

Testing times

Lessons from the evaluation of the
18-21 Work Skills Pilot 1

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Pilot origins

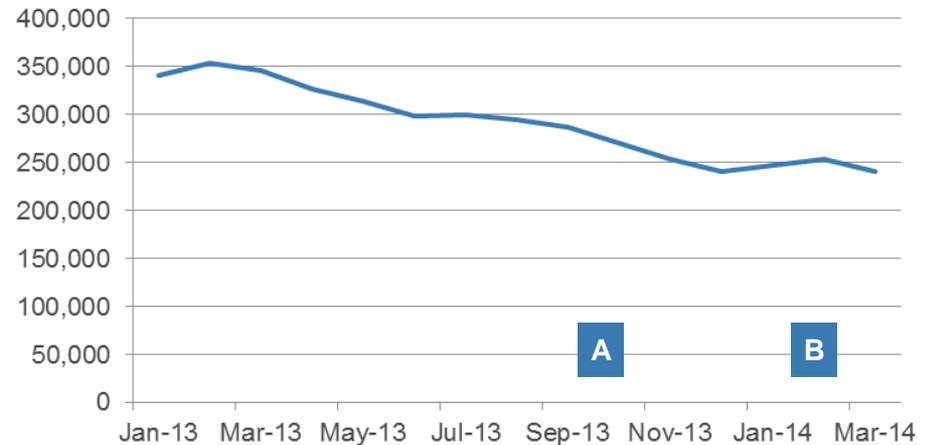


Part of overall **government strategy to reduce unemployment** – young people disproportionately affected, those lacking skills more so; welfare conditionality



Informed by the **Heyward Review 2013** and its recommendation to test additional support for low skilled, unemployed 18-21 year olds

18-24 claimant count 2013-14 ONS



A

Autumn statement 2013

B

PM's speech Feb 2014

Two pilots announced in **Autumn Statement 2013**



18-21 Work Skills Pilot 1 mandation to online maths and English training to new youth claimants without Level 2 maths and/or English

18-21 Work Skills Pilot 2 mandation to work or skills provision of long-term youth claimants

Pilot design and development

Delivered through a cross-departmental collaboration between DWP & BIS (now DfE) :

- 1. Design the trial** – inform investment decision, what it would test, RCT design, cohort and flow assumptions, area selection trial data
- 2. Develop and randomisation design, infrastructure** – legislative protocols; staff training, randomisation tool, commission training providers and independent evaluation
 - Evaluation to provide independent assessment of trial design; evaluate impact, provide qualitative insights

Pilot aims

- Test **impact on employment outcomes and skills acquisition** of mandating new JSA claimants aged 18-21 who cannot provide evidence of attainment of Level 2 in English and/or maths

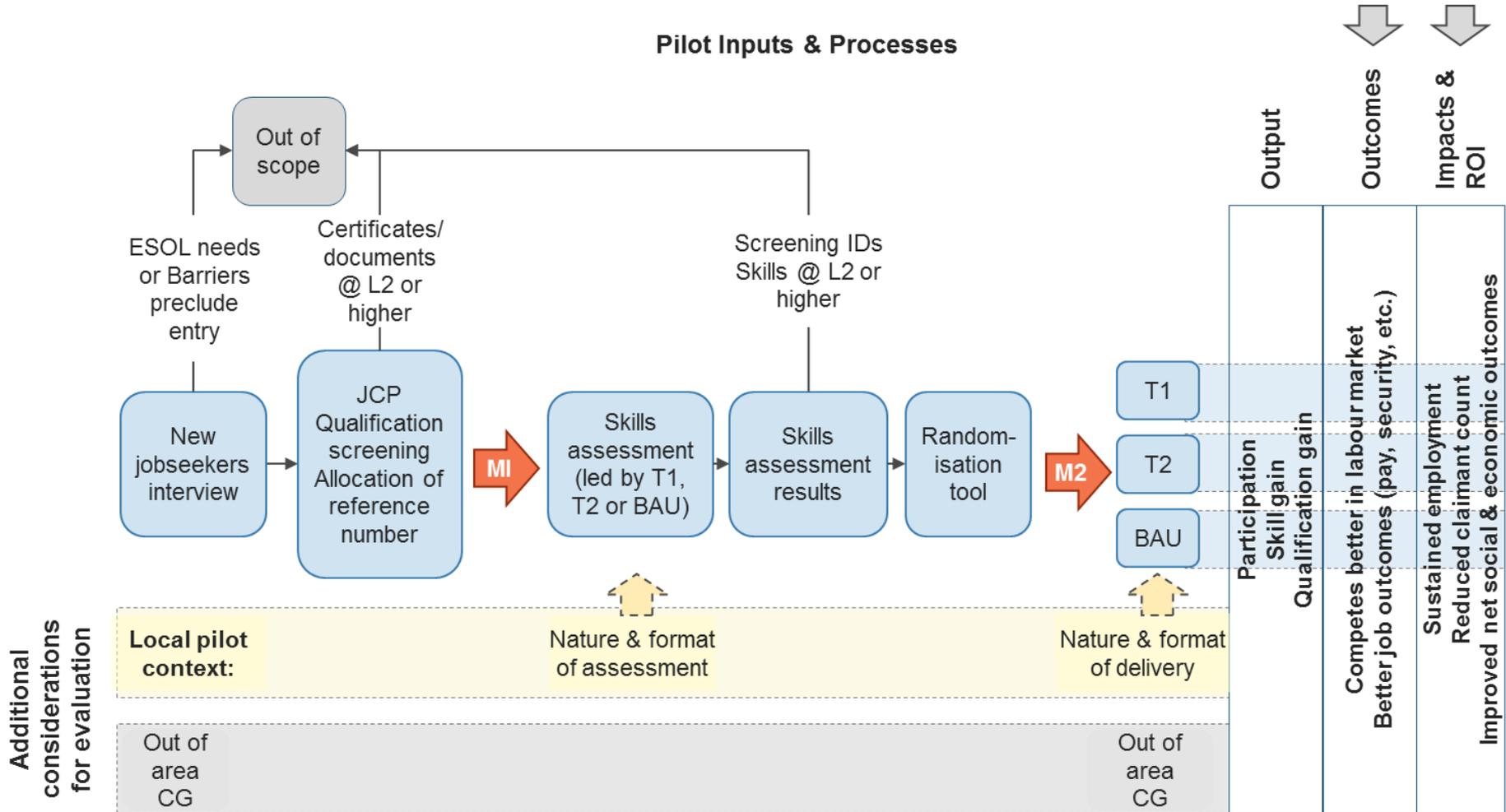


Necessitated prior mandation to **assessment** where certificates not available to avoid mandating young people to repeat a Level

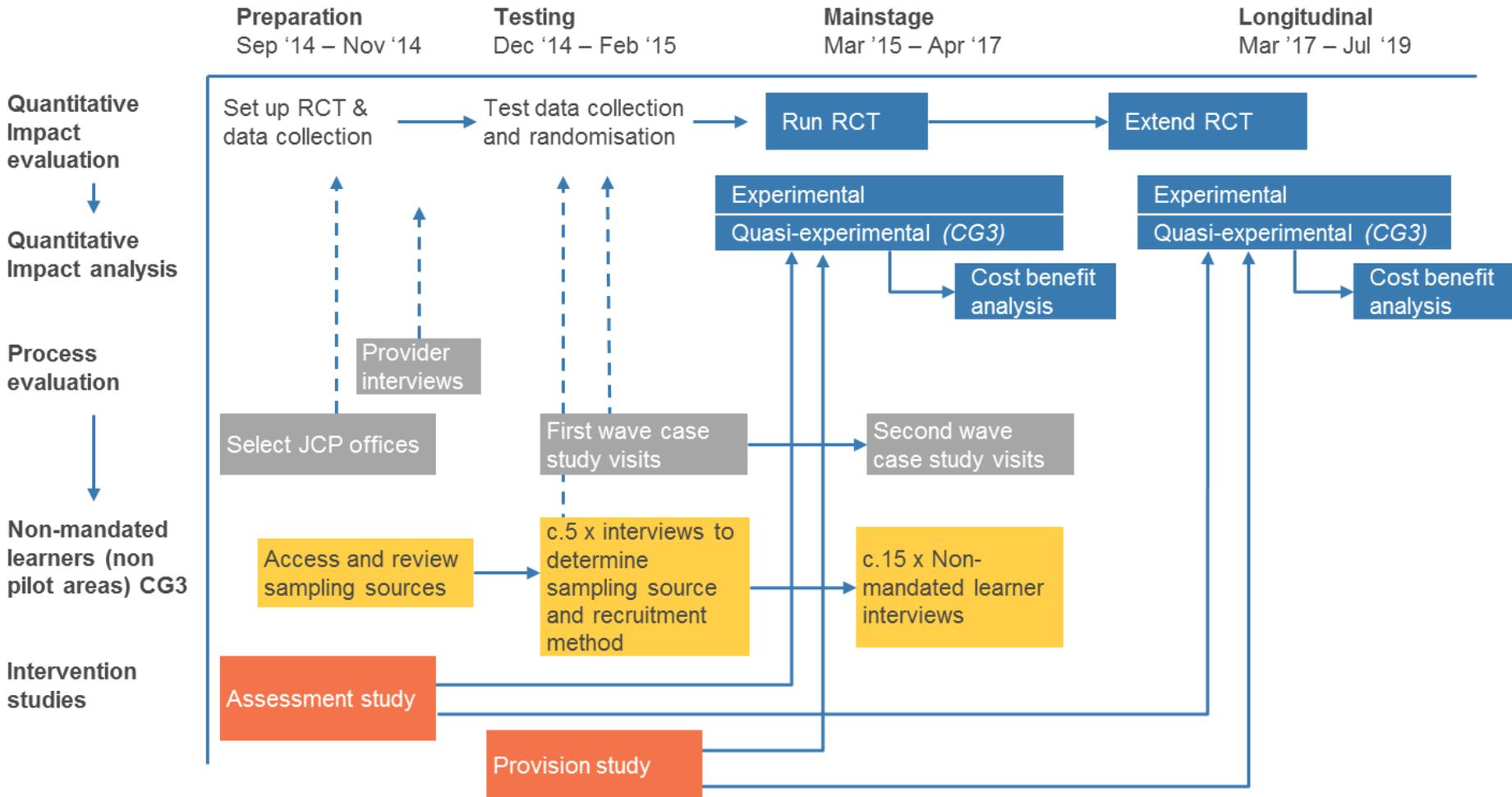
- Test new **skills delivery mechanisms and their cost efficiency** – pure and blended online against ‘business as usual’ classroom provision

Pilot logic model and high level evaluation design

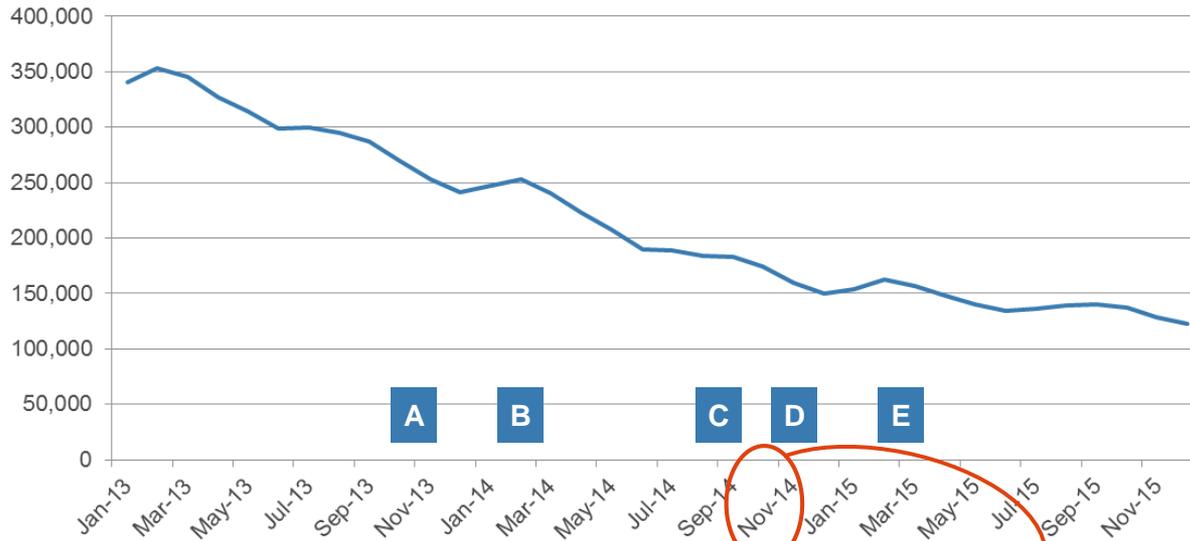
External context:
Changes to qualifications, future of functional skills, availability of GCSE exams, labour market



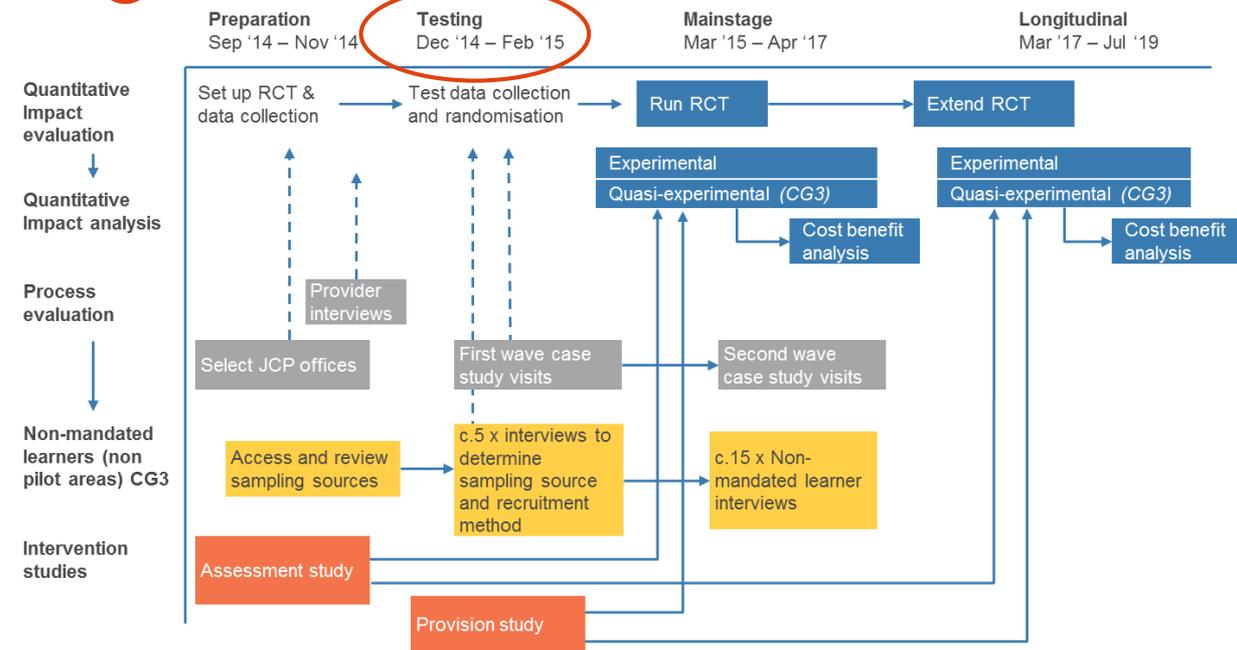
Pilot timeline and evaluation detailed design



Changing context and decision to close



- A** Autumn statement 2013
- B** PM's speech Feb 2014
- C** Accelerated UC implementation announced Sept 2014
- D** Launched Nov 2014
- E** Closed Mar 2015



Testing phase insights

Case studies and learner interviews

- Supply and type of training in business as usual provision varied considerably between areas
 - Intentions to increase referrals for control group; improve/expand BAU provision
- Some misunderstanding/misinterpretation of protocols and guidelines led to variations in practice and some wrong referrals to assessment
- Process for handovers between JCP and providers varied, with consequences for timelines; elapsed time between referral and assessment, assessment results and random allocation and referral and enrolment into training
- Many claimant-learners accepted or were neutral about mandation. Understanding their skills were not at the level they thought or had not improved was disappointing but most willing to re-engage with training

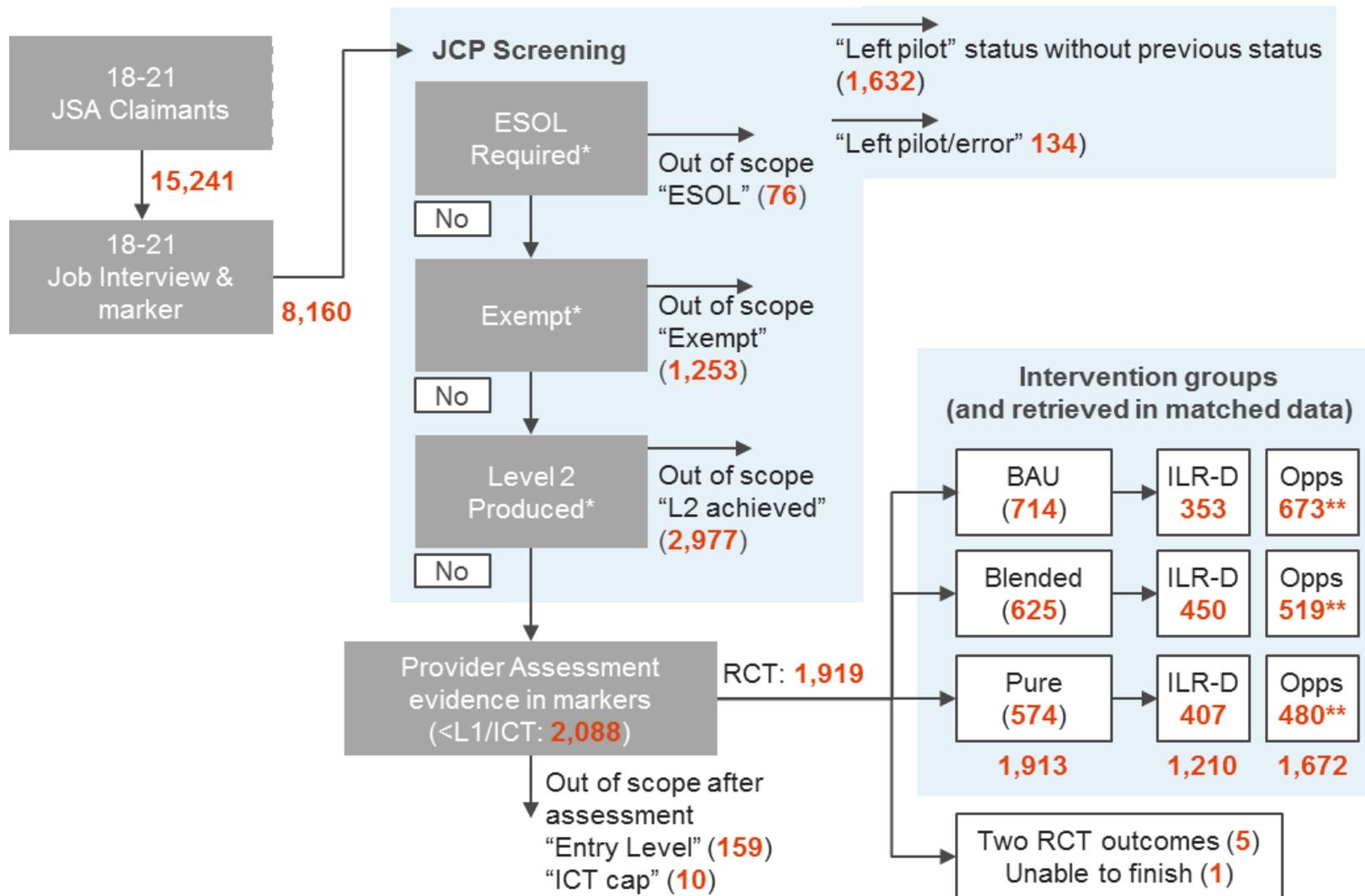
Testing phase insights

Examination of assessment tools and online learning

- Initial assessment tools configured to assess Functional Skills coverage and range, but not process i.e. application of skills that are central to the final assessment – different input and output measures could risk mis-measurement
- Providers using diagnostic assessments on enrolment and ongoing – implications for measuring skills gain without qualifications; repeating initial assessment viewed as unreliable
- There was not a consistent and distinct gap between blended and pure online learning between the providers - including the extent and mechanisms for tutor contact, learning locations for blended learners and learners who did not have suitable IT facilities at home – implications for contamination and understanding results
- Online learning systems remained in development and gaps between pure and blended in and between areas might be subject to change which might not be observable

Testing phase insights

Overview of the pilot/RCT flow data



Testing phase insights

Early outcomes available from the RCT data

Data available at pilot closure indicated:

- Those exempted following assessment (judged as possessing Level 2) had shorter duration spells of unemployment
- Pilot increased provision/uptake of training in the treatment groups
- Where participating in training, the control group was taking part in integrated employment skills training rather than basic skills provision
- Completion rate of 10% for treatment training – due to early closure, unlikely to be representative
- Treatment learners more likely to be in a positive destination (training or employment) than control group
- No detectable impacts on claim duration or referral to sanction

Lessons for the pilot and policy

- Mandation (to assessment and training) did not have a negative effect on perceptions or experience of young people
- Delivery agents were able to encourage and promote positive engagement amongst young people
- Those judged to be already at Level 2 entered positive destinations more rapidly – suggesting pilot was targeting those who more in need of support
- Matching supply and demand, including doing more at the outset to plan handover systems, set target timelines and monitor attendance
- Second chance welcomed by young people with some caveats
- Young people identified skills acquisition and how this made a difference to their outcomes

Lessons for the trial

- Value of testing phase when the reliability of key assumptions is in question and external changes could seriously undermine investment decisions
- Data architecture challenges (i) to estimate/target cohort more effectively and (ii) to monitor the pilot accurately
- Balancing fair commissioning approaches to procure the training with sufficient control measures to ensure like-for-like in delivery of pure and blended online
- The procedural elements and handovers surfaced by process evaluation could have been refined (to some degree)

Thank you

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