New Deal for Disabled People: Second synthesis report – interim findings from the evaluation

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Key findings

The New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) was implemented nationally in July 2001. The evaluation of NDDP includes a longitudinal dimension. This report covers evaluation findings up to spring 2004.

As might be expected there are some aspects of NDDP that are unchanged. However, there is also evidence of change and progression – for example, of improved relationships between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus locally, and in the circumstances of participants.

In general, the research evidence is of steady progress in terms of outcomes and institutional developments.

Registrations

Over the period July 2001 to end of March 2005, 146,340 people had registered with NDDP. The overall rate of take-up of NDDP for the year ending January 2005 was 2.4 per cent of the population flowing onto qualifying benefits.

Participants’ characteristics

People volunteering for the programme were more likely to be male, younger, on an incapacity benefit for a shorter duration, less likely to have a mental health condition and more likely to have musculo-skeletal problems than the Incapacity Benefit population as a whole. Participants were more ‘job ready’ than members of the eligible population, for example, they were more likely to report a better health status, and to possess a qualification.

Moreover, Job Brokers were not dealing with a ‘static’ client group. For instance, the perceived bridges and barriers to work of participants not in employment could change over time. Of the listed bridges and barriers to work, there were six bridges (for example, being able work at home) and five barriers (for instance, not feeling able to work regularly) where 30 or more per cent of respondents changed their views about whether the bridges and barriers applied to them.

Job entries by participants

Of those registering between July 2001 and March 2005, 56,829 (39 per cent) had moved

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into paid work (defined as employee work, Permitted Work and self-employment). Most of these participants entered work within the first few months of registering with a Job Broker; almost one-half (46 per cent) had entered work within one month of registration. Indeed, the overwhelming majority had commenced work within one year – only five per cent took longer than 12 months.

The most frequently mentioned measures that would help participants move into work were (percentages for Wave 2): if they could return to their original benefit if needed (66 per cent), being able to decide the number of hours worked (60 per cent), home-working (55 per cent) and being able to take breaks during the day when required (52 per cent). The principal perceived barriers to obtaining work were a belief that there were insufficient suitable job opportunities locally (59 per cent), a feeling that they would not be able to work regularly (54 per cent), that they could not work because of their health condition or disability (53 per cent) and a concern that they faced discrimination on grounds of their disability (45 per cent).

The main factors affecting the likelihood of participants obtaining jobs were: Job Brokers’ characteristics and activities, participants’ characteristics and region. Table 1 gives further details about each of these factors.

**Table 1 Factors influencing participants’ movements into work**

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<th>Job Brokers’ characteristics and activities</th>
<th>Participants’ characteristics</th>
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<tr>
<td>Strong organisational support for the Job Broker service within the parent organisation.</td>
<td>Women were slightly more likely to have found work than men.</td>
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<td>Availability of existing expertise and resources within the organisation.</td>
<td>White respondents were more likely to have entered work than those from other ethnic groups.</td>
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<td>Higher outcome related payments for job entries.</td>
<td>Participants aged 50 or over were slightly more likely than younger participants to have entered work.</td>
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<td>Strong management of the NDDP contract.</td>
<td>Those with no problems with English or Maths were more likely to have entered work compared to those with problems with English or Maths.</td>
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<td>Close team-working and strong team support.</td>
<td>Respondents with a positive attitude towards work (at Wave 1) were more likely to have entered work than those with a neutral or negative attitude towards work.</td>
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<td>Staff either worked on the Job Broker service exclusively or did not differentiate between their job broking work and their work on other contracts.</td>
<td>Participants with a + condition (that is, problems with arms, hands, legs, feet, neck or back) were more likely to gain employment compared to those with other types of disability or health condition.</td>
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<td>A core adviser working with participants throughout their contact with the service.</td>
<td>Participants at five months after registration who rated their health as (very) good or who said their health condition had no or little impact upon everyday activities were more likely to be in paid work than other participants.</td>
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<td>Marketing, good links with other external services especially with Jobcentre Plus.</td>
<td>Participants with a partner were more likely to have entered work.</td>
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<td>Possibly delivering wider ranging and more in-depth services.</td>
<td>Respondents in work one month before registration were highly likely to be in work post-registration.</td>
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<td>A proactive approach to maintaining contact with participants.</td>
<td>Region</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Compared to participants living in the South West, those in London, the North West, the West Midlands, the East of England and the South East were less likely to enter work.</td>
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Of those entering employment, the overwhelming majority of participants (93 per cent) were employees, and most of these worked full-time. Participants were more likely to enter routine, unskilled occupations (25 per cent) than any other occupational group. Two-thirds of participants worked 16 or more hours per week, and the median gross pay per hour for employees was £5.

**Sustained employment**

Over the period July 2001 to January 2005, 63 per cent (or 31,640 participants) had achieved sustainable employment. The proportion in paid work increased from 17 per cent in the month of registration to 36 per cent one year after registration. Over the year since their registration, 74 per cent of participants who had started work had just one spell of employment, whilst one-fifth had two spells (22 per cent), four per cent had three spells, and one per cent had four or more spells.

A number of factors were identified as undermining or supporting participants remaining in employment:

- Participants’ health status – 43 per cent of those whose job had ended identified their health as playing some part in the job ending.
- Age of participant – participants aged 50 to 59 were more likely to be in the same job one year after registration (53 per cent) than those aged 16 to 29 (43 per cent).
- Some jobs were temporary and had come to a natural end – 23 per cent of participants whose first post-registration job had ended by Wave 2 said it had terminated for this reason.
- The job could be unsuitable for the participant in terms of hours worked, the nature of the work and/or the individual’s unrealistic/realistic expectations about what they could do.
- Participants were more likely to stay in work if they were satisfied with their job.
- Job retention was assisted where employers were supportive and flexible in terms of making adaptations to the working environment and conditions of work.
- Financial advice from Job Brokers and tax credits both promoted job retention.
- Job Brokers providing a more pro-active in-work service achieved higher sustainability rates.

The qualitative research reveals that Job Brokers’ arrangements for delivering in-work support differed; for instance, some but not all Job Brokers used specialist staff.

**The changing nature of NDDP**

The Job Brokers as institutions have continued to evolve. There were developments in:

- The organisation of Job Broker services – there were instances where the profile of the job broking service within the parent organisation had risen, and where it had fallen; cases where NDDP had become more integrated with other services delivered by the organisation; and a mix in the use of generic and specialist staff, but generally more use of specialist workers, especially for providing in-work support.
- An increase in the number of referrals from Jobcentre Plus reported by some Job Brokers.
- The services provided – some Job Brokers were more focused on participants who were closer to work. There was an increase in the use of other internal and of external services by providers, and more use of direct and indirect financial support for participants.
- Funding arrangements – more Job Brokers reported during winter 2003/spring 2004 that the service was breaking even or was self-funding, or generating small surpluses. However, some organisations had decided to withdraw from providing the service.

**Job Broker relationships with Jobcentre Plus locally**

Relationships between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus locally appeared to have improved: for instance, Job Brokers tended to say that Jobcentre Plus staff had a better understanding of the job broking service.
Job Brokers’ use of Jobcentre Plus programmes varied considerably, in both range of provision and number of participants. Job Broker staff said access was generally unproblematic. Jobcentre Plus staff could also get in touch with Job Brokers on behalf of their customers.

**Partners of participants**

If someone eligible for NDDP has a partner, they are less likely to register for NDDP. However, they are more likely to achieve a positive outcome if they do participate.

Partners of participants were more likely to be in work than partners of those in the eligible population. NDDP participant couples therefore appear to be more orientated towards work than couples in the eligible population as a whole. The evidence suggests that NDDP Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff should consider involving the partner in discussions where partners are supporting participants in getting work.

**Conclusions**

For the issues covered in the report, change, rather than continuity, is the dominant motif for the programme. Changes in the participants' circumstances emphasise the importance of regular adviser initiated contacts with members of the client group. In general, the research evidence is one of steady progress, in terms of outcomes and institutional developments.

The research highlights a number of aspects to the organisation and management of job broking that Job Brokers can put in place in order to improve their effectiveness, such as reviewing how management information is used internally.


It is available from Paul Noakes at the address below.

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