoming the norm.

The findings indicate that WHP frontline advisers have used their discretion to impose a tighter compliance regime and weekly contact where the minimum service standards have granted participant autonomy. This would suggest that WHP frontline advisers constrain participant autonomy by making the decision on the participants behalf regarding frequency of contact. However, within the FSS framework, the FSS frontline advisers and participants experienced limited autonomy, a preference emerged to enhance individual autonomy and impose a less regulated system. Increasing the autonomy for FSS frontline advisers and participants would further empower them to provide a flexible and personalised service. In not providing this, the FSS frontline advisers looked for loopholes in the guidance that would provide autonomy to them and for the participant to choose their preferred frequency and method of contact.

8.3.4 Summary

The research findings suggest that both approaches differ in the level of autonomy and accountability afforded to SLBs which have defined their actions and behaviours. These are influenced by the minimum service standards imposed by the UK and Scottish Governments, which highlight that FSS Frontline advisers face greater accountability than their English counterparts. This has resulted in overly bureaucratic processes, which FSS frontline advisers have sought to overcome either by overtly analysing guidance or by covertly offering support regardless of segmentation groups. The WHP and FSS frontline advisers are fully committed to a person-centred approach that aims to provide participants with a greater sense of

empowerment, leading to increased self-confidence and motivation. Both programmes focus predominantly on people with additional health barriers to overcome before moving closer to the labour market. This is often done by the same advisers not only considering employability but adopting different roles to treat the person holistically and sensitively. There is a lack of studies comparing employability support programmes that are voluntary across two countries with a shared national welfare system. The research findings indicate that employability support programmes significantly impact on the lives of participants, leading to positive outcomes in terms of employment, personal development and well-being.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

9.1 Research aims and objectives

The aim of the research was to conduct a comparative study of employability support programmes between England and Scotland which identified, compared and analysed policy, provision and practice.

The research focused on the Work and Health Programme (WHP) in England and Fair Start Scotland (FSS), both voluntary programmes contracted out to external organisations and operate on a payment-by-results model. The policy was developed independently by the UK and Scottish Government, which influenced the provision and practice of employability support programmes by Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs). The UK and Scottish Government continue to invest in employability support programmes which provide a personalised and tailored service for unemployed individuals considered to be part of a disadvantaged group. To gain an understanding of employability support programmes, the study compared and contrasted the WHP and FSS using the following objectives:

9.1.1 Research Objective 1

To compare and contrast the policies of the two main employability support programmes in Scotland and England.

1. What are the policies regarding employability support programmes in Scotland and England?
2. How do the policies of employability support programmes contrast between Scotland and England?

Summary of key findings

At a policy level, the programmes have similarities to the Work Programme (WP) and heavily influenced by neoliberalism and the adoption of the New Public Management (NPM) principles of privatisation, competition a market orientated delivery of public services. The study found that both employability support programmes followed a similar customer journey process to provide personalised and tailored support to eligible participants. However, whilst both programmes are voluntary and the customer journey was the same, both Governments have diverged in the governance and length of the programmes. Additionally, the requirements relating to the procurement of Prime Contractors and remuneration have diverged alongside changes to geographical areas that went out for tender appears to have encouraged Third Sector Organisations (TSOs) in Scotland.

9.1.2 Research Objective 2

To compare and analyse the provision of personalised and tailored employment support between Scotland and England.

1. What are the similarities and differences in the provision of employment support programmes between Scotland and England?
2. How do the similarities and differences influence the provision of employment support programmes between Scotland and England?

Summary of key findings

The study's findings suggest that the minimum service standards set by both the Scottish and UK Government have significantly impacted on the four participant touch points, access, assessment, collaboration and support. Service Providers are required to comply with the minimum service standards, which influence the access route to their respective employability support programme. The WHP frontline advisers confirmed that Jobcentre Plus is the primary access point and as such access to WHP was mainly controlled through the discretion of Jobcentre Plus (JCP) Work Coaches. However, in Scotland, there is a preference for referrals which were sourced from non-JCP sources and signified that FSS had more autonomy than the WHP to recruit from alternative sources.

Recruiting through JCP has unintended consequences for both programmes which have resulted in inconsistent referrals of people with health conditions or participants feeling pushed to join both the WHP and FSS. Referrals of eligible participants to the WHP and FSS by JCP appeared inconsistent across the country that were due to a lack of knowledge by the JCP work coach, target-driven referrals and in Scotland a reference to political motivation. The approach

taken by FSS may address some of these issues as the FSS source participants independently of the Jobcentre. However, this may inadvertently lead to participants being selected who are subjectively considered as having a higher chance of gaining employment, for example being ‘creamed’. In summary, there continues to be barriers to accessing employability support programmes, which appear to revolve around an awareness of the WHP and FSS programme objectives, the voluntary nature of the programme and the threat of welfare conditionality.

9.1.3 Research Objective 3

To compare and analyse Street Level Bureaucrats practices to provide employability support between Scotland and England.

1. What are the similarities and differences in the practices of Street Level Bureaucrats providing personalised and tailored employment support programmes in Scotland and England?
2. How do the similarities and differences influence the practices of Street Level Bureaucrats providing personalised and tailored employment support programmes between Scotland and England?

Summary of key findings

The study’s findings show that the minimum service standards of the WHP and FSS influenced the personalised support that a WHP or FSS frontline adviser provided to a participant. The themes highlighted that the level of accountability and autonomy applied to both of the programmes resulted in a divergence to the subjective process of assessment, the depth of collaboration and the breadth of in-work support.

While both programmes are designed to meet the needs of the eligible participants, there are significant differences between the way that they are delivered. FSS have more autonomy at the access stage and replaced with a greater degree of accountability due to the constraints of the minimum service standards. This is in contrast to the WHP who have less autonomy at the access stage but have a greater degree of autonomy at the stages of assessment, collaboration and support. The increased level of accountability and standardisation has had adverse consequences for FSS frontline advisers that have included frustration at increased bureaucracy which has diluted the personalisation for a participant. As a result, this leads to resistance among FSS advisers, who fully support the policy intention but look for ambiguities in the guidance to circumvent the strict standards imposed on them.

The WHP and FSS frontline advisers exhibit behaviours that align with Capability and Human Capital Development approaches. They seek to empower participants with the skills and knowledge needed to improve their lives and enhance their employability. However, the length of the programmes often fails to account for the complex health conditions of the target group, which can result in low-level interventions that may not adequately address the underlying issues. Moreover, the job outcomes rewarded in these programmes only focus on paid employment rather than recognising the value of voluntary or educational courses. This narrow approach can be limiting, as it fails to acknowledge the potential of participants and their potential contribution to their community and society in ways beyond paid employment.

9.2 Implications to theory

My research compares and contrasts employment support policy, provision and the practice of Street Level Bureaucrats (SLBs) and has significant implications for theory in several ways.

The study contributes to an understanding of how governance and regulatory frameworks shape the delivery of policy at the frontline. Specifically, that a strict accountability criterion imposed raises a conflict when implementing a voluntary programme that aims to provide participant autonomy. The move to a voluntary programme whilst retaining characteristics of a mandatory programme, such as the lack of participant autonomy and increased accountability is evidenced with FSS. Furthermore, the introduction of devolved policy in Scotland, while operating within the framework of a centralised UK Government welfare system, has created a tension between the Fair Start Scotland (FSS) and JCP. Consequently, this study has significant theoretical implications, suggesting that the effectiveness of devolved policies is limited when a central government retains control over a crucial aspect of the policy infrastructure, such as welfare.

This raises questions about the extent of autonomy and decision-making authority that is granted to devolved entities, as well as the compatibility and alignment of policy frameworks within a broader centralised system. These findings prompt further exploration into the complex interplay of multi-level governance, specifically between devolution and centralised control which highlights the challenges faced by devolved policies to achieving their intended objectives.

Furthermore, it contributes to Street Level Bureaucracy theory (Lipsky 2010) and provides a deeper understanding of the motivations, values and decision-making process undertaken by SLBs. Through a comparative analysis of SLBs in the WHP and FSS, this study reveals consistent patterns of behaviours among SLBs across both programmes, particularly to

delivering personalised support to participants. Despite the divergence in policy directions and governance frameworks between the WHP and FSS, the behaviours exhibited by SLBs remained largely consistent. This suggests that while policy and governance factors influenced the expectations and compliance requirements placed on SLBs, they had a limited direct impact on the behaviours displayed towards participants. Instead, SLBs consistently prioritised the provision of personalised support, indicating that their motivations and values were primarily driven by the programmes main objectives to empower participants in their employment journey.

Finally, the research contributes to further understanding how economic social theories are evident in practice by SLBs. The research highlights how the Human Capital approach and the Capability theory intersect when personalised employment support considers the development of capabilities and skills but is constrained by the resources available and programme length.

In conclusion, my research on employability support programmes between England and Scotland provides new insights into the development of devolved policy, the provision of employment support by Service Providers and how a shared national welfare system influences participant engagement. The research details how SLBs in a voluntary programme navigate a payment by results model which influences participation and retention. These insights can inform the future development of employment support policies and to further advance this field of study specifically concerning a market-based and payment-by- results approach for a voluntary programme.

9.3 Contribution to policy and practice

The research highlights that the use of a gatekeeper has led to inconsistent referrals and was perceived to be influenced by several factors, such as inappropriate referrals, strategic and target led referrals or a lack of referrals due to political bias. Due to the autonomy afforded to FSS Prime Contractors there has been considerable movement from being solely reliant on JCP to being more creative in their approach to recruitment. This is in contrast to the WHP who rely on JCP for referrals, which has highlighted that WHP Frontline advisers also engage in behaviours to mitigate the perceived negative impressions that participants have of the DWP and JCP.

Furthermore, the comparative thesis highlights a disconnect between the WHP and FSS programme policy and Universal Credit (UC) policy. The research raises the constraints imposed by the payment-by-results model introduced by the WHP and FSS, which define

results as being paid employment as sixteen hours or more. There are two aspects to highlight, the first being that the WHP and FSS policy does not acknowledge a ‘result’ as activities that move people closer to the labour market, such as voluntary employment or education. Moreover, if a participant leaves the programme and is engaged in voluntary work, there is a potential impact on UC which is dependent on the number of hours and that the UC work conditionality is still considered as preparing for work. The second aspect is that the sixteen-hour rule as a ‘job outcome payment ‘result’ contradicts the current UC policy of the Administrative Earnings Threshold (AET) and a throwback to legacy benefit rules such as Income Support and Job Seekers Allowance, where sixteen hours is considered full time employment and will lead to the cessation of those benefits.

The research highlights that in practice, SLBs from the WHP and FSS demonstrate high levels of commitment and expertise in providing a personalised service. However, in practice, the significant divergence in the minimum service standards influences the behaviours and actions of the WHP and FSS Frontline advisers who have to adhere to them or face financial consequences. The imposition of tighter and more rigid minimum service standards on Service Providers enhances accountability, while simultaneously reducing their autonomy. Whilst a clear regulatory framework ensures that a participant will receive a consistent service, the level of detail attached to the minimum service standards will either enable or constrain the frontline advisers, leading to the inconsistencies of a personalised service.

Finally, to create effective policies, it is crucial for policymakers to adopt a comprehensive approach that acknowledges the diverse abilities of individuals and recognises the significance of non-paid work and educational pursuits. This necessitates a shift in perspective towards an understanding of how Human Capital Development and Capability approaches could be utilised to encompass all dimensions of a participant's potential rather than solely focusing on their capacity to obtain paid employment.

In conclusion, the research has generated new knowledge as it compares the first devolved employment support programme in Scotland and the new employment support programme introduced by the UK Government. The research highlights that a voluntary programme introduces challenges for Prime Contractors to maintain a viable market share and the retention of participants. Furthermore, the research highlights that England and Scotland have chosen to adopt a similar contracted out model, these have significantly diverged at the governance level and has created two very different approaches. However, the study also highlights that despite the differences taken to governance, the behaviours of the WHP and FSS frontline advisers are

similar as they aim to empower participants with a tailored and holistic service. Furthermore, where frontline advisers are constrained through a lack of autonomy or increased accountability, they will navigate strategies to meet the participant's needs and deliver the core aims of the programmes.

9.4 Recommendations for policy and practice

Following on from the previous section the following recommendations are suggested regarding the future implementation of employability support programmes, either at a devolved or national level.

9.4.1 Referral system and autonomy

The referral system and autonomy refer to the processes and level of independence that Prime Contractors have in determining the quality and quantity of participant referrals and delivering employment support programmes. It involves the mechanism through which individuals are referred to these programmes and the extent to which Prime Contractors have the freedom to make decisions based on their expertise and local knowledge.

In the context of employment support programmes, a referral system is a critical component as it determines the pool of participants who can benefit from the services offered. A well-functioning referral system ensures that individuals who can benefit from the programme are identified and connected to appropriate services. Therefore, a recommendation would be to address the inconsistent referrals caused by the use of a gatekeeper system, considering the factors such as inappropriate referrals, strategic, target led or in the case of FSS, political bias.

The study found that referrals to the Work and Health Programme (WHP) were controlled by JCP and that the Prime Contractors had no autonomy to recruit independently. This is in contrast to Fair Start Scotland (FSS), where Prime Contractors exercised their autonomy to recruit participants predominantly from non-JCP routes. Therefore, the removal of JCP as a centralised authority would enable the WHP Prime Contractors with the autonomy to independently source and recruit participants. By encouraging the autonomy of WHP Prime Contractors this would facilitate a more creative approach to recruitment, as observed by FSS, which has enhanced the effectiveness and extended the reach of the programme.

9.4.2 Alignment of programme policies

Alignment of programme policies refers to the harmonisation and coherence between different policies within a specific programme or across multiple programmes. It involves ensuring that

the objectives, principles and strategies of various policies are consistent and mutually supportive, creating a cohesive framework for effective implementation.

In the context of employment support programmes, alignment of programme policies entails integrating the goals and guidelines of different initiatives, such as the Work and Health Programme (WHP) and Fair Start Scotland (FSS), with broader policy frameworks like Universal Credit (UC). Alignment aims to eliminate contradictions, overlaps and conflicting requirements that may hinder the seamless delivery and desired outcomes of these programmes.

A recommendation is to address the inconsistency between the WHP and FSS with the policies of UC which specifically relate to the definition of a job outcome for the WHP and FSS. This is where paid employment of 16 hours or more is a job outcome and appears to be related to older legacy benefits such as Job Seekers Allowance and Income Support (IS) when entitlement would cease at this point. The sixteen-hour threshold appears to have caused some confusion for eligible participants who do not realise that this does not exceed the hours for UC entitlement. Furthermore, activities that move individuals closer to the labour market should be acknowledged, such as voluntary employment or education, as valid results rather than solely defining results as paid employment of sixteen hours or more.

9.4.3 Minimum Service Standards and Personalised Service

Minimum service standards refer to a set of predetermined criteria or expectations that govern the minimum level of service delivery in a particular context. These standards are established to ensure a baseline level of quality and consistency in the services provided. In the context of a personalised service, it refers to the tailoring of support and services to meet individual needs and preferences.

A recommendation is to consider the impact of rigid minimum service standards on the level of accountability and autonomy that Service Providers have and to provide, a regulatory framework that allows frontline advisers the flexibility to deliver personalisation. As evidenced in FSS, where a tight regulatory framework is in place, this has led to the dilution of personalisation. Additionally, to recognise the value of a participant's potential beyond their capacity to obtain paid employment, incorporating the Human Capital Development and Capability approaches to encompass non-paid work and educational qualifications.

These recommendations aim to improve the effectiveness, consistency and the person-centred approach of employment support programmes, considering the challenges and observations as identified in this comparative research between England and Scotland.

9.5 Research limitations

The limitations of the Covid 19 pandemic had a significant influence on accessing research participants, the number of research participants and the perceptions of a business-as-usual service provided by research participants.

9.5.1 Accessing interview participants

The original request for access to the identified Prime Contractors were first made when businesses across Scotland and England were starting to open up after the second major lockdown in May 2021. However, there were still restrictions that differed between Scotland and England due to the different approaches taken by the UK and Scottish Governments. This meant that Prime Contractors faced an increase in workload due to new referrals and having to manage their existing programme participants back to the office whilst dealing with a hybrid working environment for members of staff and participants who were shielding.

Accessing frontline advisers was done through contact and permission from gatekeepers, with confirmations made through several phone calls. Access to named FSS Frontline advisers was predominantly granted by regional and local gatekeepers who were part of the Service Provider's organisations. For the WHP, permission first had to be given by the DWP before interviews could be undertaken, this took several months to receive. Consequently, the interviews were arranged remotely through MS Teams due to the ongoing uncertainties of restrictions.

9.5.2 Physical locations

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 landscape and the potential of new variants, gaining access to physical locations was not considered. In not having access to the physical locations of frontline advisers this may have restricted the opportunity of a short interview with other frontline advisers or managers.

9.5.3 Sample size

Due to the disparity of the sample size between Scotland and England, it is difficult to generalise the results. Thirty-two interviews were undertaken with frontline advisers, team leaders and managers working in Prime Contractors and Sub-contractors (Service Providers). Additionally, an interview was undertaken with a procurement specialist from Scottish Government. Unfortunately, requests to the DWP for the same were not answered. Twenty-one interviews were undertaken with a mix of frontline advisers, team leaders and managers in

Scotland compared to nine frontline advisers and two team leaders in England and as such this does not accurately represent the population.

9.5.4 Time constraints

As previously discussed, requests to access and interview participants were through gatekeepers and would have still been required even in the absence of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 Pandemic did contribute to the number of Service Providers who were unable to participate at the time of contact in May 2021 but registered an interest when business stabilised. The delay in taking part was more prevalent for WHP Prime Contractor's, as many of the interviews gathered for FSS Frontline advisers had already been undertaken by the end of 2021 and before restrictions were lifted. Therefore, with additional time, the scope of data gathered from WHP could have increased and especially with the DWP agreement already in place.

9.5.5 Summary

In conclusion, the Covid-19 pandemic limited access to Service Providers and frontline staff due to the uncertainty and volatility of the employment support sector and labour market. Several new employment support initiatives were launched due to the Covid-19 pandemic which meant that Service Providers were faced with allocating advisers to new programmes just as England and Scotland were reducing lock down restrictions.

9.6 Future research

The research undertaken has been carried out between England and Scotland within the employment support sector. Extending on this further there are two possible areas where future research could be carried out which involve the:

- Impact of governance and regulatory frameworks to the provision of public services
- Evaluation of market based and payment by results approaches

9.6.1 governance and regulatory frameworks

Future research could investigate the impact of governance and regulatory frameworks that shape policy at the frontline. For example, a comparative study of housing policy and how this compares between Scotland and England. Additionally, the research could be extended to comparing FSS and the WHP in Wales who are also have a devolved Government. This could use the analytical framework that identified the four stages of a personalised customer journey alongside Street Level Bureaucracy theory (Lipsky 2010). However, employment support policy has not been devolved to Wales and this would present an interesting landscape from

which to explore the dynamics between traditional and non-traditional SLBs, operating in both a national welfare system and a national programme in a devolved nation.

9.6.2 The evaluation of market based and payment by results approaches

Future research could study the implication of how market based and payment-based approaches influence, what and how specific payment-based models encourage or discourage potential private, public or third sector organisations from tendering for services. This could use a case study approach to compare and contrast organisations, such as what is their organisational structure, how performance is measured and how SLBs gain experience and learning within this role.

9.7 Personal background of researcher

This research has particularly interesting as I was a ‘traditional’ Street Level Bureaucrat and worked within the Department of Work and Pensions from Thatcher to Cameron. I processed welfare benefits at the frontline, delivered training to staff during the modernisation of the Civil Service project under Blair and Brown and impacted welfare reform policies that included, Pension Credit and Universal Credit. Latterly, working as a volunteer adviser for a local Citizens Advice Bureau, where I experienced the societal and economic impact of unemployment alongside the effects of the welfare reform policies introduced during the era of austerity. The research provided an opportunity explore in-depth the integral role of employability support and how the non-traditional SLB face similar challenges to the ‘traditional’ SLB when delivering policy.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Prime Contractors

Fair Start - Scotland 2020

Lot	Contract Area	Providers
1	Glasgow	People Plus Group Ltd (Private)
2	Lanarkshire	Remploy Limited (Supported Business)
3	Tayside	Remploy Limited (Supported Business)
4	Forth Valley	Falkirk Council (Public Sector)
5	East	Start Scotland Limited (Private and Third Sector Partnership)
6	Southwest	Start Scotland Limited (Private and Third Sector Partnership)
7	Northeast (from 2020)	Start Scotland Limited (Private and Third Sector Partnership)
8	Highlands and Islands	People Plus Ltd (Private)
9	West	The Wise Group (Third Sector)

Work and Health Programme 2020 - England

	Contract Package Areas	Provider
1	Northwest	Ingeus (Private)
2	Central	Shaw Trust (Third Sector)
3	Northeast	Reed In Partnership
4	Southern	Pluss (Social Enterprise)
5	Home counties	Shaw Trust (Third Sector)
Devolved Deals		
a	Greater Manchester Combined Authority	Ingeus and The Growth Company
b	West London Alliance (WL)	Shaw Trust (Third Sector)
c	Central London Forward (CL)	Ingeus (Private)
d	South London Partnership (SL)	Reed In Partnership (Private)
e	Local London (LL)	Maximus (Private)

Prime Contractors - Websites and Contact details.

Scotland	
People Plus Group Ltd (Private)	https://peopleplus.co.uk/employability-programmes/
Remploy Limited (Private/ Supported Business)	https://www.remploy.co.uk/about-us/current-programmes
Falkirk Council (Public Sector)	https://www.falkirk.gov.uk/services/jobs-careers/fair-start.aspx
Start Scotland Limited (Private and Third Sector Partnership)	https://www.startscotland.scot/your-journey
The Wise Group (Third Sector)	https://www.thewisegroup.co.uk/fairstart/
England	
Ingeus (Private)	
Remploy Limited (Supported Business)	https://www.remploy.co.uk/about-us/current-programmes
Reed In Partnership	https://www.reedinpartnership.co.uk/
Pluss (Social Enterprise)	https://www.pluss.org.uk/
Shaw Trust (Third Sector)	https://www.shawtrust.org.uk/
Maximus (Private)	https://www.maximusuk.co.uk/

Appendix 2 - Claimant Count and Job Density

Scotland

Scotland: Average Claimant Count 4.6/Average Job Density 0.82

1. Excess UC claimants/Fewer Vacancies

TTWA Code	TTWA Name	UC Claimants	Vacancies
S22000069	Kilmarnock and Irvine	6.9	0.64
S22000079	Stranraer	6.5	0.81
S22000051	Ayr	5.9	0.71
S22000057	Dunfermline and Kirkcaldy	5.7	0.68
S22000064	Girvan	5.5	0.76
S22000085	Greenock	5.5	0.58
S22000049	Arbroath and Montrose	5.4	0.69
S22000071	Motherwell and Airdrie	5.3	0.66
S22000083	Wick	5.2	0.73
S22000054	Dumbarton and Helensburgh	5.1	0.69
S22000056	Dundee	5.0	0.75
S22000067	Hawick and Kelso	4.8	0.77

2. Excess Universal Credit claimants/Excess Vacancies

TTWA Code	TTWA Name	UC Claimants	Vacancies
S22000048	Alness and Invergordon	5.4	0.84
S22000065	Glasgow	5.3	0.84
S22000005	Campbeltown	5.3	0.87
S22000073	Oban	4.7	1.07
S22000052	Broadford and Kyle of Lochalsh	4.6	0.97

3. Fewer Universal Credit claimants/Fewer Vacancies

TTWA Code	TTWA Name	UC Claimants	Vacancies
S22000061	Falkirk and Stirling	4.5	0.75
S22000072	Newton Stewart	4.3	0.68
S22000070	Livingston	4.2	0.70
S22000084	Fraserburgh	4.0	0.73
S22000075	Peterhead	4.0	0.75
S22000060	Elgin	3.7	0.78
S22000053	Dalbeattie and Castle Douglas	3.7	0.77
S22000078	St Andrews and Cupar	2.5	0.61

4. Fewer Universal Credit claimants/ Excess Vacancies

TTWA Code	TTWA Name	UC Claimants	Vacancies
S22000082	Ullapool	4.5	0.82
S22000080	Thurso	4.4	1.00
S22000062	Fort William	4.3	0.97
S22000055	Dumfries	4.3	0.90
S22000066	Golspie and Brora	4.3	0.86
S22000086	Lochgilphead	4.2	1.19
S22000077	Portree	4.1	0.85
S22000063	Galashiels and Peebles	3.8	0.87
S22000013	Western Isles	3.7	0.87
S22000068	Inverness	3.6	0.97
S22000081	Turriff and Banff	3.5	0.67
S22000059	Edinburgh	3.5	0.94
S22000074	Perth	3.5	0.90
S22000032	Mull and Islay	3.3	1.13
S22000047	Aberdeen	3.2	1.03
S22000050	Aviemore and Grantown-on-Spey	3.1	0.84
S22000076	Pitlochry and Aberfeldy	3.0	0.94
S22000039	Shetland Islands	2.5	1.10
S22000035	Orkney Islands	2.2	1.02

Appendix 3 - Claimant Count and Job Density

England

England: Average Claimant Count 4.6/Average Job Density 0.82

1. Excess UC claimants/Fewer Vacancies

TTWA Code	TTWA Name	UC Claimants	Vacancies
E30000215	Hartlepool	7.5	0.59
E30000018	Bradford	7.1	0.68
E30000169	Birmingham	7.1	0.85
E30000241	Margate and Ramsgate	7.0	0.68
E30000192	Clacton	6.9	0.62
E30000177	Bridlington	6.9	0.72
E30000171	Blackpool	6.9	0.82
E30000210	Great Yarmouth	6.6	0.74
E30000275	Sunderland	6.5	0.71
E30000264	Skegness and Louth	6.3	0.84
E30000288	Wolverhampton and Walsall	6.2	0.72
E30000202	Dudley	6.2	0.74
E30000182	Burnley	6.1	0.77
E30000233	Liverpool	6.0	0.80
E30000093	Middlesbrough and Stockton	6.0	0.72
E30000061	Hastings	5.8	0.77
E30000173	Blyth and Ashington	5.8	0.68
E30000245	Newcastle	5.7	0.77
E30000199	Darlington	5.7	0.87
E30000208	Folkestone and Dover	5.6	0.69
E30000170	Blackburn	5.5	0.76
E30000201	Doncaster	5.5	0.73
E30000220	Hull	5.4	0.80
E30000211	Grimsby	5.4	0.77
E30000219	Huddersfield	5.2	0.69

E30000235	Lowestoft	5.2	0.71
E30000279	Torquay and Paignton	5.2	0.78
E30000029	Halifax	5.2	0.83
E30000194	Corby	5.1	0.81
E30000004	Barnsley	5.0	0.71
E30000168	Birkenhead	4.9	0.63
E30000284	Warrington and Wigan	4.9	0.84
E30000203	Durham and Bishop Auckland	4.8	0.69
E30000268	Southend	4.7	0.72
E30000270	St Austell and Newquay	4.7	0.82
E30000260	Scunthorpe	4.7	0.77
E30000179	Brighton	4.6	0.81
E30000261	Sheffield	4.5	0.73
E30000249	Nottingham	4.5	0.76
E30000070	Isle of Wight	4.5	0.80
E30000273	Stoke-on-Trent	4.5	0.75
E30000283	Wakefield and Castleford	4.5	0.80

2. Excess Universal Credit claimants/Excess Vacancies

TTWA Code	TTWA Name	UC Claimants	Vacancies
E30000239	Manchester	5.6	0.89
E30000234	London	5.0	1.03
E30000252	Penzance	4.9	0.88
E30000229	Leeds	4.9	0.99
E30000259	Scarborough	4.8	0.91
E30000108	Peterborough	4.6	0.88

3. Fewer Universal Credit claimants/Fewer Vacancies

TTWA Code	TTWA Name	UC Claimants	Vacancies
E30000240	Mansfield	4.4	0.78
E30000278	Telford	4.4	0.86
E30000253	Plymouth	4.4	0.80
E30000054	Grantham	4.4	0.84
E30000195	Coventry	4.4	0.78
E30000232	Liskeard	4.4	0.71
E30000242	Medway	4.3	0.74
E30000176	Bridgwater	4.3	0.84
E30000287	Wisbech	4.3	0.70
E30000166	Bedford	4.2	0.83
E30000076	Lancaster and Morecambe	4.2	0.71
E30000204	Eastbourne	4.2	0.83
E30000181	Bude	4.2	0.72
E30000174	Boston	4.2	0.77
E30000291	Worksop and Retford	4.1	0.82
E30000254	Portsmouth	4.0	0.79
E30000231	Lincoln	4.0	0.80
E30000290	Workington	4.0	0.85
E30000167	Bideford	4.0	0.79
E30000124	Spalding	4.0	0.81
E30000285	Weston-super- Mare	3.9	0.81
E30000292	Worthing	3.8	0.82
E30000190	Chesterfield	3.8	0.79
E30000051	Falmouth	3.7	0.76
E30000187	Canterbury	3.7	0.79
E30000225	King's Lynn	3.7	0.81
E30000230	Leicester	3.7	0.80
E30000227	Launceston	3.6	0.84
E30000178	Bridport	3.4	0.87
E30000183	Burton upon Trent	3.4	0.78
E30000248	Norwich	3.4	0.87
E30000193	Colchester	3.4	0.80

E30000147	Whitby	3.3	0.84
E30000095	Minehead	3.2	0.85
E30000263	Sidmouth	3.2	0.87
E30000293	Yeovil	3.2	0.87
E30000271	Stafford	3.1	0.85
E30000198	Cromer and Sheringham	3.1	0.79
E30000226	Kingsbridge and Dartmouth	3.1	0.83
E30000165	Bath	2.9	0.86
E30000236	Ludlow	2.8	0.79
E30000135	Thetford and Mildenhall	2.8	0.66
E30000064	Hexham	2.7	0.79
E30000221	Huntingdon	2.7	0.81
E30000172	Blandford Forum and Gillingham	2.6	0.83
E30000159	Andover	2.6	0.85
E30000294	York	2.4	0.87

4. Fewer Universal Credit claimants/ Excess Vacancies

TTWA Code	TTWA Name	UC Claimants	Vacancies
E30000160	Ashford	4.4	0.97
E30000266	Slough and Heathrow	4.3	0.91
E30000175	Bournemouth	4.2	0.88
E30000257	Redruth and Truro	4.2	1.06
E30000247	Northampton	4.2	0.99
E30000200	Derby	4.1	0.91
E30000282	Wadebridge	4.1	0.89
E30000224	Kettering and Wellingborough	4.0	0.88
E30000237	Luton	3.9	0.95

4. Fewer Universal Credit claimants/ Excess Vacancies

TTWA Code	TTWA Name	UC Claimants	Vacancies	TTWA Code	TTWA Name	UC Claimants	Vacancies
E30000184	Bury St Edmunds	3.2	1.14	E30000184	Bury St Edmunds	3.2	1.14
E30000289	Worcester and Kidderminster	3.9	0.87	E30000218	High Wycombe and Aylesbury	3.1	0.89
E30000286	Whitehaven	3.9	0.91	E30000185	Buxton	3.1	0.89
E30000191	Chichester and Bognor Regis	3.9	0.89	E30000216	Hereford	3.0	0.96
E30000255	Preston	3.8	0.91	E30000205	Evesham	3.0	0.88
E30000162	Barnstaple	3.8	1.08	E30000206	Exeter	3.0	0.92
E30000274	Street and Wells	3.8	0.91	E30000256	Reading	3.0	1.02
E30000046	Dorchester and Weymouth	3.8	0.92	E30000186	Cambridge	2.9	1.00
E30000243	Milton Keynes	3.6	1.06	E30000196	Crawley	2.9	1.01
E30000163	Barrow-in-Furness	3.6	0.88	E30000214	Harrogate	2.8	1.08
E30000222	Ipswich	3.5	0.86	E30000228	Leamington Spa	2.8	1.10
E30000180	Bristol	3.5	1.00	E30000238	Malton	2.8	0.91
E30000197	Crewe	3.5	0.92	E30000161	Banbury	2.7	0.91
E30000209	Gloucester	3.5	0.95	E30000244	Newbury	2.7	1.08
E30000276	Swindon	3.4	0.92	E30000281	Tunbridge Wells	2.6	0.90
E30000267	Southampton	3.4	0.91	E30000164	Basingstoke	2.6	0.94
E30000110	Poole	3.4	0.97	E30000250	Oxford	2.6	1.03
E30000280	Trowbridge	3.4	0.97	E30000258	Salisbury	2.6	0.90
E30000262	Shrewsbury	3.3	0.91	E30000106	Penrith	2.6	1.10
E30000188	Chelmsford	3.3	0.87	E30000039	Skipton	2.5	1.10
E30000277	Taunton	3.3	0.98	E30000223	Kendal	2.5	1.18
E30000272	Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City	3.3	0.95	E30000246	Northallerton	2.4	0.96
E30000189	Cheltenham	3.3	0.99	E30000212	Guildford and Aldershot	2.3	0.98

Appendix 4 - Questionnaire

Questions for frontline managers and staff delivering personalised services.

Question	Probe
Can you tell me what your role is?	What did you do before this? How do you think you have developed in the job role? How did this happen?
Could you explain to me what are personalised employment services?	Where does this information come from? (Perception of personalised services)
Could you tell me what would be the typical client journey?	Does this journey differ by different clients or circumstances? Can you provide examples? Do you have adequate skills to guide the client through this?
Could you tell me what influences the decisions you make as to what personalised employment services you offer to clients?	What about client characteristics? What about organisational constraints such as resources/ time spent with them? What about the state of local economy etc. The skills of clients and retraining – industrialised area requiring IT skills, older workforce? What about the availability of networks in the area you have available to provide specialised support? Can you give some examples?
How does this impact on the personalised employment services you are able to provide to clients?	Can you give some examples?
Can you tell me if there are any other factors that you think influence the services offered?	Can you give some examples?
How do you feedback improvements to personalised services?	Are you involved in the design of personalised services? Who do you feedback to? Can you give some examples?
Is there anything else you would like to add or anything that has not been covered?	Thank you for your time

Appendix 5 - WHP Customer Service Standards

WHP Customer Service Standards	Administration	Customer
1. The Contractor must acknowledge 99.5% of referrals on (PRaP) system within 2 (two) working days of receipt of the referral.	x	
2. The Contractor will attempt to contact a potential Participant within 2 (two) Working Days of receiving a Referral.		x
3. The Contractor and the potential Participant will undertake the initial appointment within 15 (fifteen) Working Days of the Contractor receiving the Referral. The Contractor must also update PRaP with a start, did not attend or did not start by the 15th (fifteen) working day for 99% of referrals. This will be monitored through PRaP.		x
4. No more than 4% of referrals will be in backlog. Backlog means an accumulation of uncompleted work or matters needing to be dealt with in relation to CSS1 or 3 above. This will be monitored through PRaP.	x	
5. No single referral will be in backlog for more than 25 working days of receiving the referral. This will be monitored through PRaP.	x	
6. The Contractor will provide the Participant with a copy of the Customer Service Standards within 1 (one) Working Day of becoming a Participant.		x
7. The Action Plan must be finalised within 20 (twenty) Working Days of receipt of the Referral.		x
8. The Contractor will contact the Participant (by telephone/video conference or any other method permitted by the Contract) every 10 (ten) Working Days as a minimum, to discuss the Participant's wellbeing, Action Plan and job goals ("Booked Meeting"). The frequency of the Booked Meetings can be amended if the Participant prefers a different arrangement.		x
9. If the Participant misses a Booked Meeting and the Contractor is not contacted by the Participant with an explanation as to why, the Contractor will attempt to contact the Participant within 2 (two) Working Days with a view to resolving any issues.		x
10. Ahead of the Participant commencing employment or self-employment, the Contractor will attempt to discuss with the Participant the initial in-work support needs that exist.		x
11. Whilst the Participant is in employment or self-employment, the Contractor will attempt to contact (via telephone/video conference or any other manner permitted by the Contract) the Participant every 10 (ten) Working Days to offer any necessary support that the Participant may require in employment or self-employment. The frequency of the contact can be amended if the Participant prefers a different arrangement.		x

<p>12. If the Participant is not in employment or self-employment at the point they cease to be a Participant, the Contractor will produce an exit report pack. This will include a summary of the Participant’s time on WHP, along with details of additional support that can be accessed to support them going forward (“Exit Report Pack”). The Exit Report Pack will be provided to Participants within the last 10 (ten) Working Days of the Participant being a Participant. When a Participant’s employment ends during the in-work support period and they return to Jobcentre Plus for support, an exit report pack must be provided to the Participant within 10 (ten) working days of the date the Contractor establishes that the Participant is no longer in employment. The Contractor will also maintain a copy of the Exit Report Pack securely, which must be sent to the Contracting Body upon request from the Contracting Body.</p>		x
<p>13. Contractors must send a copy of the fully completed ESF1420 Initial form for WHP provision to the DWP ESF Admin Team within five (5) Working Days of the start date; this should be annotated Covid-19 where a Participant signature is unobtainable.</p>	x	
<p>14. Contractors must securely send a copy of the fully completed ESF1420 end form to the ESF 14-20 Admin Team within eight (8) weeks of the completion date.</p>	x	
<p>15. The Contractor will be required to obtain information from Participants/Customers on the usefulness of the programme by contacting 100% of Participants/Customers as a minimum once every 3 calendar months.</p>		x
<p>16. At the end of each calendar month, the Contractor will complete the template as provided in Annex B to Schedule 6 of CV04 This template will be provided to the Contracting Body on the 15th day of the following calendar month. If the 15th day happens to be a non-Working Day, then the deadline will move to the next Working Day.</p>	x	

Chapter 16. Department for Work and Pensions (Gov. UK 2022g) as of July 2022

Appendix 5a - Work and Health Programme participant touch points

Summary	Time	Fixed/Flexible	Stage
2. Attempt to contact a potential Participant	Within 2 (two) Working Days of receiving a Referral.	Fixed	Access
3. Undertake an initial appointment	Within 15 (fifteen) Working Days	Flexible unless mandated	Assessment
6. Provide the Participant with a copy of the Customer Service Standards.	within 1 (one) Working Day of becoming a Participant	Fixed	Assessment
7. Finalised Action Plan	Finalised within 20 (twenty) Working Days of receipt of the Referral.		Assessment
8. Discuss the Participant's wellbeing, Action Plan and job goals face to face or remotely	Every 10 (ten) Working Days as a minimum.	Flexible	Collaboration
9. Participant misses a booked Meeting and no contact.	Contact the Participant within 2 (two) Working Days	Fixed	Collaboration
10. Attempt made ahead of commencing employment or self-employment to discuss initial in-work support needs that exist.	Not timebound	Flexible	Support
11. Attempt made to contact remotely to offer any necessary support	every 10 (ten) Working Days	Flexible	Support
12. Exit package if participant disengages from the programme and not in employment, self-employment or exits employment during in work support period	within the last 10 (ten) Working Days	Fixed	After Assessment
15. The Contractor will be required to obtain information from Participants/Customers on the usefulness of the programme by contacting 100% of Participants/Customers	as a minimum once every 3 calendar months.	Fixed	After Assessment

Appendix 6 - Fair Start Scotland Key Delivery Indicators

Obtained from Scottish Government through a Freedom of Information request

	Key Delivery Indicators	Administration	Customer
1	Induction (Stages 4 and 5). Induction Interview to be completed face to face within 5 Working Days from receipt of the referral.		X
2	Induction (Stages 4 and 5). For any Participant whose Induction interview is not completed within the 5 Working Days timeline as outlined in Ref.1 above, the Induction Interview must be completed within 10 Working Days from receipt of the referral.		X
3	Induction (Stages 4 and 5). Within one working day following receipt of referral, the Service Provider must notify the Participant and DWP, in writing, of the date and time of the Induction Interview.		X
4	Induction (Stages 4 and 5). 2 working days prior to the Induction Interview , the Service Provider must contact the Participant by phone to alleviate any Participant concerns. Evidence of both successful and unsuccessful calls should be recorded.		X
5	Induction (Stages 4 and 5). At the Induction Interview, the Service Provider must provide each Participant with an Induction Pack and have evidence of a signed Participant Agreement.		X
6	Intervention / Participant Engagement (All Stages) Weeks 1-3 Service Provider must demonstrate engagement with the Participant Weeks 4 – PES (Personalised Employment Support) End Date At every weekly face to face intervention, a Participant’s personalised Action Plan will be reviewed and updated to reflect progress and agreement of future activities and actions.		X
7.	Intervention / Participant Engagement (All Stages) Face to face formal monthly review between the Key Worker and the Participant to take place.		X
8.	FSS Questionnaire: FSS Questionnaire must be completed at the Induction Meeting.		X
9.	FSS Questionnaire: Service strand to be confirmed by end of week 3 commencing from the Participants start date.		X
10.	In Work Support Plan (Stage 10) A detailed In Work Support (IWS) Plan to be agreed with the Participant within 10 Working Days of job start.		X
11.	Procedure for Disengagement by Participant The Service Provider must contact the Participant within 1 Working Day to establish circumstances surrounding disengagement from being notified that the Participant will not continue with the Service.		X

12.	Procedure for Disengagement by Participant If the Service Provider is unable to engage the Participant within 5 Working Days of disengaging they must contact DWP.	x	
13.	Participant Service Exit and Leaver Plan (Stages 8 and 9). The Service Provider must produce a detailed Leavers Plan for each Participant returning to DWP within 10 Working Days of Participant service exit date.		x
14.	Complaints. The Service Provider must acknowledge receipt of complaints/concerns with the Complainant within 2 Working Days of receipt.	x	
15.	Complaints. Service Provider must provide a formal response to Complainant within 5 Working Days (copied to the Scottish Government) of the complaint being raised.	x	
16	Specialist Support Service Provider must contact the Specialist Supplier Organisation on the day that the issue / need is identified to arrange interview assessment re access to specialist support to address health problems, including professional help to manage mental/physical health conditions and well-being interventions on date the requirement is established.		x
17	In Work Support Plan (Stage 10) Job Analysis must be undertaken for each Participant entering employment within 10 working days of each job start, to inform the In-Work Support Action Plan, and with Participant consent, must be agreed with the employer.		x
18	Vocational Profiling All Participants must be offered Vocational Profiling.		x
19	Supported Employment Model and Individual Placement and Support The Supported Employment Model for disabled people and Individual Placement and Support (IPS) must be available and offered.		x
20	Management Information The Service Provider is required to provide management information to the Scottish Government in accordance with this Specification		
21	Stakeholder Engagement Plan The Service Provider is required to provide an updated Stakeholder Engagement Plan every 3 months commencing from the “ Commencement Date ” i.e., last working day in June, September, December and March and report progress of partnership, integration and alignment activities with local organisations and services.		

Source: (Confirmed by Scottish Government 2022)

Appendix 6a - Fair Start Scotland participant touchpoints

Contractor Responsibilities	Time	Fixed/Flexible	Stage
1. Start/Induction Interview to be completed face to face.	Within 5 Working Days from receipt of the referral.	Fixed	Assessment
2. If Start/Induction interview not completed within 5 Working Days.	Must be completed within further 10 Working Day from receipt of the referral.	Not stated in KDI	Assessment
3. Notify participant in writing date and time of induction interview.	Within 1 day of receipt of referral.	Fixed	Assessment
4. The Service Provider must contact the Participant by phone to alleviate any Participant concerns.	48 hours prior to the Start Date/Induction Interview.	Fixed	Assessment
5. Provide Induction Pack at induction interview.	Within 15 days.	Fixed	Assessment
6. The participant personalised Action Plan will be reviewed and updated to reflect progress and agreement of future activities and actions.	Weekly	Not stated in KDI	Collaboration
7. Face to face formal monthly review between the Key Worker and the Participant to take place.	Monthly	Not stated in KDI	Collaboration
8. Segmentation questionnaire must be completed at the Induction Meeting.	Within 15 working days	Fixed	Assessment
9. Service strand to be confirmed by end of week 3 commencing from Participant starting on Programme.	Within 15 working days	Fixed	Assessment
10. A detailed In Work Support (IWS) Plan to be agreed with the Participant.	Within 10 Working Days of job start.	Fixed	Support

11. Establish the circumstances surrounding disengagement from being notified by the Participant that they will not continue with the Programme.	Within 1 Working Day	Fixed	At any stage
13. Produce a detailed Leavers Plan for each Participant returning to JCP.	Within 10 Working Days of Participant end date.	Fixed	Support
16 Facilitate immediate referrals and access to specialist support.	Immediate	Fixed	Collaboration
17. Job Analysis must be undertaken for each Participant entering employment within 10 working days of each job start, to inform the In-Work Support Action Plan, and with Participant consent, must be agreed with the employer.	10 days of starting job	Fixed	Support
18. All Participants must be offered Vocational Profiling.	Not time bound	Fixed	Collaboration
19. The Supported Employment Model for disabled people and Individual Placement and Support (IPS) must be available and offered.	Not time bound	Fixed	Collaboration

Appendix 7 - Eligibility of participants

Eligibility	Work Programme 2011 (DWP (2012))	Work and Health Programme 2017 (Gov.UK (2022a))	Fair Start Scotland 2018 (Gov. Scot 2019)
Age and Residence	<i>Over 18</i>	<i>Over 18</i>	<i>Over 18</i>
	<i>- Resident in Great Britain</i>	<i>- Resident in England or Wales</i> <i>- Right to reside and enter employment</i>	<i>- Resident in Scotland</i> <i>- Right to reside and enter employment</i>
Benefits	<i>- receiving benefits</i> <i>JSA, IS, ESA, IB</i>	<i>- Receiving a working age benefit: JSA, IS, ESA, UC</i> <i>- Not receiving a working age benefit but not in education or working</i>	<i>- Receiving a working age benefit: JSA, IS, ESA, UC</i> <i>- Not receiving a working age benefit but not in education or working</i>
Entry Point	<i>3 months (seriously disadvantaged)</i> <i>9 months (18 -24)</i> <i>12 months (25+)</i>	<i>- Eligible disadvantaged Group (see table 5.3)</i> <i>Voluntary for Early access client group</i> <i>Mandatory for LTU after 24 months</i>	<i>- Eligible disadvantaged Group (see table 5.3)</i> <i>Voluntary for disadvantaged groups</i> <i>Guidance stipulates programme entirely voluntary</i>
Conditionality		<i>No sanctions if refuse to join</i> <i>Normal conditionality and mandatory work-related activity sanctions by the Jobcentre Plus and also if they choose to disengage</i>	<i>No sanctions if refuse to join</i> <i>Normal conditionality and mandatory work-related activity sanctions by the Jobcentre Plus and also if they choose to disengage</i>

Appendix 8 - FSS Strands

Intense	Likely key customer groups
<p>Disabled and in need of specialist support services, to include physical disabilities and learning disabilities; or severe and enduring mental health conditions. or likely to be over 5 years unemployed. or a significant proportion of the barriers within advanced.</p>	<p>Disabled Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Universal Credit (UC) (Any work prep group as long as they are not in work)</p>
Advanced	
<p>Unemployed for more than 2 years, and in addition the following barriers will be prevalent: Mental and/or Physical health barrier. or in recovery from addiction. or with a conviction and additional barriers; or Disabled and in need of a specialist key worker. or Housing issues. FSS Early Entry Groups – including lone parents; refugees; care leavers and those with convictions are eligible after 6 months of unemployment (this has now changed to Day 1 unemployed entry from April 2020).</p>	<p>Disabled ESA Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) 24+ JSA Early Entry UC (work-focussed interview group, work prep group, all work -related requirements group) IS (lone parents)</p>
Core	
<p>Unemployed for less than 2 years and/or health is not a barrier to work; and the following barriers will be prevalent: Skills deficit. or Literacy and numeracy requirements. or English language requirements. or Lack of confidence and resilience. or Environmental barriers: including travel, childcare, debt, a conviction (but no additional barriers)</p>	<p>JSA Early Entry UC (All work related requirements group) IS (lone parents)</p>

Source: Gov. Scot (2021d)