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West Midlands  
Combined Authority

## Evaluation of the Job Rotation Pilot in Coventry Local Authority Area 2024-2025

Final report

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## Executive Summary

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### Background

The Danish Job Rotation (JR) model centres on temporarily removing from the workplace and providing training for low skilled workers, whilst simultaneously providing in-work experience and vocational training for unemployed people who act as de facto substitutes. Unemployment benefits are topped up as individuals are placed for work for the agreed rate for the job. Wraparound benefits are often included, such as pre-employment and in-work mentoring by work coaches/caseworkers, along with access to vocational training courses.

The Job Rotation Pilot (JRP) in Coventry area was a proof-of-concept initiative that set out to take 80 unemployed residents (UC claimants aged 19+ and seeking work in Coventry) and place them in work for up to 12 weeks.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, 80 existing employees would be upskilled/retrained.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was the main funder and one of three key delivery partners. West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) acted as lead contract holder, coordinator and partial funder through existing regional skills provision, while Coventry City Council took responsibility for local coordination, employer engagement and delivery. Coventry area was selected for the pilot as potentially standing to benefit most strongly in the West Midlands (WM) due to above average unemployment and claimant counts in the region.

In September 2024, WMCA commissioned Pye Tait Consulting to conduct an independent process and impact evaluation of the JRP in the Coventry area, up to its conclusion at the end of March 2025. The methodology involved in-depth interviews with key partners and a sample of participating employers; a survey of existing employees undertaking upskilling; a survey of backfill candidates via two survey touchpoints (each approximately one month apart); and an in-depth interview with one training provider involved in the upskilling of existing employees. Further detail on participant numbers can be found in section 2.2.

### Programme inputs and outputs

- DWP was the main funder of the JRP via a grant of £740,000 for 80 existing employees and 80 backfill candidates, which funnelled down to a wage subsidy of £3,600 to each employer per backfill candidate offered a placement. Based on this, the total cost per participant (based on 160) equated to £4,625.

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<sup>1</sup> Originally it was envisaged that the work placement duration might be longer, although the duration was ultimately set with consideration to overall delivery timescales. There were some occasions where an employer had to shorten the work placement duration due to placement start dates commencing within 12 weeks of the pilot's end date.

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- As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, the target of 10 participating employers had been partially met, including one large employer and six SMEs, spanning a range of sectors and job roles. A total of 64 existing employees (from a target of 80) had been upskilled, and 72 backfill candidates (from a target of 80) had been assigned a work placement.
- Backfill candidates were primarily young people aged under 25 and existing employees were primarily older age groups. The JRP as a whole successfully engaged traditionally underrepresented ethnic groups.
- Most upskilling provision took the form of accredited training, mainly, but not exclusively, in leadership and management.
- Modelling undertaken by WMCA suggests a saving of £14,790 to the public purse per person moving into employment, estimated to result in savings of between £1.2m to £1.3m as a result of the intervention.<sup>2</sup>

## Delivery effectiveness

- For most participating employers, backfill candidates directly substituted for existing employees being upskilled, but a non-direct substitution model was flexibly agreed with one employer, which better suited the needs of this business.
- On the whole, key partners described a good collaborative approach; furthermore, local resources were mobilised effectively for the pilot and assisted by regular meetings, progress updates and effective communication.
- Key challenges included: protracted delays to programme set-up in 2024; determining how the Job Shop and JCP could best complement one another in sourcing different participant groups; difficulties matching backfill candidates to the roles and sectors they were best suited to; and – for one employer in particular – a concern that the 12-week placement would not be long enough for some candidates to be considered truly work ready.

## Employer outcomes

- Employers participating in the JRP believe that the model has helped to increase business productivity, improve retention and strengthen the progression and promotion potential of existing employees.
- While most employers believe that the JRP has helped to reduce training costs, views are somewhat divided on whether it has helped them to save on recruitment costs, for example due to more time needed than expected to source the right

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<sup>2</sup> Calculations were undertaken using the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) Cost Benefit Analysis Model. Available at: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/research/research-cost-benefit-analysis/>

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candidates; and greater resource investment than would normally be case to provide basic skills and behavioural training for some the backfill candidates.

- Employers said that they have become more aware of other local skills initiatives, notably finding the JRP “eye-opening” to what is available; furthermore, two employers have gone on to take part in other initiatives.
- There is evidence of the JRP having stimulated spillover benefits, for example by having a motivating influence on members of the workforce **not** directly involved in the pilot to think about their own development, and encouraging employers to think about which other roles they might want to upskill in the future.

### Existing employee outcomes

- Most employees (89%) undergoing upskilling felt positive about the pilot when it was first introduced to them (the remainder felt neutral and none felt negative).
- Employees said they had developed a range of skills as a result of the upskilling, most notably management and leadership (mentioned by 67%), communication (61%) followed by problem solving (28%).
- In terms of overall value, employees rate the JRP highly at 8.3 out of 10 (higher still at 8.9 among employees based within SMEs).
- Most employees (89%) found the upskilling useful and helpful, and 83% said it was enjoyable.
- Satisfaction levels at work appear to have increased thanks to the JRP, with 89% saying they were satisfied when reflecting back to before they took part, rising to 95% at the time of the survey.
- Corroborating the views of employers on the JRP’s role in encouraging retention, 61% of employees said they were ‘very likely’ to stay with their employer when reflecting back to before the upskilling, rising to 94% at the time of the survey.
- More than three quarters (77%) of employees agree that the training has improved their career progression opportunities.
- Over a third (39%) of employees do not think they would have had the same opportunity to develop and progress had they not received the upskilling (higher still at 57% among employees based within SMEs).



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## Backfill candidate outcomes

- Most backfill candidates (72%) felt positive about the JRP when it was first introduced to them (the remainder felt neutral and none felt negative).
- Almost all (96%) said they were hoping to find lasting employment from the JRP.
- Backfill candidates' experience of the Job Shop work readiness sessions was largely positive, with most saying the sessions covered topics appropriate to their needs.
- More than three quarters (79%) agreed that the work readiness sessions helped to increase their motivation to find long-term work, although views were somewhat mixed regarding the sessions' ability to prepare them for the workplace (between 25% and 38% were either neutral or tended to disagree on this).
- A small number of respondents were frustrated by a mismatch between job roles they were initially told about and roles they ultimately interviewed for.
- Almost all backfill candidates (93%) were satisfied with their work placement and the same proportion (93%) said their work placement was in an industry area or job role that they felt suited them.
- All (100%) said that they felt supported by their employer either to a great extent or to some extent.
- The biggest challenge experienced by around a quarter of backfill candidates was not having sufficient work to do or not gaining as much experience as they would have liked (e.g. due to time spent shadowing or learning).
- Almost three quarters (72%) took part in employability sessions run by their employer, with positive feedback on the way they were run and the coverage of topics appropriate to candidates' needs.
- In terms of overall value, backfill candidates rate the scheme highly at 8.5 out of 10 (slightly higher still at 8.6 among candidates placed within SMEs).
- The pilot appears to have had a positive influence on candidates' confidence in their own career potential, with less than four in 10 (38%) confident when reflecting back to before the work readiness sessions, rising to 97% at survey touchpoint 1.
- Most (83%) said the JRP had reduced their reliance on UC.
- A large proportion of backfill candidates (87%) said they were hoping to pursue a permanent position with their employer. Just under half (45%) said that their employer had discussed a more permanent position with them, rising to 80% among

those placed within SMEs. This suggests that long-term employment outcomes may not be feasible for all as a result of the pilot, although SMEs appear to be better placed to offer long-term positions.

## Conclusions

Further details relating to each concluding point below can be found in section 8.2.

1. The JR model has strongly supported employers to enable upskilling of their workforce across a range of sectors and job roles, and for different sizes of organisation.
2. There is evidence that the JR model can bring substantial additionality to upskilling arrangements, along with wider, spillover benefits.
3. The JR model has demonstrated its ability to facilitate the progression of existing employees, including (but not limited to) those in low wage roles.
4. The Job Shop work readiness sessions organised as part of the JRP have provided valuable experience for local residents to help with their future job searches, even where not ultimately selected for a placement.
5. The work placements offered as part of the JR model can make a valuable difference for backfill candidates, with key outcomes including improved confidence, stronger perceived employment prospects and ability to overcome challenges.
6. Whilst taking part in the JRP has – according to backfill candidates – reduced their reliance on UC, this reduction in reliance on the state would need to be balanced against: i) the employer subsidy provided by the state for offering the placement; and ii) the sustained benefits for all those taking part.
7. For employers, evidence suggests that the JR model has the potential to boost productivity, improve retention, reduce training costs, strengthen their buy-in to local skills initiatives, and potentially help contribute to wider economic growth
8. The JR model can lead to different types of benefits and trade-offs in the way it is operated by larger employers relative to SMEs, including prospects for backfill candidates' long-term employment within the placement company.
9. Whilst the JR model is a unique type of offering that does not easily compare with similar other schemes and initiatives, evidence from the pilot suggests the model is able to deliver strong comparable outcomes.

## Forward considerations

On the back of the broad range of positive outcomes identified from the JRP, consideration should be given to extending the pilot, and/or rolling it out to other areas in the West Midlands region or to other areas and regions of the country. The following forward considerations are intended to help when considering such a rollout.

1. **Importance of government funding:** This would be essential, as evidenced by feedback from all interviewed employers who found that an important enabler to taking part.
2. **Flexible adoption of the JR model:** The JRP has demonstrated that the JR model can be adapted flexibly, using a direct or indirect substitution approach, which could provide a useful basis for negotiating future participation with large and small employers like.
3. **Ensuring sufficient lead and delivery timescales:** Whilst the JRP experienced some unforeseen delays due to the General Election and mayoral elections, future scheme roll-out should ensure sufficient lead time to establish governance processes, galvanise and work with employers to complete onboarding processes, and ensure sufficient time for all rotations to be organised and completed within allowed funding period.
4. **Streamlining processes where possible:** Consideration should be given to where certain local administrative processes could be made more efficient to help make rollout as efficient as possible, e.g. reflecting on internal processes or information asked of employers that proved less useful, overly burdensome or unnecessarily time consuming as part of the JRP.
5. **Importance of good collaboration:** As demonstrated by the JRP, a strong collaborative approach is vital to help create opportunities for employers to network with skills system actors and understand more about the local skills offer through initial briefing/employer engagement sessions, and other events. These represent key ingredients that should be in place and that could be replicated for future, similar projects.
6. **A mutually supportive approach to accessing and engaging local SMEs:** Given that SMEs are the lifeblood of local economies, it is important that they are strongly represented to maximise opportunity creation across a broad range of priority sectors. This means reflecting on which engagement processes worked most and least well as part of the JRP to help secure their buy-in. A key lesson from the JRP is that more employers across a range of sectors could potentially have been identified with greater sharing of employer contacts and relationships between partners, such as access to JCP data.

7. **Maximising the size of the candidate pool for employers:** The Job Shop work readiness sessions as part of the JRP provided vital support for local residents looking for work and have evidently made a difference to individuals' prospects. However, several employers did not select from these cohorts, or only partially selected from them. Whilst this does not appear to have deterred employers who would willingly take part again, it does potentially lessen the likelihood of individuals securing long-term employment if employers have concerns about the right fit or their confidence in being able to bring them up to speed over the course of 12 weeks. As such, future rollout should seek to maximise as far as possible the size of the candidate pool with support from the Job Shop and JCP, potentially offering additional incentives to residents, and building in flexibility for employers to select candidates in other ways to help manage their expectations.
8. **Accessing more reliable data to measure return on investment:** Return on investment could be more reliably determined if key partners and evaluators had access to information on UC claimed and ideally taxes paid by participating individuals pre and post intervention. It is appreciated that accessing and using DWP or HMRC data brings with it a range of complexities such as consent, data access protocols and data privacy implications that could make this difficult. It is also important to note that placement candidates are not determined well in advance but continuously over the course of the intervention; moreover, employers may be reluctant to share information about these candidates due to concerns about consent, data privacy and how this information might be used.
9. **Deployment of regular and robust monitoring tools:** As demonstrated by the JRP, these are important to make it easy to track and analyse participant numbers across different participant groups (including columns for numbers separate to textual information) along with information that makes it easy to track the profile and characteristics of those taking part. This may require upfront agreement with employers on the types of information they are expected to provide and when, as part of the condition of taking part, as well as an expectation that they would be contacted as part of any accompanying evaluation.

# 1. Background and Context

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## 1.1 About the Danish Job Rotation model

Emerging in the 1980s, the Danish Job Rotation (JR) model was introduced as part of a strategic move towards 'Welfare for work' which the Danish government had developed to support adults returning to the workplace. The model centres on subsidised employment and targeted initiatives to assist disadvantaged groups such as low-skilled and low-income individuals. The model involves temporarily removing from the workplace and providing training for low skilled workers, whilst simultaneously providing in-work experience and vocational training for unemployed people who act as de facto substitutes.

Unemployment benefits are topped up as individuals are placed for work for the agreed rate for the job. Wraparound benefits are typically included, such as pre-employment and in-work mentoring by work coaches or provider caseworkers, along with access to vocational courses such as apprenticeships. A collaborative effort to delivering the model typically encompasses a range of stakeholders such as local government actors, employers, employment and skills services, as well as workers and unemployed individuals.

The JR model caught on more widely from the 1990s and a transnational network set up to trial and support its implementation across Europe, including the UK. JR schemes operated through the network were funded centrally by the community initiative Adapt, and European Structural Funds.<sup>3</sup>

Recent research<sup>4</sup> has found the JR model to be beneficial at meeting three separate but inter-related needs of local economies: i) tackling unemployment; ii) addressing skills shortages; and iii) encouraging business development through staff training and the promotion of lifelong learning. Meanwhile, employers reap the benefits of enhanced training for existing employees without losing production/service delivery, improving their retention, reducing turnover, and saving costs to their business. As a result, the model is deemed effective for sectors or businesses that struggle to recruit, and is viewed as a potential solution to the UK's long-lamented under-skilled labour market.

A key identified challenge for the UK when implementing the JR model has been engaging employers, in part due to the scheme's perceived complexity. Past research into employer engagement in active labour market programmes found UK employers were discouraged from engaging due to the large number of programmes and providers, and a lack of knowledge and clarity about the value of such programmes and how to access them. Conversely, Danish employers where the model originated were found to have greater

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<sup>3</sup> Schömann, K, Mytze, R, & Gülker, S (1998) Institutional and Financial Framework for Job Rotation in Nine European Countries.

<sup>4</sup> Etherington, D (2022) Lessons from the Danish Employment and Skills Model – Job Retention and Rotation Scheme

institutional trust in government policy and programmes, and were more knowledgeable about them and positively disposed towards them.<sup>5</sup>

Further evidence relating to the JR model's past implementation and evidence of outcome, including within the UK, can be found in Appendix 1.

## 1.2 Alignment with UK national and regional priorities

Baroness Ruby McGregor-Smith's 2021 review *Supporting progression out of low pay: a call to action*<sup>6</sup> examined the range of barriers faced by those in low pay looking to progress. It set out key actions that governments at every level should consider taking, to help address the short-term instability of insecure, low-hours or seasonal contracts, and the longer-term concern of sectoral decline. The review noted that close to half (45%) of all low-paid jobs in Great Britain were in wholesale and retail trades, hospitality, residential and social care, as well as business support services. The review also pointed out that 30% of all low-paid employee jobs were held by young people, while 27% were held by older people.

In response to this review, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) made it a priority to boost work incentives of low-income households; put in place a new offer to support Universal Credit (UC) claimants in-work who want to progress; give people greater opportunities to develop new skills or enhance and utilise existing skills; and provide targeted help for those facing greater barriers to working more hours and moving to higher skilled, higher paying jobs.

The November 2024 *Get Britain Working* White Paper<sup>7</sup> sets out a fundamentally different approach to the employment support system – backed by £240 million of investment – to target and tackle the root causes of unemployment and inactivity, and better join up health, skills and employment support based on the needs of local communities. This is especially important given another challenge facing the UK, as examined by The Economics Observatory<sup>8</sup> in January 2024, that labour force participation has not fully recovered since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Drawing on these issues and actions, West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is currently delivering on its 2024-2027 strategy<sup>9</sup> of which Pillar 3 focuses on:

- Improving labour market participation and helping more people into good work (with wraparound support)
- Ensuring pathways into sectors with good jobs
- Supporting in work progression
- Helping people change career or progress out of low pay

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<sup>5</sup> Employment Related Services Association [online] Job Rotation: an idea whose time has come?

<sup>6</sup> DWP (2021) *Supporting progression out of low pay; a call to action*

<sup>7</sup> DWP, HM Treasury, DfE (2024) *Get Britain Working* White Paper

<sup>8</sup> Economics Observatory (January 2024) *Has job furlough reduced UK labour force participation after Covid-19?*

<sup>9</sup> WMCA *Employment and Skills Strategy 2024-2027*

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- Establishing a coherent employment support offer for all residents with effective triage

WMCA identified the JR model as one way of being able meet these goals and identified Coventry area as potentially standing to benefit most strongly in the West Midlands (WM) region. According to ONS statistics<sup>10</sup> for the year ending December 2023, Coventry's employment rate of 71.9% was lower than the previous year and lower than the WM average. Unemployment in Coventry stood at 5.9% (11,500 people unemployed) and the claimant count was 5.6% - both higher than the WM average (Table 1).

**Table 1: Summary of employment statistics (Coventry and West Midlands)**

	Coventry	West Midlands
Employment rate	71.9%	75.2%
Unemployment rate	5.9%	4.4%
Claimant count	5.6%	3.7%

Source: ONS

## 1.3 Purpose and operational delivery of the Job Rotation Pilot in Coventry area

### 1.3.1 Purpose

The Job Rotation Pilot (JRP) in Coventry area was a proof-of-concept initiative that set out to take 80 unemployed residents (UC claimants aged 19+ and seeking work in Coventry) and place them into a work opportunity for up to 12 weeks. At the same time, 80 existing employees would be upskilled/retrained.

Main intended outcomes of the pilot:

- 80 local residents claiming UC gain valuable skills and work experience
- Key focus on young people, as well as residents aged over 50
- 75% secure long-term work as a consequence
- 80 existing employees upskill, retrain and progress
- Reduced reliance on UC benefits for those taking part
- Employers realise performance benefits
- Employers are more aware of local skills and in-work support offers

Additionally, the pilot aimed to help address a number of prevailing challenges, namely that:

<sup>10</sup> ONS [online] Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity in Coventry

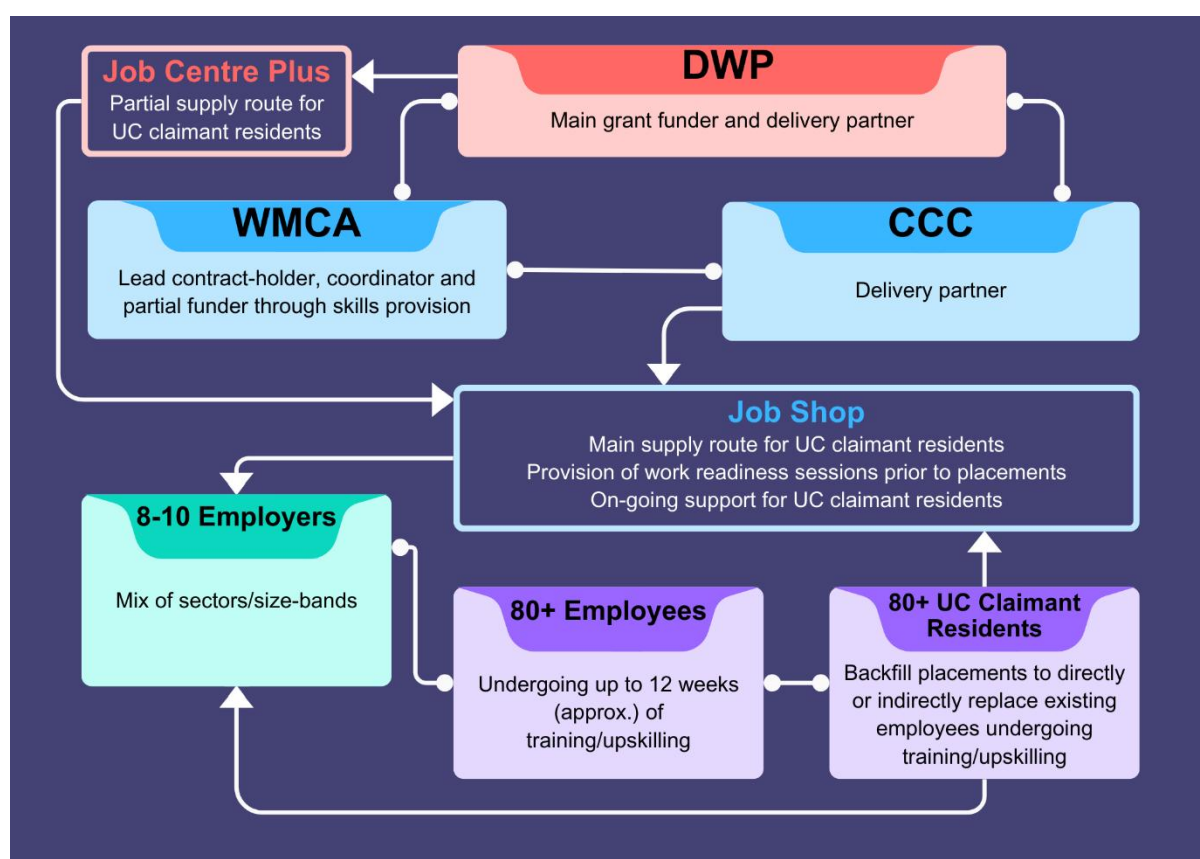


- Most Jobcentre Plus (JCP) support is tailored to help people get into work, yet many employers in low pay sectors also struggle to encourage progression
- Employers can sometimes underestimate the value of in-work progression
- Only one in six low pay workers ever truly “escape” low pay roles<sup>11</sup>
- Job seekers often lack experience – an essential variable to getting into work

### 1.3.2 Operational delivery

A schematic of the JR model in Coventry area is shown in Figure 1 and explained in further detail below.

**Figure 1: Schematic of the JRP in Coventry area**



DWP was the main funder and also a delivery partner for the JRP in Coventry area, with WMCA acting as lead contract holder, coordinator and partial funder through existing regional skills provision. Coventry City Council was the third main delivery partner with key responsibility for local coordination, employer engagement, operational delivery and activity monitoring.

<sup>11</sup> DWP (2021) Supporting progression out of low pay; a call to action



Coventry City Council formed a network of local employers in which it had confidence to offer a positive working environment and good work opportunities. The local authority-managed Job Shop served as the main supply route for Universal Credit (UC) claimant residents (hereinafter referred to as backfill candidates) recruited to the pilot on a voluntary basis.

To be eligible, backfill candidates needed to be claiming UC, and either unemployed, or employed part-time where that did not move them out of the All Work Related Requirements (AWRR) Intensive Work Search Regime.<sup>12</sup>

The Job Shop provided work readiness sessions for backfill candidates before selection and placement with participating employers. The work readiness sessions were organised into cohorts and typically involved backfill candidates attending between one and three sessions over consecutive weeks. The sessions broadly covered:

- Introduction to the JRP and how it works (including a history of the JR model)
- Overview of employers involved and job roles available
- CV writing skills
- Interviewing skills and techniques (including mock interview practise)
- A final 'meet the employer' event ahead of possible placement.

As noted above, each work placement (and corresponding upskilling of an existing employee) was scheduled for a period of up to 12 weeks. Not all individuals taking part in the Job Shop work readiness sessions were ultimately selected for placement, while Coventry City Council allowed employers to select backfill candidates from other routes where necessary, for example via JCP or their own recruitment channels. This was more common in sectors that proved hard to recruit into from the Job Shop candidate pool, such as care.

Backfill candidates placed with the pilot's large employer took part in weekly in-person half-day employability sessions where they were all brought together in a single location. The sessions encompassed a range of different themes, including:

- Confidence building
- Digital skills
- Meeting recruiters and discussing career pathways within the company
- Networking with existing employees at the organisation
- Personal branding and values
- Public speaking and communication
- Work culture and values

Originally it was envisaged that the work placement duration might be longer than 12 weeks, although this was ultimately set with consideration to overall delivery timescales. There were some occasions where an employer had to shorten the work placement duration due to

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<sup>12</sup> The AWRR stops when the claimant earns >£892 per month. At National Minimum Wage (NMW) this is 18 hours per week, or for joint claimants >£1,437 per month (29 hours per week at NMW).

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placement start dates commencing within 12 weeks of the pilot's end date. One employer started their upskilling employee on a Leadership and Management apprenticeship with a duration of 18 months, although no suitable candidates were found to backfill for that employee.

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## 2. Evaluation Aims, Objectives and Methodology

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### 2.1 Evaluation aims and objectives

In September 2024, WMCA commissioned Pye Tait Consulting to conduct an independent process and impact evaluation of the JRP in the Coventry area, up to its conclusion at the end of March 2025.

The evaluation sought to understand whether the pilot was effective in supporting employers to upskill their workforce and/or to provide backfill candidates (UC claimants) with valuable work experience to improve their employment outcomes.

#### **Key evaluation questions:**

- To what extent does the job rotation model support employers to upskill existing low paid staff? Is the model more effective for business of different sizes or in different sectors?
- To what extent does the job rotation model support progression of low wage workers, either in their existing company or elsewhere?
- To what extent does the job rotation model improve employment outcomes for unemployed participants? How does the return in investment compare with other programmes of employment support?
- What impact does engagement with the job rotation programme have on the participating employer – on business performance and on their wider workforce? Are they more likely to invest in training or to take on unemployed adults in the future?

### 2.2 Methodology

The evaluation involved the following main activities.

#### **Evaluation design (October 2024)**

- Development evaluation logic model and theory of change

- 
- Development of interview topic guides/survey questions

#### **Desk-based research (November 2024)**

- Rapid desk review relating to the JR model's past implementation and identified benefits
- Outcome comparisons with other, similar schemes (as far as reasonably possible)

#### **Primary research (November 2024-January 2025)**

- In-depth interviews/discussions with strategic partner representatives (DWP, WMCA and Coventry City Council)
- In-depth interviews with participating employers (five achieved) – see Note 1
- Survey of existing employees undertaking upskilling (18 responses)
- Survey of backfill candidates via two survey touchpoints – each approximately one month apart to measure changes in perceptions over time (touchpoint 1 = 47 responses; touchpoint 2 = 19 responses) – see Note 2
- In-depth interview with one training provider involved in the upskilling – See Note 3

**Note 1:** For employer interviews to be meaningful, it was important that their backfill candidates and existing employee upskilling arrangements were already in place by that point, and that the employer had consented to taking part in the evaluation. This was the case for some, but not all employers, during the evaluation's fieldwork window.

**Note 2:** Given that some backfill candidates were placed with an employer later in the evaluation's fieldwork window than originally anticipated, it was not feasible to survey these individuals twice. This explains the lower number of survey completions for touchpoint 2.

**Note 3:** Each employer had a link with one training provider for the JRP. Six training providers were involved in total, with Coventry City Council's affiliated Adult Education provider working with four of the ten employers. Not all providers had begun offering training during the evaluation fieldwork window.

#### **Contacts and surveying approach**

Coventry City Council provided Pye Tait Consulting with contact details for consenting employers and backfill candidates. Existing employees were reached with assistance from their employer.

The surveys of existing employees and backfill candidates were phone-led, with a supporting online self-completion option for a small minority (three respondents) preferring to respond this way.

Of the 47 backfill candidates taking part at touchpoint 1, 29 were already in a work placement, while the remainder had only taken part in Job Shop work readiness sessions. Of

those in their placement, more than three quarters (79%) had been there for between four and eight weeks, and the remainder for eight weeks or longer.

For practical reasons and to maximise engagement given the comparatively large share of individuals placed with the single large employer, the evaluators visited its offices on two occasions to undertake the touchpoint 1 and touchpoint 2 backfill candidate surveys. This involved in-person one-to-one survey completions on days that all individuals would be at the same location.

During the research, Pye Tait Consulting also participated in monthly partner meetings and JRP board meetings to provide updates on progress and findings to date from the evaluation.

See Appendix 2 for further details on the evaluation's target audiences and response rates.

See Appendix 3 for participant profiling data (supplied by Coventry City Council).

See Appendix 4 for comparisons of outcomes between the JRP and other employability-related programmes.

## 2.3 Notes of caution

Analysis of certain survey questions in this report (existing employees and backfill candidates) includes comparisons between the overall survey sample and SMEs. All analysis should be treated with caution due to the low base numbers involved, particularly the SME cohort which is as follows:

- **Existing employees based within SMEs:** Seven surveyed out of 12 in position during the evaluation fieldwork window (58% response rate)
- **Backfill candidates based within SMEs:** Eight surveyed out of 12 in position during the evaluation fieldwork window (67% response rate).

Ordinarily, cross-tabulations would not be reported with such low base numbers, but have been included here given the importance of drawing out the perspective of individuals working within SMEs as part of the JRP.

Certain survey questions asked existing employees and backfill candidates to rate their perceptions by reflecting back to before they took part in the JRP, and comparing that to the present moment, i.e. when the survey was undertaken. Such techniques can create a tendency for optimism bias when thinking about the present relative to the past. Additional questions were therefore asked to probe for the reasons why opinions had changed. Note that it was not possible to survey individuals prior to them taking part in the JRP (the evaluation was commissioned once the JRP was already up and running) therefore a logically constructed approach was necessary to help determine the difference the pilot had made.

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## 3. Programme Inputs and Outputs

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This chapter summarises the resource contributions to setting up the JRP by key partners; target and actual participant numbers across the key beneficiary groups (employers, existing employees and backfill candidates); the profile and characteristics of participants based on currently available data; and an indication of the return on investment.

### Chapter 3 – key takeaways:

- DWP was the main funder of the JRP via a grant of £740,000 for 80 existing employees and 80 backfill candidates, which funnelled down to a wage subsidy of £3,600 to each employer per backfill candidate offered a placement.
- Based on this, the total cost per participant equated to £4,625.
- As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, the target of 10 participating employers had been partially met, including one large employer and six SMEs, spanning a range of sectors and offering a range of job roles.
- As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, the targets of 80 existing employees and 80 backfill candidates had been almost fully met, with activity still on-going to recruit and mobilise 'rotations' with employers that had signed up in order to achieve targets.
- Backfill candidates were primarily young people aged under 25 and existing employees were primarily older age groups, while the JRP as a whole successfully engaged traditionally underrepresented ethnic groups.
- Most upskilling provision took the form of accredited training – predominantly, but not exclusively in leadership and management.
- Modelling undertaken by WMCA suggests a saving of £14,790 to the public purse per person moving into employment, estimated to result in savings of between £1.2m to £1.3m as a result of the intervention.<sup>13</sup>

### 3.1 Resourcing (inputs)

The JRP equated to £1.06 million in total funding, drawn from several sources. The largest portion comprised a £740,000 grant from DWP to encourage in-work progression and employment, and to reduce UC claims by enabling progression for those in work. DWP also funded the evaluation to help inform its own in-work progression models.

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<sup>13</sup> Calculations were undertaken using the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) Cost Benefit Analysis Model. Available at: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/research/research-cost-benefit-analysis/>

DWP's grant of £740,000 was to enable 160 individuals (80 existing employees and 80 backfill candidates) to take part. This equates to a cost of £4,625 per participant.

The remainder of funding was made available by the WMCA Adult Skills Fund (formerly Adult Education Budget) by making existing training provision available for JRP participants. Overall, this represents a portion of the £133.7m total funding from the Adult Skills Fund for WMCA, aimed at delivering adult education in the region.

Coventry City Council made a contribution to the JRP through its services as a delivery partner.

Each participating employer received a wage subsidy of £3,600 for each backfill candidate over the placement period.

### 3.2 Participant numbers (outputs)

JRP target and actual participant numbers for employers, existing employees and backfill candidates are shown in Table 2.

The intention was for all 'rotations' (existing employees and backfill candidates) to commence sometime between September 2024 and December 2024 to allow these to conclude within 12 weeks and by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 (the end of the DWP contract period). This proved challenging for reasons which are explained more fully in section 4.3. Instead, following extensive planning and coordination, upskilling and work placements began being allocated in late October 2024, with the latest (at the time of writing) allocated in February 2025.<sup>14</sup>

**Table 2: JRP proposed and actual participants (correct as of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025)**

Participant group	Initial proposed	Actuals into position			% into positions
		All	Of which, large employers	Of which, SMEs	
Employers taking part	10	7	(1)	(6)	70%
Existing employees – upskilling taking place	80	72	(51)	(21)	90%
Backfill candidates – placed	80	64	(51)	(13)	80%

Source: WMCA and Coventry City Council

As of 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, targets had been mostly met for each audience. Three SMEs were initially engaged although did not ultimately proceed, in two cases due to the employers not

<sup>14</sup> The contractual and funding implications of work placements and upskilling extending beyond March 2025 are a matter between DWP, WMCA and Coventry City Council.

finding the CVs of backfill candidates suitable and in the third case not responding to Coventry City Council's requests.

In total, 49 backfill candidates took part in one of four cohorts of work readiness sessions organised by Coventry City Council at the Job Shop. Of these, eight (at the time of writing) had been selected for work placements. All remaining work placements were drawn from other routes to source candidates. The large participating employer organised its own work readiness sessions via the Job Shop and JCP in order to have a broader pool of individuals to select from (see also section 4.3.4 – challenges for employers).

These numbers do not mean that the remaining 42 Job Shop candidates who were not granted a work placement did not benefit from the pilot, as the findings in chapter 7 set out, including section 7.2 on the experience and usefulness of the work readiness sessions. Furthermore, with respect to any Job Shop candidates not placed, it is understood that Coventry City Council continues to work with them as part of its existing mainstream offer (outside the scope of this evaluation). This means ensuring they have the support via the offer of workshops and employer links to find them good quality work.

### 3.3 Participant profile (equity)

The pilot engaged employers across a range of industry sectors, including animal welfare (charity), health and social care, public administration, retail/warehousing, security, textiles, and utilities. As noted in the above table, one large employer and nine SMEs took part, with the large employer accounting for approximately three quarters of total individual participants.

Coventry City Council's monitoring data provides an insight into the pilot's breadth of reach in terms of the characteristics of individual participants and the variety of courses they took part in during the pilot (existing employees and backfill candidates). A summary is provided below and more granular information is provided in Appendix 3. Note that the data are incomplete at the time of writing and so should be **treated with caution**.<sup>15</sup>

- **Age:** Most backfill candidates (58%) were young people aged under 25 whom, for the most part, were in rotation with existing employees in a comparatively older age bracket (i.e. 75% of existing employees being upskilled are aged 25-50).

*NB: One participating SME drew attention to the age differential being potentially advantageous, noting that a backfill candidate aged under 21 came into the business with experience from a similar work environment (thus bringing fresh eyes) while the existing employee they were rotating with had the benefit of "life experience".*

- **Gender:** Almost two thirds (63%) of backfill candidates and a similar proportion of existing employees (58%) were females.

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<sup>15</sup> Base numbers for monitoring data on participant characteristics: Existing employees (n=12); backfill candidates (n=40)



*NB: For comparison purposes, the UK population is 51% female and 49% male (Census 2021)*

- **Ethnicity:** The pilot appears to have created more opportunities for traditionally underrepresented groups, with two thirds (66%) of backfill candidates and 83% of existing employees being non-White British.

*NB: For comparison purposes, 45% of Coventry's population and 28% of the West Midlands population are non-White British (Census 2021)*

- **Highest qualification level:** Backfill candidates had a broad range of maximum educational attainment levels prior to take part, with more than a third (35%) qualified at Level 2 (GCSE/equivalent) or below, through to more than half (52%) qualified to Level 4 (Foundation degree/equivalent) and above.

*NB: For comparison purposes, 42% of Coventry's population is qualified at Level 2 or below, and 31% is qualified at Level 4 or above (Census 2021), thus the JRP appears to have attracted a disproportionately higher proportion of candidates with above average qualifications (this may or may not be rebalanced when data from all employers are accounted for).*

- **Employability training:** All backfill candidates (93%) were offered some form of employability training as part of the pilot, with a small minority offered other types of technical training as appropriate to the work placement.
- **Types of upskilling:** For two thirds of existing employees (66%) upskilling spanned either leadership and management (33%) or NVQ Level 3 Adult Care (33%) with the remainder involved in either management shadowing (17%) or breakaway classroom training (17%), latterly at Level 1
- **Accredited/non-accredited upskilling:** Leadership and management training, as well as NVQ Level 3 Adult Care, formed accredited training, whereas the management shadowing and breakaway classroom training was non-accredited.

One employer observed how the JRP had been instrumental in helping to bring an older person back into employment as a backfill candidate:

*"When I first met [Name], she was very nervous and wasn't sure whether she could do it. She is a different person now – so confident and knows what she's talking about. Before that, she was resisting work and the scheme has allowed her to build confidence and self-belief."*

Employer



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### 3.4 Indications of return on investment

In principle, the JRP represents value for money by creating a single co-ordinated holistic pathway from multiple existing and separate offers undertaken by different organisations, including Coventry City Council, JCP staff and training providers. The model delivers outputs and outcomes for local residents stepping into work, existing employees being upskilled, and employers respectively. Value for money can also be found where employers hitherto lacked knowledge about local and regional skills offers available, potentially saving them time and valuable resource to research this, and encouraging them to take advantage of these offers in the future.

A detailed cost benefit analysis did not form part of this evaluation's remit. However, modelling undertaken by WMCA<sup>16</sup> suggests a saving of £14,790 to the public purse per person moving into employment. Using this as a forecast model, WMCA has estimated that this would result in savings of between £1.2m to £1.3m to the public purse as a result of the intervention. It is also worth noting from McKinsey and Company that effective reskilling tends to bring a business productivity uplift of 6 to 12 percent and makes financial sense for more than 75% of businesses.<sup>17</sup>

A more rigorous assessment of return on investment for this pilot is complicated by the fact that UC is a means-tested benefit based on the claimant's individual circumstances, including income. Amounts of UC claimed and taxes paid can vary from individual to individual based on many factors such as in-work promotion and other changes to income and savings. It should also be noted that data were not available for this evaluation regarding the amounts of UC claimed by backfill candidates both prior to and during their work placement to be able to determine to what extent, if at all, UC claims reduced. This makes it important for this evaluation to focus on a broader set of outcomes for employers, existing employees and backfill candidates as evidence of value for money.

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## 4. Delivery Effectiveness

This chapter explores how the Danish JR model was adapted at a local level in Coventry area to best suit the needs of participating employers, along with the importance of large and small employers taking part, and how employers used the funding. It then discusses the effectiveness of partnership working arrangements, challenges and lessons learned, and factors important when thinking about sustainable delivery of the model in the future.

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<sup>16</sup> Calculations were undertaken using the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) Cost Benefit Analysis Model. Available at: <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/research/research-cost-benefit-analysis/>

<sup>17</sup> McKinsey and Company (2020) *The economic case for reskilling in the UK: How employers can thrive by boosting workers' skills*

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**Chapter 4 – key takeaways:**

- For most participating employers, backfill candidates directly substituted for existing employees being upskilled, but a non-direct substitution model was flexibly agreed with one employer, which better suited the needs of this business.
- As a strategically important employer in the area, the single large business taking part provided an important test bed for the model, although key partners agreed that SMEs were vital to the proof of concept spanning different settings and sectors, especially as SMEs might ordinarily be less able to develop, progress and back-fill positions so easily, and be less engaged with local and regional skills interventions.
- On the whole, key partners described a good collaborative approach; furthermore, local resources were mobilised effectively for the pilot and assisted by regular meetings, progress updates and effective communication.
- Key challenges included: protracted delays to programme set-up in 2024; determining how the Job Shop and JCP could best complement one another in sourcing different participant groups; difficulties matching backfill candidates to the roles and sectors they were best suited to; and – for one employer in particular – a concern that the 12-week placement would not be long enough for some candidates to be considered truly work ready.

## 4.1 Adoption of the JR model

### 4.1.1 Overview

Employers taking part in the JRP had the flexibility to select employees for upskilling and choose backfill candidates to best suit their business needs. They found that direct interaction with backfill candidates through the Job Shop or JCP was important to help them find individuals well suited to the roles being considered. One employer described the Job Shop as “like having your own recruitment agency but without the cost.”

For most employers, backfill candidates directly substituted for existing employees being upskilled, in line with the original Danish JR model. In the case of one employer, backfill candidates were recruited into positions where most vacancies tended to arise in the company, while existing employees were upskilled from other (unconnected) roles. These two approaches are unpacked in more detail below.

### 4.1.2 ‘Direct substitution’ approach

Employers adopting this approach selected existing employees for upskilling who demonstrated one or more of: strong attitude and enthusiasm at work, potential to succeed, increased skills needed (but for which training was considered expensive) and/or those seen

as “deserving” of the opportunity. One employer mentioned drawing on recent appraisals to identify employees to take part. Another said they were looking to promote someone to “free up” the owner/manager to spend more time developing the business in different ways.

Backfill candidates, as direct substitutes for roles being upskilled, were selected based on employers’ perceptions of their capability and interest in the area of work. Most employers intended for their existing employees to be promoted and for backfill candidates to have a permanent position at the company. However, some employers felt it was too early to tell at the time of interview which and how many backfill candidates would be kept on. One employer described the work readiness of backfill candidates as “good” but noted that some were looking for part-time work which could present a challenge as the employer was looking to fill full-time positions.

#### **4.1.3 ‘Non-direct substitution’ approach**

For one employer, backfill candidates were recruited into entry level roles for 12 weeks where the business saw regular “churn” and where most vacancies tended to arise. Existing employees then underwent line management training and the funding enabled them to directly line manage the backfill candidates and spend time on supporting those individuals. This employer welcomed the flexibility to adapt the original JR model in this way, whilst still in keeping with its spirit, and to best suit the needs of the business.

At the time of writing, this employer is less confident about taking backfill candidates on permanently, mainly due to some of these individuals being perceived as “further away” from the job market. Whilst providing long-term employment opportunities was not the main objective for this employer when providing the work experience opportunities, the employer was keen and supportive of these individuals developing skills and behaviours that would stand them in good stead for future work opportunities.

#### **4.1.4 Involvement of a single large employer relative to nine SMEs**

The large employer’s participation in the pilot was considered important by key partners due to its strategic importance to the area and ability to mobilise at scale. At the same time, it was noted that SMEs would still be vital to the model given that they form the “bread and butter” of the region; collectively offer a good sectoral spread to help with the pilot’s ‘proof of concept’; are comparatively less likely to have a strong coordinated approach to training and upskilling; and are comparatively less likely to have awareness and prior engagement with local and regional skills offers. This view was backed up by an SME taking part in the pilot, who mentioned that the subsidy “can be more valuable for an SME as it offsets the costs of recruitment and training.”

#### **4.1.5 Use of funding by employers**

Participating employers used the JRP funding in different ways based on their own needs. One employer put all of it towards the upskilling of existing employees and another expects to do so when they get more fully up and running on the pilot. A third allocated funding to

training of backfill placements and covering – in part - their salaries during the placement. Other uses of funding included organising line management and associated on-going support for backfill candidates.

## 4.2 Partnership working

Key partners broadly agreed that local infrastructure to deliver the pilot had been deployed successfully, involving orchestrating key players effectively and ensuring no organisations were over-burdened.

Existing networks are understood to have been leveraged well, with meetings between partners described all round as useful and constructive. Furthermore, the strong collaborative approach helped to create opportunities for employers to network with skills system actors and understand more about the local skills offer through initial briefing/employer engagement sessions, and more. These represent key ingredients that could be replicated for future, similar projects.

Key partners each described communications as having been generally clear, helpful and transparent, which helped forge a shared vision for what success should look like; thinking continuously about how to work well and better together; and sharing progress updates and learnings.

Two employers mentioned being especially pleased with the smooth process of moving backfill candidates into positions within their companies, and in moving existing employees onto upskilling courses. Several employers praised Coventry City Council for being helpful, making clear what was expected of them, answering questions promptly, and keeping them up to date on anything pertinent to the pilot.

*“Communication is always key and that has been really good”.*

Employer

One employer praised the “pace” of communications and flexibility afforded to them to respond to Coventry City Council’s information requests when they could, due to how busy they were. Another praised Coventry City Council’s flexibility in allowing the employer to organise its own tailored work readiness sessions via the Job Shop and JCP in order to have a greater choice of candidates when recruiting to fill the placements.

## 4.3 Challenges and lessons learned

### 4.3.1 Delivery timescales

JRP delivery was subject to delays due to several factors, notably:

- The General Election (announced on 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024, and set for 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024), resulting in 9.5 weeks pre-election period preventing external work on the JRP
- West Midlands mayoral elections (held on 2nd May 2024)

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- Time required for WMCA/Coventry City Council governance processes
  - Time required for Coventry City Council to obtain job specifications for backfilling and vacant progression roles

The funding agreement was considered by one partner as “quite rigid” up to the end of March 2025 given the time needed to get the pilot in motion, which resulting in “a relatively compressed timescale” for the placements and upskilling.

#### **4.3.2 Joined up working**

One key partner emphasised the importance of always having a shared understanding between partners from the outset of the problem to be solved and vision for success, and whilst it took some time to build that for the JRP, this provided learning opportunities along the way. Another noted that better sharing of customer data between partners could have helped to better plan (collectively) which employers and local residents would be best to approach and how to advertise vacancies to source suitable candidates.

#### **4.3.3 Dynamics of the Job Shop and JCP**

It is understood that the Job Shop and JCP were both initially operating in the same space as part of the JRP, i.e. engaging employers. In hindsight, it was felt that JCP may have been better placed to identify the backfill candidates. This led to a further identified challenge in that Coventry City Council’s Job Shop (running for some 10 years) was considered to have a different type of relationship with local residents than JCP, with the Job Shop deemed to take a more “discerning” approach to matching individuals to employment opportunities whilst JCP was deemed as historically more “transactional” or “claims oriented”.

Partners noted that a more holistic approach to helping people into good employment was important to the spirit of the pilot to ensure that individuals were put forward for job entry points that would suit them, as well as to align with the needs of employers signing up to the pilot. This is understood by partners to have worked well for the most part, though one noted (backed up by feedback from employers and backfill candidates later in this report) that the matching process was not always easy.

#### **4.3.4 Challenges for employers**

One employer would have liked more clarity from the outset on what success should look like from the pilot, notably whether it was more about upskilling or more about working towards sustained employment creation. This employer felt that creating long-term employment positions would require greater selectivity and screening on their part than was originally allowed for, although it is understood that this was matter was worked through so the employer could have a greater hand in the screening process.

Linked to this point, there was some concern from employers that the Job Shop work readiness candidate pool was not large enough to allow the right candidates to be matched appropriately to available work placements in the available time. A key challenge (noted by

one partner) was that SMEs proved more difficult to engage and bring onboard to begin with, ultimately limiting the range of sectors and roles available. It is felt that greater sharing between partners of contacts/relationships with employers might have helped with SME engagement.

The pilot also required significant company resource inputs for one employer, mainly line managing backfill positions who turned out to need more additional guidance and support than would be the case with those recruited in the usual way. Linked to this, the placement period of up to 12 weeks was considered shorter than the employer would have liked to enable backfill candidates to be truly “work ready”.

#### 4.3.5 Delivery of upskilling

According to feedback from one training provider, some employers made bespoke requests and had expectations for training that would not have been feasible within the target 12-week period.

It is also understood that one employer was unable to commit to freeing up their staff to take part in the training, meaning it needed to be undertaken on top of existing work. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this affected the motivation of some existing employees to take part.

*“Employers are asking if it is running again – there is appetite for it. [One employer] wishes they could have started earlier. It would then have been less rushed.”*

Training provider

#### 4.4 Sustainability of the model

All interviewed employers considered the funding to be essential to the model’s sustainability. In the absence of the subsidy, some employers would have found it difficult to continue with the pilot, particularly given: i) the challenges recruiting the right people with a long-term employment outcome in mind; and ii) greater levels of resource needed to support candidates compared with recruits sourced through usual channels.

One employer said that the use of online recruitment firms (e.g. Indeed) have traditionally proven slicker and easier for sourcing candidates. However, they believe that if the recruitment aspect of the JRP were to become smoother and achieve a better skills and job role fit, this would strengthen its potential. Another employer suggested that more targeted marketing (e.g. via social media channels) would help to cast the recruitment net wider and help them to engage with the most suitable candidates.

Several employers noted that – without the subsidy – delivery of the model would be possible but would take longer due to not being able to upskill multiple people at once.

*“The model is good. The scheme has been great, and we would love to continue if there were more placements available.”*

Employer



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## 5. Employer Outcomes

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This chapter sets out the value of the JRP for employers. Key measures include: productivity; retention; the progression and promotion potential of existing employees undergoing upskilling; if/to what extent the JRP model has helped to bring down typical training and recruitment costs; and if/how taking part in the JRP has increased employers' appetite to take part in other local skills initiatives. Finally, the chapter summarises notable spillover benefits and additionality leveraged by the JRP.

### Chapter 5 – key takeaways:

- Employers participating in the JRP believe that the model has helped to increase business productivity, improve retention and strengthen the progression and promotion potential of existing employees.
- While most employers believe that the JRP has helped to reduce training costs, views are somewhat divided on whether it has helped them to save on recruitment costs, for example due to more time needed than expected to source the right candidates; and greater resource investment than would normally be case to provide basic skills and behavioural training for some the backfill candidates.
- Employers said that they have become more aware of other local skills initiatives, notably finding the JRP “eye-opening” to what is available; furthermore, two employers have gone on to take part in other initiatives.
- There is evidence of the JRP having stimulated spillover benefits, for example by having a motivating influence on members of the workforce **not** directly involved in the pilot to think about their own development, and encouraging employers to think about which other roles they might want to upskill in the future.

### 5.1 Increased productivity

Most participating employers were of the view that the activities enabled by the JRP will lead to increased productivity, although they found this hard to quantify.

*“It’s hard to measure but I think productivity will definitely improve – adding headcount means you can increase output. Getting them placed in a production area, we’ll have higher output as a result.”*

Employer

*“The more you upskill, the more you can move into more complex work, which is a good thing for us and the business.”*

Employer

Another employer described how the pilot has boosted productivity by freeing up time and space for other employees within the company to focus more on value-adding activities.

*“I couldn’t focus on business expansion before this. I can now get more involved in tenders. In a small business we often end up doing a range of jobs – having the extra head count has allowed people to focus more on specific tasks.”*

Employer

However, one employer mentioned that delivery had been more of a “give” by them in terms of time and resource investment to enable and support upskilling and backfill candidate placements, therefore they expect any signs of increased productivity to become more visible in the longer term.

## 5.2 Improved retention

Employers strongly believe that the JR model can help to improve retention. One employer described improved retention as a hugely rewarding outcome both for them and the individual, especially as existing employees invest so much personal equity. Another mentioned that their employees have been “empowered to go on a course and learn new skills” which “definitely helps to retain staff.” A third mentioned that it was “nice for staff to see [that the employer] is promoting internally” and that it “gives everyone a buzz.”

*“[The upskilling] shows that the employees have been invested in – they then feel more confident to go on and pursue a better role.”*

Employer

*“We’re undoubtedly seeing better engagement and retention – we saw that in Kickstart a few years ago and we’re seeing it in this too. It’s especially the case among young people in care – it’s transformational for them.”*

Employer

## 5.3 Progression and promotion of staff

There is general agreement among participating employers that the JRP has strengthened the progression and promotion potential of existing employees. Two said that one or more of their staff undergoing upskilling had already moved into a more senior position. Another two intend to promote their upskilled employees.

*“The people taking part in the upskilling are going to move on to new roles – we know that already and we’re helping support that transition.”*

Employer

One employer whose staff have been undergoing line management training said that their team’s skills in dealing with more challenging staffing situations would stand them in good stead for future roles. For this employer, the original aim was not to promote their employees



but provide tangible experience to evidence their capabilities when applying for more senior roles for which line management is often a requirement.

*“For existing employees, the classroom training and online training is the same as they would get without the pilot. But as part of the pilot, they actually line manage someone for that 12 weeks which they would never have done. So that involved helping those individuals with attendance, pastoral support, confidence etc. So that’s real on-the-job line management experience for 70% of their time. That’s the additionality. It’s then giving them experience when they apply for other positions... so the development they are getting is going to support their future progress and lead to more growth in the company and more opportunities.”*

Employer

One employer felt it was “too early to talk about concrete outcomes” but expects the JRP to strengthen promotion and retention potential, especially given their intention to promote employees upon completion of the training.

*“I would hope that the training will give [existing employees] a boost of confidence and encourage them to remain here.”*

Employer

*“I’d suggest even if [the pilot] doesn’t lead to a long-term job, it’s still really good – it helps people gain good experience, make connections and obtain insight into how businesses operate.”*

Employer

## 5.4 Impact on training and recruitment costs

Most interviewed employers believe that the JRP has helped to reduce training costs, although views are somewhat mixed on whether it has helped them to save on recruitment costs.

*“The recruitment process through the pilot has been the same as would normally be the case without it.”*

Employer

*“The pilot has allowed us to employ people with less experience and lower skill levels than we would normally take on, and we have the additional funding available [through the pilot] to train them.”*

Employer

Several employers found that the selection process required time and resources that didn’t ultimately prove worthwhile. For one SME, whilst the subsidy “massively reduced training costs”, time was spent interviewing candidates through the Job Shop who were not ultimately suitable.

Another employer said that recruitment and onboarding costs for the pilot were more than they would normally spend. This was largely due to the perception of backfill candidates being “further away” in terms of basic skills needed, ranging from attitudinal aspects (e.g. punctuality) to basic digital literacy (e.g. being able to create a meeting entry in Microsoft Outlook). This resulted in a greater amount of time spent by candidates shadowing experienced members of staff.

*“We have contributed additional significant resources like onboarding, putting on pension programmes, tech licences, kit, devices, time for line managers, line management (some backfill people haven’t been in work before), senior support for line managers, and weekly employability sessions. Some of these costs would have been incurred anyway if recruiting normally but the significant extra is on the line management and support side for these individuals given what additional support they might need.”*

Employer

## 5.5 Wider benefits for employers and the local economy

### 5.5.1 Wider benefits for employers

The JRP evidently led to certain aspects of additionality and spillover benefits that look set to lead to lasting, sustained value:

- One employer observed how the upskilling gave a confidence and motivation boost for employees **not** directly taking part in the pilot
- Another employer said they were now considering other roles within their organisation to upskill into besides those being facilitated by the pilot
- A third welcomed the link forged with the Adult Education training provider and is considering other external upskilling they might wish to access externally

From a counterfactual perspective, two employers mentioned that while upskilling would likely have happened even without the pilot, that the pilot has helped to:

- Bring the upskilling forward
- Increase the scale of upskilling
- Allow the upskilling to include elements that would not normally form part of someone’s in-house training (such as the hands-on line management of backfill placements)
- Minimise the burden on the employer, notably through linkages with an external training provider

### 5.5.2 Stronger employer engagement with the local skills system

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Firstly, all participating employers said they would willingly take part in the JRP again. This signals strong buy-in to the JRP and evidence that the scheme has helped to: i) build good relationships between industry and the local skills system; and ii) improve employers' awareness, belief and trust in local skills services.

Several employers said that their involvement with the JRP has encouraged them to think about participating in other, similar, schemes. Two said they have already in fact gone on to access other initiatives since joining the pilot. For example, an employer in the care sector was introduced by their linked training provider to a charity that conducts workshops and seminars for carers working with autistic individuals. Another had limited prior knowledge of local skills offerings but since researched this and joined an accelerator programme aimed at helping high-growth businesses.

One employer described the pilot as an "eye opener" regarding the types of support available and how it could help their business. Another said that whilst they hadn't accessed further skills initiatives as yet since taking part in the pilot, it has made them more aware of what's "out there" and they will be keeping an eye out for future, similar opportunities.

*"The JRP has inspired us to explore what else we can do to help support people from marginalised backgrounds into employment, which has led to the development of our [into work] programmes. We run two-day employability sessions at JCP and the Job Shop preparing for any roles we are recruiting. For those who show potential, we then guarantee spots at an assessment centre for that role."*

Employer

Acknowledging the challenges that backfill candidates can face when entering employment, the same employer noted that they are currently exploring the idea of deploying a pastoral role within their organisation to support individuals' transition into the workplace.

For two employers, the pilot aligns well with their broader corporate responsibility goals, which helped to make the JRP especially attractive to be involved in from the outset. One employer mentioned that the grant has been beneficial, but they would have signed up without it due to having bought strongly into the idea of the JRP and its intended benefits.

*"We're interested in supporting the local community and keeping jobs within the Coventry area."*

Employer

### **5.5.3 Potential long-term benefits for the local economy**

Participating employers are of the view that the JR model:

- Represents a good way of galvanising local residents who approach the Job Shop and JCP, then matching them to employers with vacancies, in turn helping to accelerate recruitment to support the economy and get people working

- If sustained or broadened, could provide more people in the local area with basic skills – including employability skills that they may be lacking – in turn bringing them back to the jobs market
- Provides an incentive to encourage individuals back into employment who face the greatest barriers, including (but not limited to) older workers lacking confidence and basic skills but possessing a willingness to learn and contribute more to society

*“[The pilot is] certainly creating job opportunities within the region and having a positive impact on social service users within the Coventry area.”*

Employer

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## 6. Existing Employee Outcomes

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Having established employers' views on the positive outcomes of the JRP, chapter 6 brings in the perspective of employees undergoing upskilling courses. This includes how employees were selected to take part and their initial feelings about the JRP; the types of skills and knowledge they have developed as a result of the upskilling; the value gained from taking part and what that means for their satisfaction levels at work and likelihood to stay with their current employer. It goes on to examine what all this means for employees' progression and promotion potential, with evidence of how employees' in-work responsibilities have changed as a result of the JRP.

### Chapter 6 – key takeaways:

- Most employees (89%) undergoing upskilling felt positive about the pilot when it was first introduced to them (the remainder felt neutral and none felt negative).
- Employees said they had developed a range of skills as a result of the upskilling, most notably management and leadership (mentioned by 67%), communication (61%) followed by problem solving (28%).
- In terms of overall value, employees rate the JRP highly at 8.3 out of 10 (higher still at 8.9 among employees based within SMEs).
- Most employees (89%) found the upskilling useful and helpful, and 83% said it was enjoyable.
- Satisfaction levels at work appear to have increased thanks to the JRP, with 89% saying they were satisfied when reflecting back to before they took part, rising to 95% at the time of the survey.

- Corroborating the views of employers on the JRP's role in encouraging retention, 61% of employees said they were 'very likely' to stay with their employer when reflecting back to before the upskilling, rising to 94% at the time of the survey.
- More than three quarters (77%) of employees agree that the training has improved their career progression opportunities.
- Over a third (39%) of employees do not think they would have had the same opportunity to develop and progress had they not received the upskilling (higher still at 57% among employees based within SMEs).

## 6.1 Onboarding and initial perceptions

### 6.1.1 How the JRP was introduced to existing employees

Firstly, it should be noted that all surveyed employees undergoing upskilling as part of the JRP said they did not claim UC before the upskilling and that they did not claim it at the point of the survey.<sup>18</sup> It is understood from Coventry City Council that making receipt of UC an eligibility criterion for existing employees would have presented potentially prohibitive challenges such as the following:

- Employers not being able or willing to share UC claims information about their employees to identify those best placed to take part in the programme
- Employees not being willing to share this information with their employer
- Data sensitivity, i.e. a risk of employees feeling stigmatised if eligibility for upskilling was focused around those claiming UC
- The above adding to already existing challenges faced by Coventry City Council obtaining requested information from some employers as part of the onboarding process, e.g. due to employers being very busy

All surveyed employees undertaking upskilling (18, including seven from SMEs) were introduced to the JRP directly by their employer. In most cases, details were shared with many people within the company as an opportunity to gain additional skills, following which employees expressed interest and were selected to take part.

One individual had recently received a promotion within the company, and their manager recommended that they undergo the subsidised upskilling. Another was in the middle of transitioning to a more senior role, therefore the training was introduced as a good way to gain relevant knowledge and experience to help prepare them for that change.

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<sup>18</sup> This question was not asked of the employees of one organisation, at the organisation's request.

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*"I was new to the company. I wanted to get involved in some programmes to aid my progression and was told about the Job Rotation pilot. So it went from there."*

Employee undertaking upskilling

### **6.1.2 Initial perceptions**

Most surveyed employees (89%) felt positive about the pilot when it was first introduced to them, and the remainder (11%) felt neutral. None felt negative. Among the seven employees based within SMEs, there was marginally greater neutrality, with five positive and two neutral.

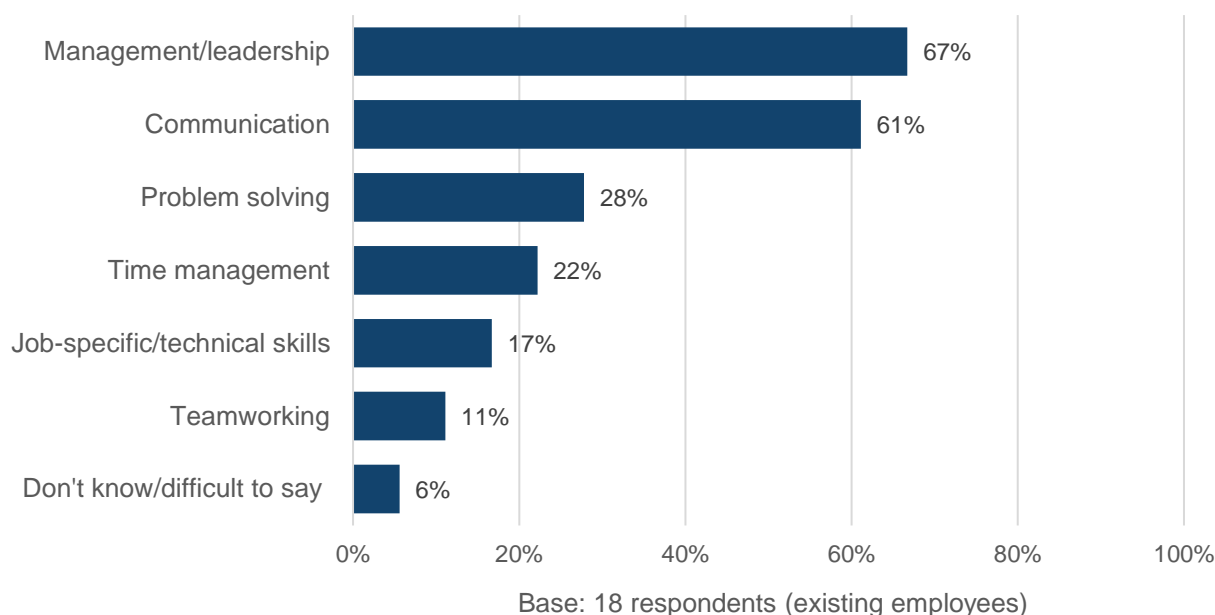
Employees undergoing line management training mentioned being particularly motivated by the opportunity to line manage the backfill candidates directly. Others were positive about the idea of developing new skills, gaining additional experience, contributing to personal growth, and a chance to feel more confident at work. One referred to any training as a positive thing, as it offers "an extra string to your bow."

*"It's a good opportunity for people who have experienced circumstances resulting in unemployment to help them get back into work. For the company it's good to have different insights into the workplace."*

Employee undergoing upskilling

## **6.2 Skills and knowledge developed**

The range of training and upskilling for employees has been wide-ranging, with evidence of employees developing a variety of skills. More than two thirds (67%) developed management and leadership skills, followed by communication skills (61%) and problem solving (28%) – Figure 2.

**Figure 2: Types of skills and knowledge developed through the upskilling**

Among the seven employees based within SMEs, there was less of a focus on management and leadership, with the most common response (mentioned by three) being job-specific technical skills, followed by communication skills.

Employees receiving line management training mentioned attending a half-day course at the start prior to further on-the-job training, covering such topics as:

- Planning and assigning tasks for other employees
- Setting and achieving goals in the workplace
- Managing workloads
- Engaging with and managing different personalities

Other employees' training has tended to be more theory-based, with involvement from an external trainer. Much of the training has been sector and job-specific, tailored to the needs of individual SMEs, as appropriate. Examples of training topics covered, include:

- The theory behind different types of illnesses, how they are diagnosed, then role-playing different scenarios and examining case studies
- How to manage children with autism, as well as understanding different 'triggers'
- Showing patience and understanding
- How to safeguard clients
- Understanding different types of businesses
- Understanding different personalities and abilities within a team

- Business planning/strategy development
- Completing an online course, watching a series of training videos, absorbing the information, and then thinking about how to apply that in the workplace
- Shadowing a more senior member of staff

### 6.3 Overall value of the upskilling

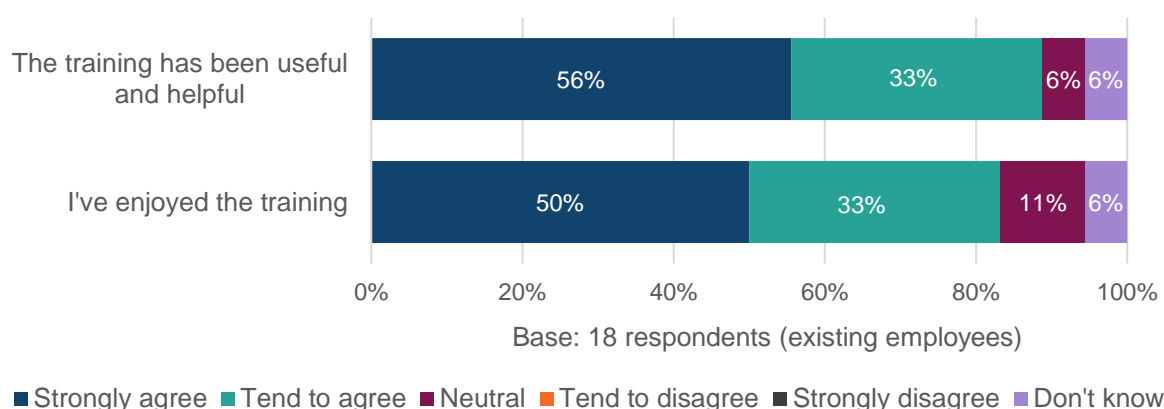
Existing employees were asked – overall – how valuable they found the JRP on a scale from 1 ‘not at all valuable to 10 ‘extremely valuable’. The mean rating is high (8.3), suggesting that the scheme has been highly valuable for employees (Table 3).

**Table 3: Overall perceived value of the JRP**

	Mean (1 to 10)	Mode (1 to 10)	Range (1 to 10)
All employees (Base 18)	8.3	8	6-10
SME employees (Base 7)	8.9	8	8-10

Unpacking this further, most employees (89%) agreed that the upskilling has been useful and helpful, while 83% found it enjoyable (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Extent of agreement/disagreement with specific outcomes of the upskilling**



Of the seven employees based within SMEs, all (100%) either strongly or tended to agree with both of these statements, thus while SME employees were comparatively less positive in their initial perceptions about taking part, they found it on the whole more useful, helpful and enjoyable.

In follow-up, all surveyed employees were asked to elaborate on how the upskilling had been useful and beneficial. Just under a third said it had given them valuable management



experience where (in some cases) they hadn't line managed someone before. Several elaborated further, for example understanding different skill levels within the team, delivering effective feedback to colleagues, and learning how to frame a problem for others to find a solution.

Several mentioned having improved their confidence and adopting a more positive attitude to work as a result of the training. Three said that it had been motivating to see opportunities created for their colleagues (including others undergoing upskilling, as well as the backfill candidates). Another said that the training had enabled them to work with young people for the first time, which they described as "interesting" and "eye opening".

*"The scheme has allowed the backfill candidates to come in and fulfil the role I was doing, so that has created a nice environment. It's also opened opportunities up to other people in the company. They know they have chances in the future to progress so there is a real sense of positivity at work."*

Employee undergoing upskilling

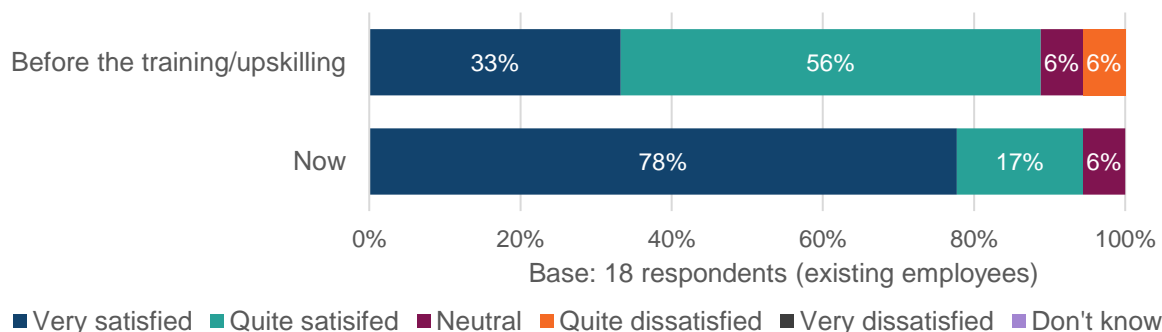
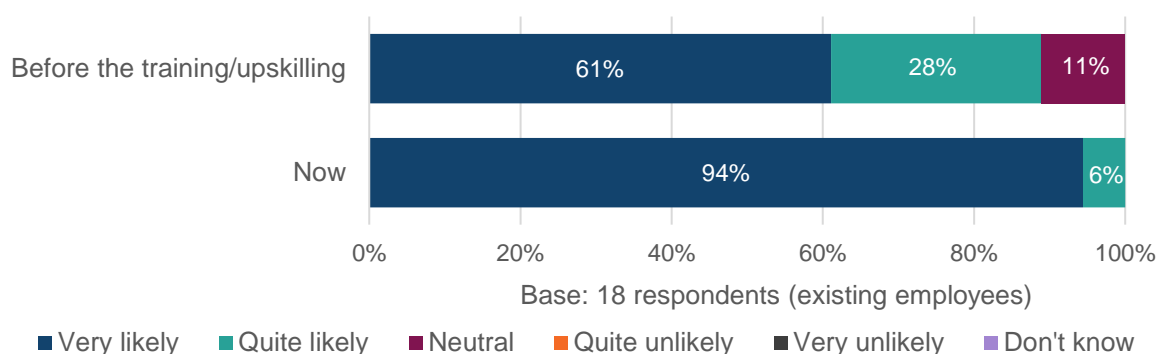
## 6.4 Satisfaction and likelihood to stay with the employer

### 6.4.1 Headline perceptions

Employees undergoing upskilling were asked to think back to before it began and compare that to the present day, in order to rate their:

- a. General satisfaction at work
- b. Likelihood of staying with their current employer

The upskilling appears to have made a positive difference to perceptions in relation to both of these outcomes. Most surveyed employees (89%) said they were very or quite satisfied at work when thinking back to before the upskilling, rising to 95% at the time of the survey. Moreover, the proportion 'very satisfied' has strengthened (33% when thinking back to before the upskilling, rising to 78% at the time of the survey). A similar pattern is evident with respect to the likelihood of staying with their employer (61% 'very likely' before the upskilling, rising to 94% at the time of the survey) – Figure 4. These findings therefore corroborate the views of employers (section 5.2) that the JRP has been valuable in helping to improve workforce retention.

**Figure 4: Feelings about work before and after the upskilling****A: General satisfaction at work****B: Likelihood of staying with my existing employer**

Of the seven employees based within SMEs, general satisfaction with work is slightly less positive than the overall picture. Thinking back to before the upskilling, most (86%) were quite satisfied at work and 14% quite dissatisfied. This strengthens to 71% very satisfied and 29% quite satisfied at the time of the survey.

In terms of the likelihood of staying with their existing employer, the picture is more mixed among SME employees when thinking back to before the upskilling (14% very likely, 57% quite likely and 29% neutral). However, this rises to 86% very likely and 14% quite likely at the time of the survey.

**6.4.2 Additional insights on satisfaction at work**

Employees who said their satisfaction at work had increased as a result of the upskilling mentioned feeling more valued by their employer; better able to see how the company was interested in their development; in possession of greater knowledge; and more positive and confident about the future as a result.

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One employee felt as though they were “not going anywhere” before the placement and had wanted to improve and progress. Since the upskilling, they are now in a more senior role and feel a lot happier at work.

Only one employee said they were less satisfied at work than before taking part in the JRP, which they put down to working closely with a backfill candidate who was unhappy with the department they were placed in. The existing employee therefore felt somewhat disheartened by seeing this person placed in an area of work they were not happy with.

#### **6.4.3 Additional insights on likelihood to stay with the current employer**

Among five employees more likely to stay with their employer after participating in the JRP, the main reasons include:

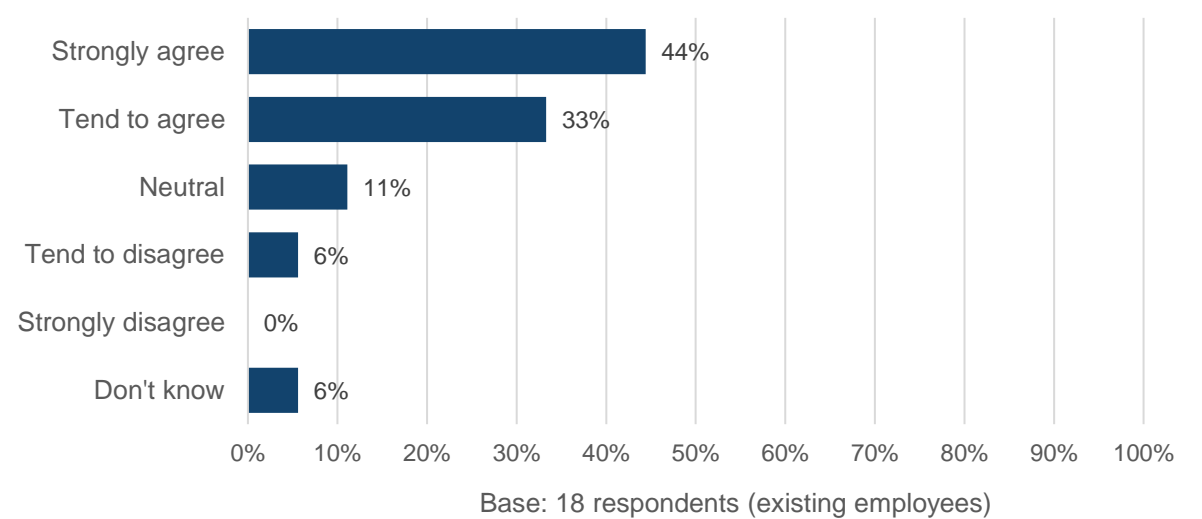
- Progression in the company has become more tangible (three).
- Feeling valued by the employer (two)
- Happier and more comfortable in the workplace (two)
- Increased confidence at work (one)

### **6.5 Progression and promotion potential**

Evidence from surveyed employees shows that the JRP is playing a strong role in supporting their progression and promotion, which further supports the views of employers (section 5.3).

Firstly, more than three quarters of surveyed employees (77%) agree that the training has improved their career progression opportunities (Figure 5). One employee tending to disagree said they had only recently been promoted, so did not see the training as improving their career progression opportunities.

**Figure 5: Extent of agreement/disagreement that the training has improved career progression opportunities**



Of the seven employees based within SMEs, all (100%) either strongly or tended to agree that the training had improved their career progression opportunities. This may also explain their comparatively stronger levels of agreement on its use and value (discussed earlier).

More than a third (39%) of employees do not think they would have had the same opportunity to develop and progress in their job or career had they not received the upskilling as part of the JRP. This rises to 57% among employees of SMEs, pointing to the upskilling being especially impactful for this cohort and evidence of strong additionality brought by the JRP in shaping longer term progression outcomes.

Of those employees who feel that they would have had the same opportunities even without the JRP, five put this down to their employer providing ample opportunity for progression and often looking to develop and promote people. Three were of the view that they would likely have been upskilled eventually but acknowledged that the programme had helped to unlock that and make it easier. One employee remarked that they were still doing similar jobs as before the placement, viewing the training as more of an “add-on”.

*“I think I would have had the same level of progression without the scheme, but I was provided with the tools that make it easier to transition. The extra knowledge and support have been really helpful as I move into a new role.”*

Employee undergoing upskilling

Several employees believe that the scheme has made a real difference to their career progression opportunities as a result of the hands-on line management experience that they would not necessarily have gained in the absence of the programme. One mentioned that

the scheme has given them more confidence to start a new role, while another believes it has helped to expedite the upskilling process (echoing the view of their employer).

*“The training has really set me apart. I felt like I was a bit stuck before I was given the opportunity.”*

Employee undergoing upskilling

As further evidence of progression, employees were asked whether their in-work responsibilities had changed since starting the upskilling. More than a quarter (28%) said yes – even higher among those based within SMEs (five out of seven). Examples of changes to responsibilities are summarised in Table 4.

**Table 4: Examples of responsibilities before and after the upskilling – where different**

Responsibilities before the upskilling	Responsibilities after the upskilling
Attending care calls and mainly helping the elderly in their own houses – nothing office based	Overseeing staff, assisting with client training plans, spot checking staff, shadowing the registered manager  Still doing care calls - essentially covering jobs that cannot be done by others
Administrative duties, working with production and warehouse staff	Looking at the big picture with a focus on growing the business (including strategies for growth, looking at key performance indicators (KPIs) rather than just supervising workloads
Helping clients and managing people with healthcare challenges	More of a senior role; administering medication independently; doing blood sample checks; lots of responsibilities not previously possible as an assistant

## 6.6 Case studies



### Upskilled employee – case study 1

*“It has been very helpful to learn how to deliver feedback”*

While working in a communications role, this employee was contacted by managers about a line management upskilling opportunity. They were initially excited by the opportunity to

support an incoming member of the team, for whom they would be providing direction during their placement.

The upskilling consisted of a short course of timetabled training alongside self-directed online learning. Both covered skills in management, leadership, and communication. The employee found this training to be both useful and enjoyable, helping them to develop their people skills, especially providing constructive feedback to others.

Of particular value to the employee was how taking part in the JRP helped their own development and that of the backfill candidate simultaneously – something they found really rewarding.

Without the JRP, this employee does not feel they would have had the hands-on opportunity to line manage others. And while they didn't see any immediate changes to their job, they view the training as putting them in a strong position for their onward career development.



### Upskilled employee – case study 2

*“I felt like I was a bit stuck before I was given the opportunity.”*

Prior to taking part in the JRP, this employee was working in a care role on a zero-hour contract. Their employer approached them as a candidate for upskilling and training, which looked like an exciting prospect.

The employee initially undertook specialist carer training for a particular disorder, which helped them to develop new knowledge and specific techniques for managing the disorder. Taking part in the scheme was instrumental in transitioning their role to a more senior level and a fixed full-time contract with improved wage.

The employee feels the upskilling will undoubtedly have a positive impact on their career prospects and likelihood of staying with their current employer owing to the strong support received. Without the scheme, they do not believe this would have been possible, yet they now have “a clear pathway forward.”

## 7. Backfill Candidate Outcomes

This chapter explores the perspectives of backfill candidates, starting with how they heard about the JRP and their initial perceptions and expectations. It then explores candidates'

views relating to the Job Shop work readiness sessions and the work placement, latterly covering general satisfaction, how the work environment suited them, support provided by the employer, and challenges faced. A picture is then built of the overall value of the JRP for backfill candidates, how it has strengthened their confidence in different ways, its influence on future career prospects, and on long-term employment opportunities. At this point, views of employers are brought in to compare backfill candidates' hopes and expectations with what employers said they were able to offer.

#### **Chapter 7 – key takeaways:**

- Most backfill candidates (72%) felt positive about the JRP when it was first introduced to them (the remainder felt neutral and none felt negative).
- Almost all (96%) said they were hoping to find lasting employment from the JRP.
- Backfill candidates' experience of the Job Shop work readiness sessions was largely positive, with most saying the sessions covered topics appropriate to their needs.
- More than three quarters (79%) agreed that the work readiness sessions helped to increase their motivation to find long-term work, although views were somewhat mixed regarding the sessions' ability to prepare them for the workplace (between 25% and 38% were either neutral or tended to disagree on this).
- A small number of respondents were frustrated by a mismatch between job roles they were initially told about and roles they ultimately interviewed for.
- Almost all backfill candidates (93%) were satisfied with their work placement and the same proportion (93%) said their work placement was in an industry area or job role that they felt suited them.
- All (100%) said that they felt supported by their employer either to a great extent or to some extent.
- The biggest challenge experienced by around a quarter of backfill candidates was not having sufficient work to do or not gaining as much experience as they would have liked (e.g. due to time spent shadowing or learning).
- Almost three quarters (72%) took part in employability sessions run by their employer, with positive feedback on the way they were run and the coverage of topics appropriate to candidates' needs.
- In terms of overall value, backfill candidates rate the scheme highly at 8.5 out of 10 (slightly higher still at 8.6 among candidates placed within SMEs).



- The pilot appears to have had a positive influence on candidates' confidence in their own career potential, with less than four in 10 (38%) confident when reflecting back to before the work readiness sessions, rising to 97% at survey touchpoint 1.
- Most (83%) said the JRP had reduced their reliance on UC.
- A large proportion of backfill candidates (87%) said they were hoping to pursue a permanent position with their employer. Just under half (45%) said that their employer had discussed a more permanent position with them, rising to 80% among those placed within SMEs. This suggests that long-term employment outcomes may not be feasible for all as a result of the pilot, although SMEs appear to be better placed to offer long-term positions.

## 7.1 Onboarding, initial perceptions and expectations

### 7.1.1 How backfill candidates heard about the JRP

Around half of surveyed backfill candidates said that they found out about the JRP through the Job Shop. Some said they had been working with the Job Shop for a while in the hope of finding employment, where the programme was then introduced to them by their Job Coach. Just over a quarter found out about the scheme from JCP where it was also being advertised. These individuals were then referred to the Job Shop to register. Five backfill candidates said they were told about the scheme by family members, while two found details about it online.

### 7.1.2 Initial perceptions

Respondents were asked how they felt about the JRP when the idea of it was first introduced to them. Most (72%) said that they felt positive and the remainder (28%) felt neutral. None felt negative.

Among those initially feeling positive, just over a third viewed it as a good potential opportunity to find work and a career.

*"It's a great opportunity to get jobs that you wouldn't find online as they [Job Coaches] have more knowledge than I do when it comes to finding work."*

Backfill candidate

Two individuals were going through major life events when they heard about the programme – expecting a baby and immigrating to the UK, respectively – which meant finding employment was a key priority for them. Another two said they had previously taken part in a shorter placement (two weeks) with the same employer and felt the scheme was a good way to gain more experience at that organisation.

Four mentioned liking the idea and concept of the JR model when it was introduced to them, with one having gone on to further research the model's application. Two others said they were pleased to see the range of roles on offer through the JRP and were able to match with areas of work they wanted to get into.

Among employees initially feeling neutral about the scheme, the main reason was that they were unsure what to expect and didn't know much about it.

*"I didn't realise it was a programme or placement at first. I had been looking for admin work and was told there was a particular role available. When I went to the initial session, I realised what it was."*

Backfill candidate

Other reasons for initially feeling neutral towards the programme mentioned by different individuals are as follows:

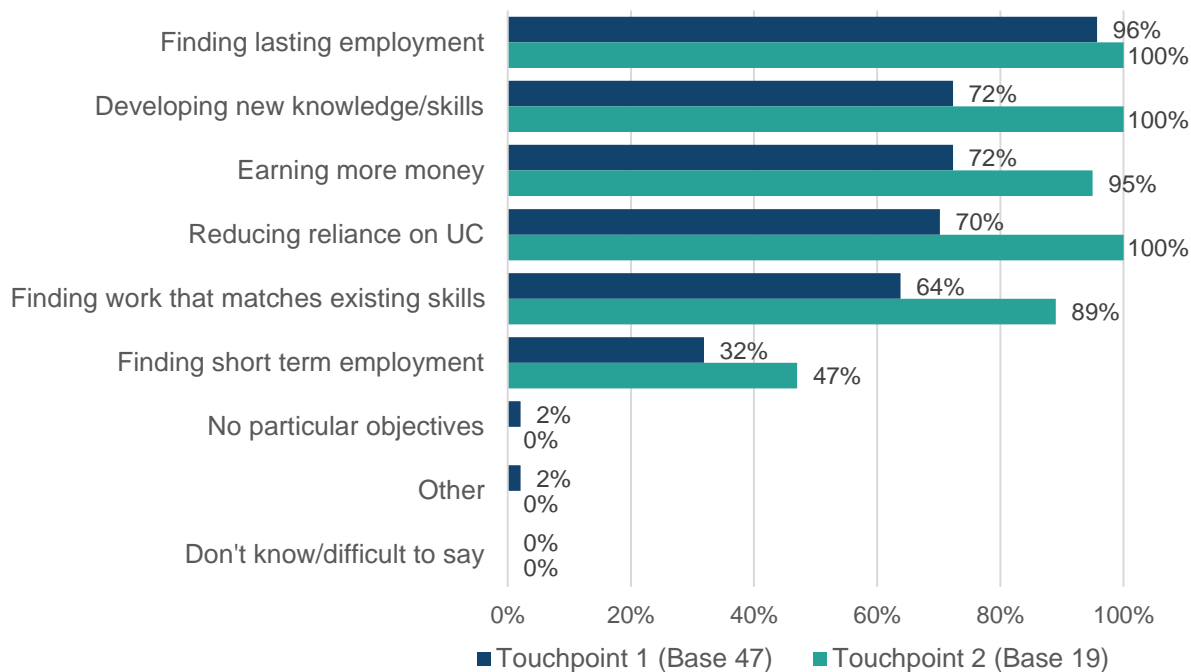
- English not being the candidate's first language
- No guarantee of a job at the end of the placement
- The job roles on offer did not look suitable to them
- Had spent a long time looking for employment so by that point was sceptical about whether the scheme would make a difference

### 7.1.3 Initial expectations

At survey touchpoints 1 and 2 (each approximately one month apart) backfill candidates were asked what they were hoping to achieve from the work placement. The most common answer was finding lasting employment, mentioned by 96% at touchpoint 1, increasing to 100% at touchpoint 2, making this a clear overriding driver for taking part (Figure 6).

By touchpoint 2, candidates identified with a broader range of benefits, suggesting these had become more apparent as the placement helped them to gain more experience. For example, between 70% and 72% at touchpoint 1 said they were looking to develop new knowledge/skills, earn more money and reduce their reliance on UC. Each of these were selected by between 95% and 100% of backfill candidates at touchpoint 2.

Figure 6: What backfill candidates were hoping to achieve from the placement



Among backfill candidates looking to develop new knowledge or skills, almost half said they wanted to develop job-specific skills and knowledge in a field of interest. Most commonly, candidates said they were looking for administrative work and sought experience in tasks such as handling data and understanding different software. Three were hoping to develop general experience in the care sector. One individual, who had been working as a healthcare worker in their native country, wanted to get to build experience of the UK healthcare system. Others mentioned a desire for experience in animal care, finance and marketing respectively – thus a broad range of individual interests.

Many backfill candidates were keen to improve one or more cross-cutting skills, with two thirds referencing digital skills including Microsoft Outlook, Word or Excel. Candidate-identified weaknesses in this area align with the feedback from one employer that the placed individuals lacked these types of basic competences. A quarter of backfill candidates said they wanted to improve their communication skills, with three also wanting to build their confidence.

*“I don’t always ask for help, so it’s about knowing when to do that. Also, communication skills, being a team player and getting used to that type of environment.”*

Backfill candidate

Three candidates said there were no particular skills that sprung to mind which they wanted to develop, with one adding that the programme was about “trying something new”, therefore they came with an open mind. Another said they were already working part-time, so their main objective was to have more hours.

## 7.2 Experience and usefulness of the Job Shop work readiness sessions

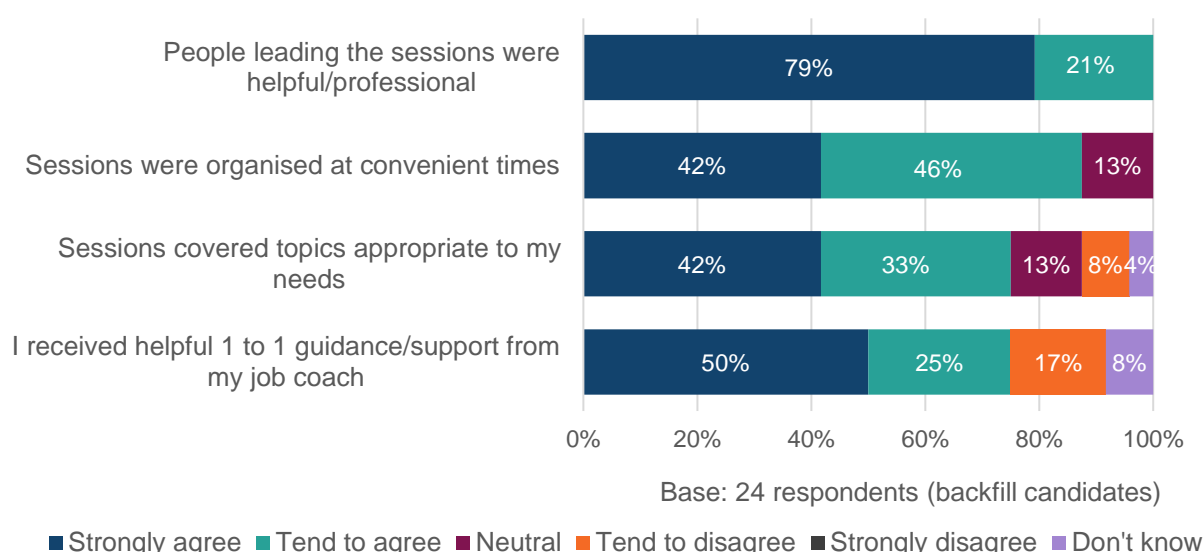
### 7.2.1 Experience of the Job Shop work readiness sessions

Just over half (51%) of surveyed backfill candidates said they had taken part in one or more Job Shop work readiness sessions ahead of their work placement. Of these, the experience appears to have been positive.

All (100%) agree that the people leading the sessions were helpful/professional. Most (88%) said the sessions were organised at convenient times; three quarters (75%) that the sessions covered topics appropriate to their needs, and the same proportion that one-to-one guidance from their job coach was helpful (Figure 7).

Candidates' reasons for tending to disagree with the latter two statements include the Job Coach not providing as much guidance or support as the individual would have liked; and that the skills development were too focused on the specific placement, with insufficient broader applicability.

**Figure 7: Extent of agreement/disagreement with aspects of the work readiness sessions**

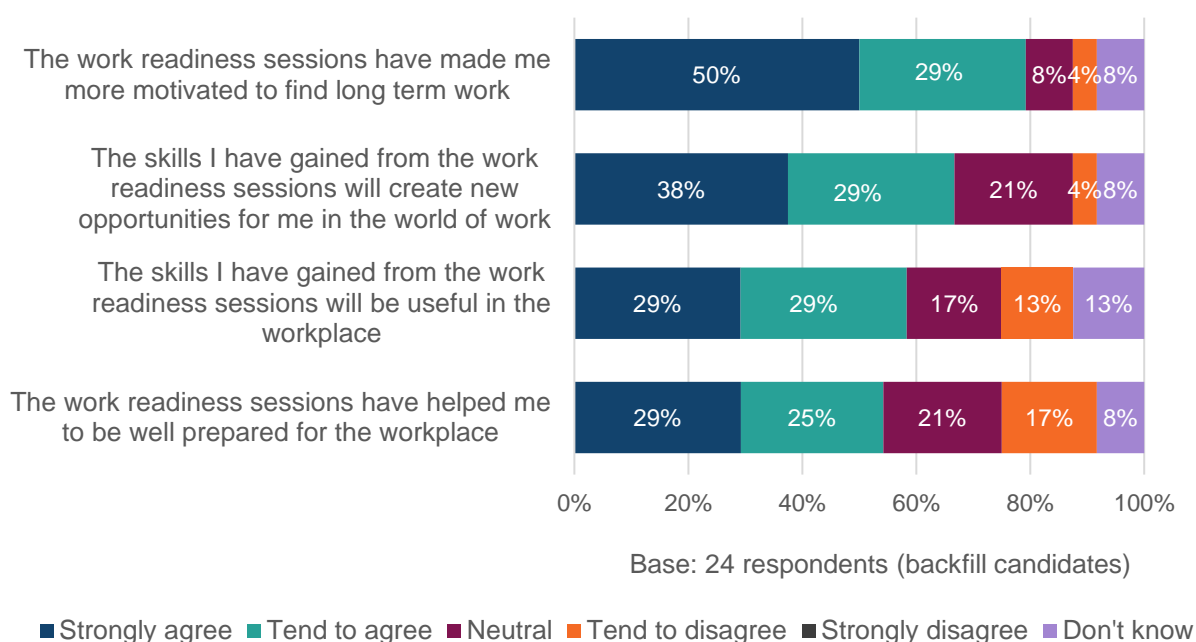


### 7.2.2 Usefulness of the Job Shop work readiness sessions

The work readiness sessions appear to have been very useful for most candidates, with more than three quarters (79%) agreeing that they helped to increase individuals' motivations to find long-term work. Most candidates also agree that the skills they have gained from the sessions will help to create new opportunities (67%), be useful in the workplace (58%) and that the sessions prepared them for the workplace (54%). Views are

more mixed with respect to these latter statements, with between 25% and 38% either neutral or tending to disagree (Figure 8).

**Figure 8: Extent of agreement/disagreement in the usefulness of the work readiness sessions**



Backfill candidates were then asked what made the work readiness sessions particularly useful and beneficial for them. A primary reported driver was the sessions' ultimate aim as conveyed to them – to help them find long-term employment. Just over a third singled out helpful assistance from their Job Coach, with particular praise for their Job Coach's:

- Good availability
- Readiness to answer questions
- Ability to provide valuable information about the JR scheme
- Help in finding suitable jobs tailored to the individual's needs and circumstances (one individual praised their job coach for helping them find roles that were more flexible to people with disabilities)

*"The one-to-ones have been useful because it feels like there's someone in your corner trying to help you as much as they can, and giving you all the information and techniques you need to succeed."*

Backfill candidate

Candidates were especially complimentary about the work readiness sessions on interview skills and techniques. For some, mock interviews with the Job Shop team helped increase their confidence going into real interviews with participating employers. One respondent said the mock interviews focused on potential interview questions that are often difficult to

answer, which they found really useful. A participating employer also echoed the importance of this type of exercise:

*“The job shop processes are an invaluable experience – candidates wouldn’t get the same level of feedback at a normal interview.”*

Employer

Three mentioned finding the CV building session useful for improving their chances for future applications and valued being able to meet and talk to other participants. Three also described how, despite not receiving a placement offer, they received useful feedback from employers on how they could improve for future opportunities.

*“They [employers] offer all the help they can, and they are fantastic. It is down to the individual what you do with the support.”*

Backfill candidate

When asked if/how the work readiness sessions could be improved, just under half of backfill candidates who attended the sessions did not identify anything they would change.

However, four expressed some frustration with an apparent mismatch between job roles they were initially told about and roles they interviewed for, which they put down to communication issues between the Job Shop and the employer. Three felt that the sessions could have been better tailored to their work goals, with one feeling that they had a higher skillset than the available jobs (which they perceived as “mainly entry-level”). A part-time worker who took part in the sessions felt out of place after getting the impression that the sessions were geared more towards unemployed individuals, which was in fact a key aim of the pilot.

## **7.2.2 Perceived reasons for not being selected for a work placement**

Of the 47 backfill candidates surveyed at touchpoint 1, just under two thirds (62%) said they had been placed. Of the 18 who hadn’t by that point, the main reason (mentioned by seven) was that they were interviewed by an employer but not selected. The next most common reason (mentioned by three) was placement opportunities not being right for them.

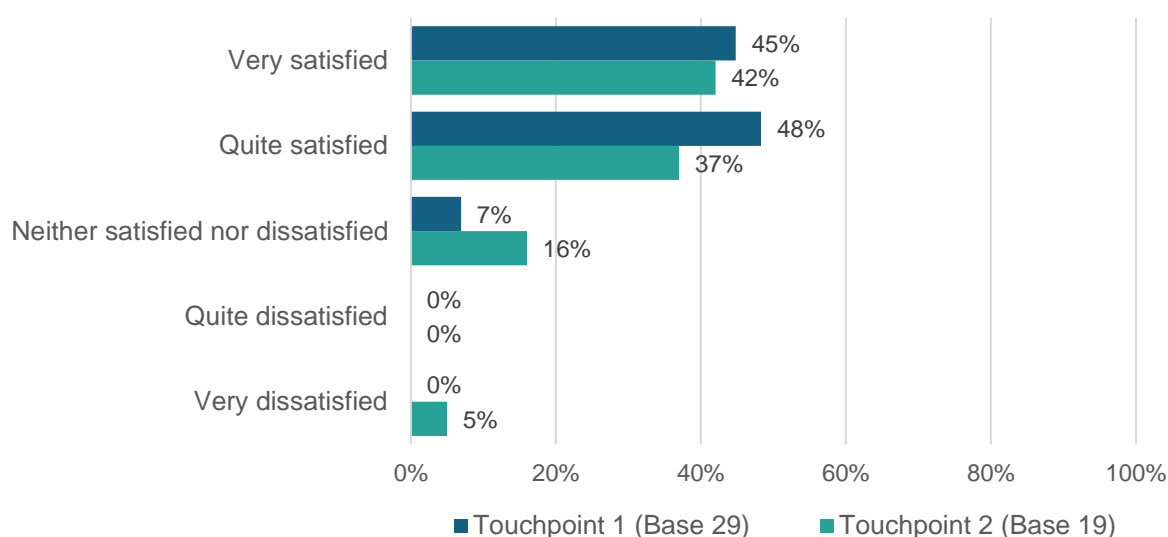
Other stated reasons include the work placement not being in a sector they were interested in; logistical or communication-related matters (such as the employer reportedly changing the interview to an inconvenient time, or the candidate claiming not to have been told the date for meeting with employers); and the candidate receiving a different job offer.

## **7.3 Experience of the work placement**

### **7.3.1 Satisfaction with the work placement**

Of the 29 backfill candidates saying they were in work placements at the time of the survey, almost all (93% at touchpoint 1, 79% at touchpoint 2) said they were satisfied with their placement, including the job they had been placed into (Figure 9).

**Figure 9: Overall satisfaction with the work placement to date**



Of the eight backfill candidates placed with SMEs, a slightly lower proportion of 88% (compared with 93% for the whole sample) were satisfied with the work placement. (Size-band analysis is not possible for touchpoint 2 – applicable to all charts in this chapter).

Among backfill candidates 'very satisfied' with the work placement, half said this was because they enjoyed the role or felt it was a good fit. A different respondent said it was their dream job, while another had been looking for administrative work and was pleased to get experience in this area.

*"I'm more than satisfied. I've had three main clients that I work with all the time and loved each of them. I like my job and cannot complain."*

Backfill candidate

Four respondents praised support from the employer as a key reason for their satisfaction. One described how their line manager had encouraged them to explore different aspects of the business, while another, who had childcare commitments, said their employer had been very flexible about their working hours to cater for this.

*"Anytime I feel anxious, they always support me. No one has ever got stressed out – they understand I have got little to no experience."*

Backfill candidate



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Among backfill candidates 'quite satisfied' with the placement, similar reasons were mentioned, including good support from the employer; enjoyable work; developing new skills and confidence; and usefulness of networking.

Despite the positives, nearly a third of those who were 'quite satisfied' mentioned not having enough work to do during the placement.

*"I need more practical jobs rather than just learning – I was expecting greater variety*

Backfill candidate

Two respondents would have liked a more clearly defined progression pathway. In acknowledging there was no guarantee of a permanent position, one individual felt that the employer could have helped them to understand more about career options and associated prerequisites within the company. Two others would have preferred a different role or department, suggesting they were developing skills they didn't feel were well suited to them.

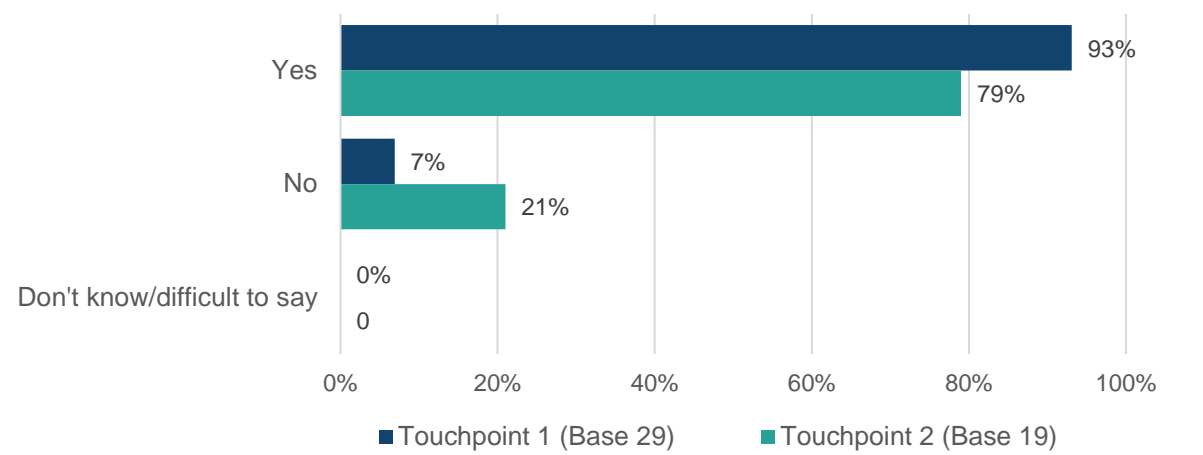
Two candidates said they were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' with the work placement for the following reasons:

- Their role changed during the placement to a position they had not applied for
- They were not given much work during the placement

### **7.3.2 Placement in an area of industry or job role that suited candidates well**

At survey touchpoint 1, almost all candidates (93%) said their work placement was in an area of industry or job role that they felt well suited to, suggesting that the process of matching candidates to job roles had worked well for individuals who were ultimately placed. However, this fell back slightly to 79% at survey touchpoint 2 (Figure 10). Whilst still strong, the change suggests that – over time – a small number of candidates may have changed their minds, found that the reality was different to their initial expectations, or become more open-minded to other options as they developed their experience and skillsets.

**Figure 10: The placement is in an area of industry or job role that suits candidates well**

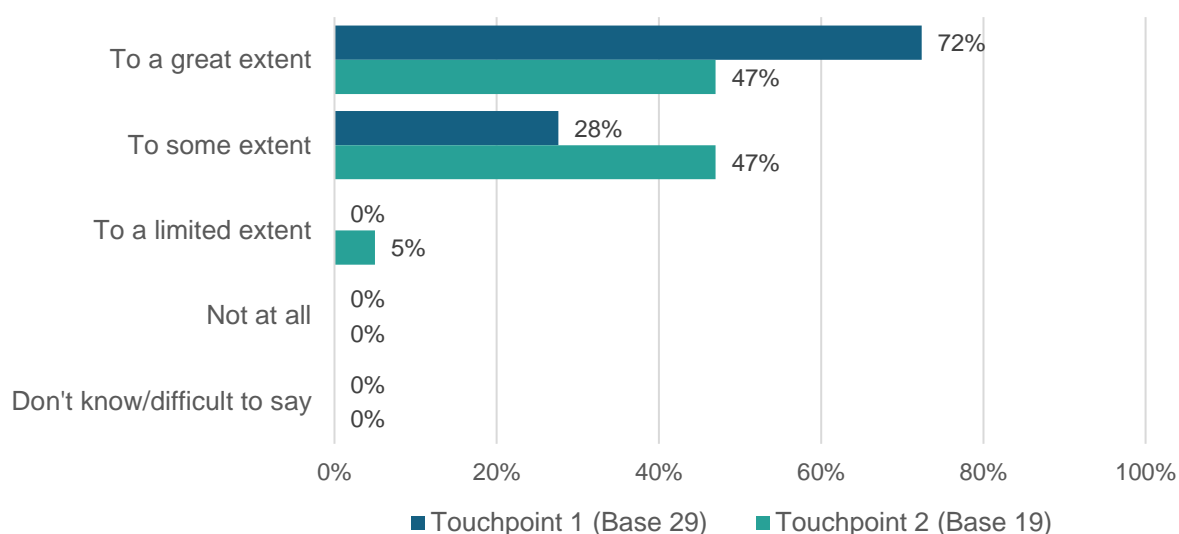


Of the eight backfill candidates placed with SMEs, 100% (compared with 93% for the whole sample) said the placement was in an area of industry or job role that suited them well.

Of the two backfill candidates who did not feel the job role or area of industry suited them well at touchpoint 1, both were placed in customer service roles. When asked what would suit them better, one said a digital or technology-focused role, while another mentioned data analysis or strategy.

**7.3.3 Feeling supported by their employer**

At survey touchpoint 1, all backfill candidates (100%) felt that they were supported by their employer either to a great extent or to some extent. The strength of support then weakened slightly by touchpoint 2 (75% to a great extent or to some extent) – Figure 8. Possible reasons might include: i) intensive upfront support from the employer being scaled back once candidates were up and running; ii) candidates getting used to the support, thus becoming less noticeable over time; or iii) employers’ support not being sustained to the levels candidates expected (Figure 11).

**Figure 11: Extent to which candidates feel supported by their employer**

All backfill candidates placed with SMEs (100%) felt supported by their employer to a great extent or to some extent. Of these, a slightly higher proportion of 88% (compared to 72% for the whole sample) answered 'to a great extent'. This may be due to owners/managers in smaller employers having a closer working relationship with the new recruits to get to know and support them more individually or be able to devote more attention to this (see quotation below).

*"We offer bespoke training – the pilot has given us the opportunity to identify who needs more support and the kind of skills they need – so it is tailored to the individual. For example, we knew that [anonymous] needed more support due to being younger and struggling initially dealing with older [people they were responsible for]."*

Employer

### 7.3.4 Challenges faced

Over a third of backfill candidates said they had not experienced any particular issues or challenges as part of their work placement.

*"There haven't been any challenges really. I've been learning as I've been going along. I've been working with an autistic client, which is a first for me, but it has been great. Any problems, I ring the employer contact, and they provide support. I haven't faced anything particularly challenging."*

Backfill candidate

However, the biggest challenge experienced by around a quarter of surveyed candidates was not having sufficient work to do or not gaining as much experience as they would have liked during the placement. Two noted that most of their time was spent shadowing or

learning. Another wanted experience exploring different departments but felt like that was a “closed door”. This potentially ties in with employer comments about individuals lacking certain basic skills, which may have made it difficult for the employer to give them greater freedom.

Five candidates mentioned logistical challenges, including not being able to easily get to the placement location due to being reliant on public transport; or having to travel to multiple locations in a single day, requiring several buses.

Other challenges, each mentioned by an individual respondent, include:

- A poor relationship with their line manager
- Changes to the job role during the placement which they were not expecting
- Perception that the organisation did not have sufficient vacancies to support long-term employment
- Joining at a busy period so the workload proved especially challenging

### 7.3.5 Experience of employability sessions (hosted by the employer)

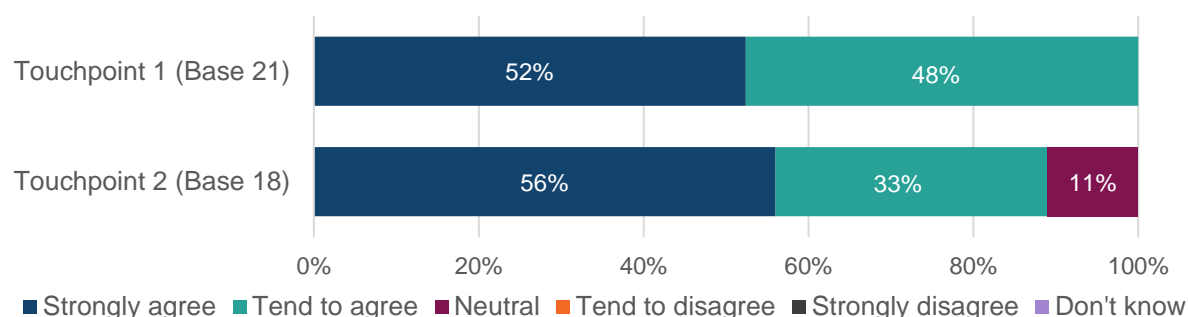
Those that had taken part in employability sessions run by their placement employer were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the sessions were:

- Run in an interesting and engaging way
- Covered topics appropriate to their needs

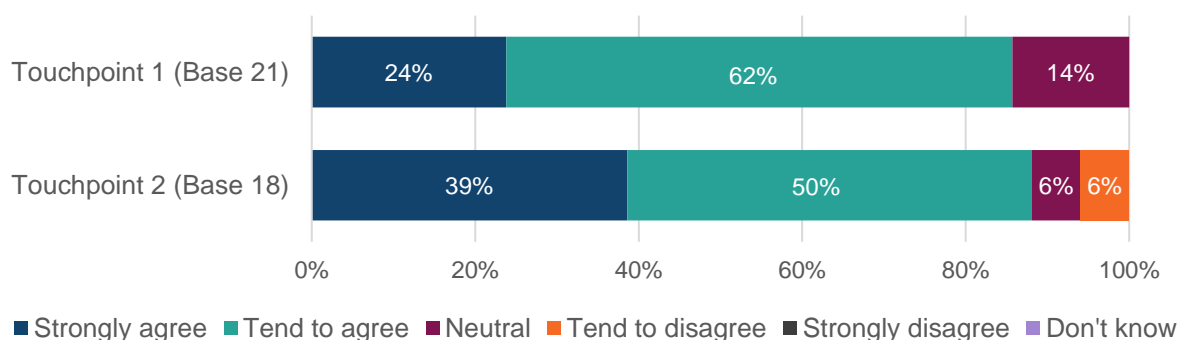
All respondents at touchpoint 1 (100%) agreed that the sessions were run in an interesting and engaging way, with only a slight fall back to 89% at touchpoint 2. A similarly large proportion agreed that the sessions covered topics appropriate to their needs, with only 6% tending to disagree at touchpoint 2 (Figure 12).

**Figure 12: Views on employability sessions (run by employer)**

#### ***A: Run in an interesting and engaging way***



### B: Cover topics appropriate to my needs



Around two fifths of individuals participating in these sessions described them as engaging, informative, helpful for building confidence, and interesting to interact with people from other departments. Several also noted that they enjoyed the interactive elements.

*“[The session leaders] actually make you think and engage rather than just feeding us information. We do different tasks, they are helping us understand that mistakes will be made but what’s important is correcting them and learning.”*

Backfill candidate

However, around a third found some of the session topics to be “quite basic” and covering things they already knew. This is perhaps to be expected where sessions are aimed at larger cohorts of people where there is a desire on the part of the employer to bring everyone up to a certain benchmark level.

*“Some themes like attitudes and culture are quite basic and are probably better for people just starting out in the world of work.”*

Backfill candidate

Several employees posed suggestions for how the employer-led sessions could be strengthened:

- Greater interactivity (this candidate felt less well suited to classroom-style learning)
- Having a digital skills session to the start of the placement, since it is relevant to the job from the outset
- Including a “day in the life of” session with an existing employee to understand what it’s like working at the company
- Learning more about the business itself

## 7.4 Overall value of the pilot

Backfill candidates were asked how valuable the JRP they found the JRP overall, on a scale from 1 ‘not at all valuable’ to 10 ‘extremely valuable’. The mean rating at survey touchpoint 1

was a very favourable 8.5, falling just slightly to 8.1 at touchpoint 2. No candidate gave a rating of 3 or below (Table 5).

**Table 5: Overall perceived value of the JRP**

	Mean (1 to 10)	Mode (1 to 10)	Range (1 to 10)
All employees – touchpoint 1 (Base 47)	8.5	8	5-10
All employees – touchpoint 2 (Base 19)	8.1	8	4-10
SMEs – touchpoint 1 only (Base 8)	8.7	9	5-10

Reasons for the given value ratings are summarised below (in order from most to least cited):

### 9 or 10

- Good prospects for future job opportunities
- A “foot in the door” at the company
- Visible progression opportunities, leading to increased motivation to pursue a permanent role
- Valuable knowledge and experience gained, such as learning from senior staff and gaining expertise in a relevant field
- Increased confidence
- Being placed in a “good fit” role
- Gaining a permanent position through the scheme
- Being able to “get out what you put in”

### 7 or 8

- Valuable knowledge and experience gained
- New skills developed
- Increased confidence
- Supportiveness of colleagues
- Being challenged in the job
- Becoming more motivated to find long-term employment
- New opportunities opened up
- Useful and valuable employability sessions

Some challenges and concerns were also expressed:

- Not having enough practical work to do during the placement

- Not being in the ideal job role
- The placement feeling better suited to a young person or graduate rather than someone with prior experience of being in a corporate environment
- No guarantee of work at the end
- Placement too short to gain maximum value

#### **6 or below**

- Lack of opportunity to carry out hands-on practical tasks
- Not being placed into the job role applied for

Many of the positive aspects of the training experience are echoed by some employers:

*“The placement has opened up a breadth of different types of work for candidates to undertake and they’ve learnt a lot of new stuff. We also have training systems which allows them to grow.”*

Employer

*“We set up shadowing arrangements and training sessions, which normally takes around a week – we don’t just throw them into the field. So we do many things to ease them into the process and give them a valuable experience.”*

Employer

## **7.5 Confidence building**

Several employers mentioned that the JRP has been instrumental in strengthening the confidence of backfill candidates – explored more fully in this section with insights from the candidates themselves.

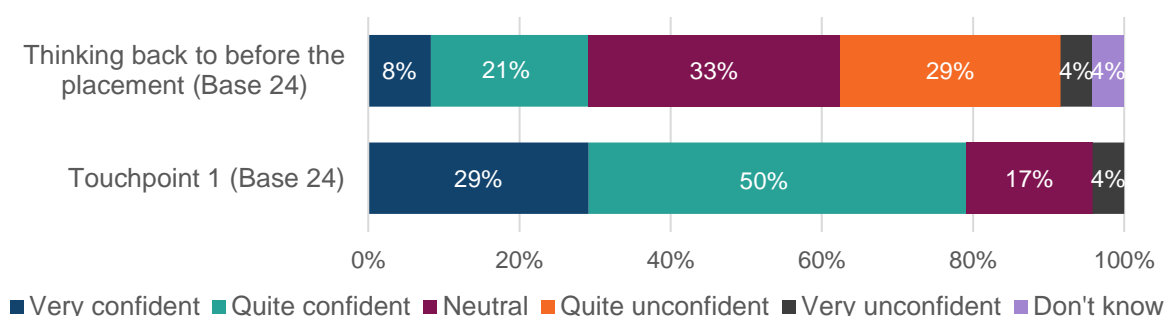
*“Our candidates have told us their confidence and communication skills have improved, and their line managers generally agree.”*

Employer

### **7.4.1 Confidence in finding long-term employment**

Backfill candidates were asked how they would rate their general confidence in finding long-term employment, firstly thinking back to before they took part in the Job Shop work readiness sessions, and then at the time of the survey itself (touchpoint 1). As Figure 13 shows, candidates consider their confidence levels to have increased substantially. Less than a third (29%) said they were very or quite confident before the work readiness sessions, rising to 79% at the time of survey touchpoint 1.



**Figure 13: Confidence in finding long-term employment**

Candidates whose confidence levels had changed were then asked for their reasons. More than a third put this down to the level of support from the organisations and people they had been working with. Among these, four reiterated the value of their Job Coaches as being key to the shift.

A quarter pointed again to the development of interviewing skills in the Job Shop work readiness sessions, as well as the experience from the placement itself leading to greater confidence in finding work. While not placed at the time of interview, one individual said that they felt more confident in an interview scenario than prior to taking part in the scheme.

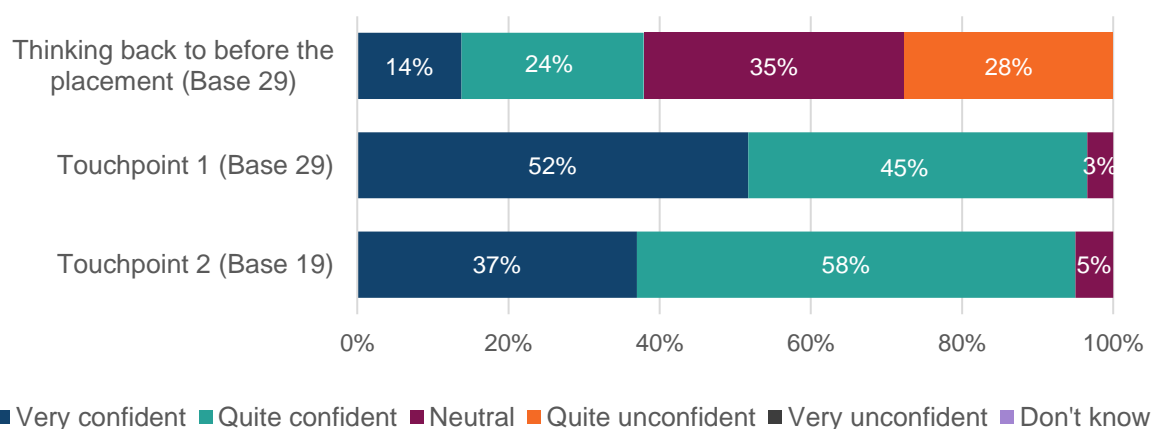
Others felt that they now had a stronger CV as a result of the CV-building sessions, which gave them a confidence boost, as did meeting and talking to other candidates and having the chance to engage with employers and obtain feedback.

*“I stepped into a blind spot, but I learnt how I could be using my experience, streamlining my skills, and understanding more of a career pathway.”*

Backfill candidate

#### 7.4.2 Confidence in own career potential

Backfill candidates were then asked rate their confidence in their own career potential, again thinking back to before they took part in the work placement, and at the time of the survey itself (both touchpoints 1 and 2). The findings reveal a strong increase in confidence levels from before the placement (38% very or quite confident) to after (97% very or quite confident) – Figure 14.

**Figure 14: Confidence in own career potential**

Of the eight surveyed backfill candidates placed with SMEs, the confidence gap from before the placement began, compared to after, is narrower than the whole sample. Fifty percent of candidates placed with SMEs felt very or quite confident before the work placement (compared with 38% across the whole sample), rising to 88% at the time of survey touchpoint 1 (compared with 97% for the whole sample). Possible reasons for the difference between the size bands are not clear and may be due to chance given the small sample sizes.

Candidates were then asked for their reasons where they had a change in confidence. Three put this down to the placement helping to narrow down a specific career pathway, for example one individual was placed in a marketing role and now knows this is a field they would like to pursue.

For two respondents, attending meetings and practising public speaking were especially important in building confidence. Another two said that being part of a professional working environment for the first time had been valuable and a key reason behind their change in confidence.

Two believe they now have a “foot in the door” at the company they work for and feel more confident in achieving a permanent position. Another two felt that having this experience on their CV would stand them in good stead when applying for any permanent roles.

Since being placed, five candidates are more confident now as they know they can carry out the role effectively, with three highlighting skills development as a key part of this. The same number mentioned how supportive the company had been and how guidance and support from certain individuals had given them a boost.

*“The placement has helped me shake off the nerves after a long time out of work. Knowing there are companies out there that can be flexible for mothers – that is great.”*

Backfill candidate

## 7.6 Future prospects and long-term employment

### 7.6.1 Becoming more independent working citizens

Backfill candidates were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed that the work placement had:

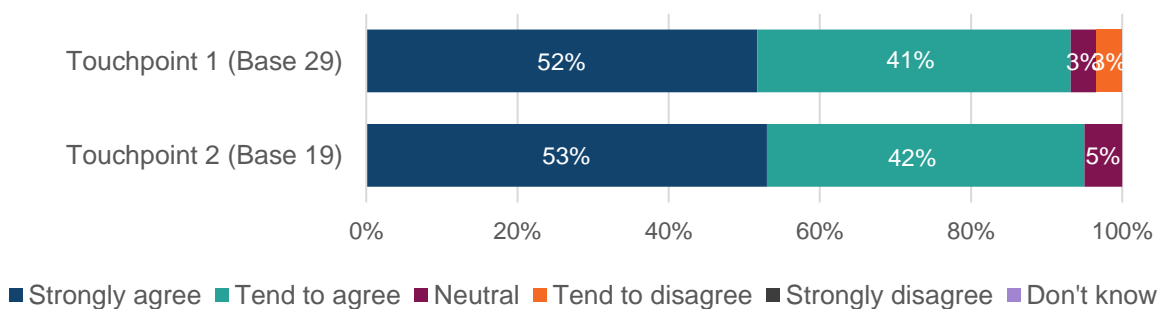
- a. Given them the skills and experience to improve their prospects in work or life
- b. Made them better equipped to overcome challenges in work or life
- c. Reduced their reliance on UC

The findings point to the pilot delivering on its intended benefits in all three areas. At survey touchpoint 1, almost all (93%) agreed they had received skills and experience to improve their prospects; 90% agreed they were better equipped to overcome challenges; and 83% agreed that the work placement had reduced their reliance on UC (Figure 15).<sup>19</sup>

Proportions of candidates in agreement are similar between survey touchpoints 1 and 2, although there is a lower strength of agreement relating to being better equipped to overcome challenges at touchpoint 2. Whilst the reasons for this are not clear, it may be that candidates noticed more of a difference here earlier on in the placement, leading to a plateauing effect later on.

**Figure 15: Extent of agreement/disagreement with outcomes of the work placement**

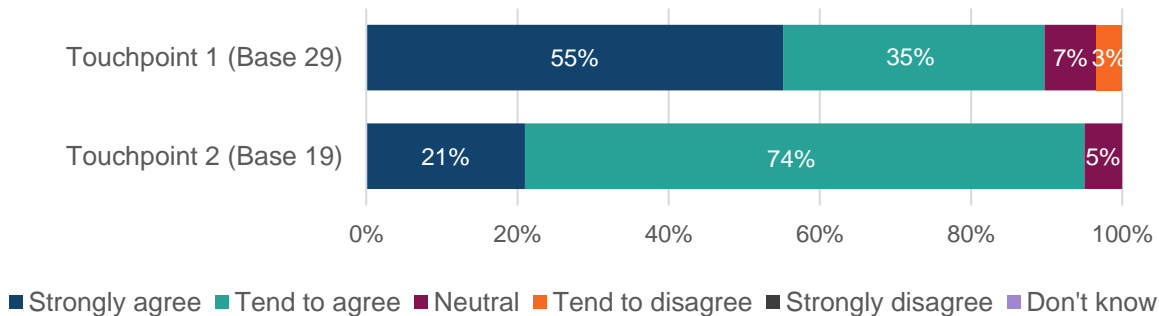
**A: The work placement has given me the skills and experience to improve my prospects in work or life**



Among the eight surveyed backfill candidates placed with SMEs, a slightly lower proportion of 88% agreed at touchpoint 1 (compared with 93% for the whole sample).

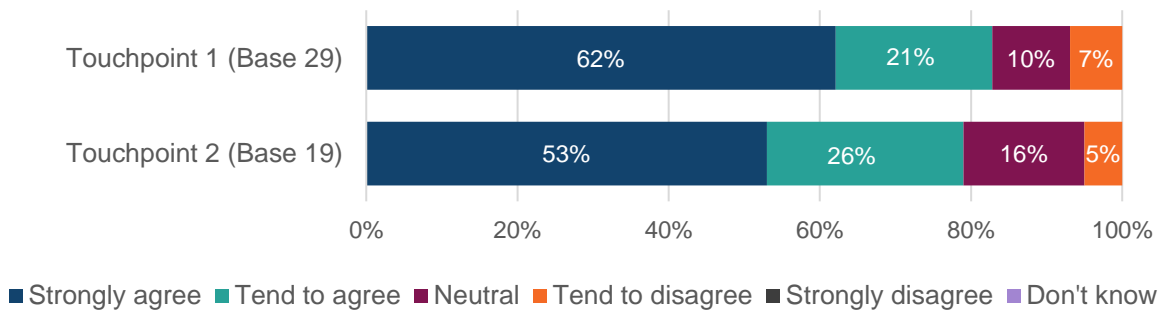
<sup>19</sup> It has not been possible as part of this evaluation to quantify amounts of UC claimed for participating backfill candidates pre and post JRP due to lack of available data.

**B: The work placement has made be better equipped to overcome challenges in work or life**



Among the eight surveyed backfill candidates placed with SMEs, a slightly lower proportion of 88% agreed at touchpoint 1 (compared with 90% for the whole sample).

**C: The placement has reduced my reliance on UC**



Among the eight surveyed backfill candidates placed with SMEs, a markedly lower proportion of 63% agreed at touchpoint 1 (compared with 83% for the whole sample), although clearly still the majority.

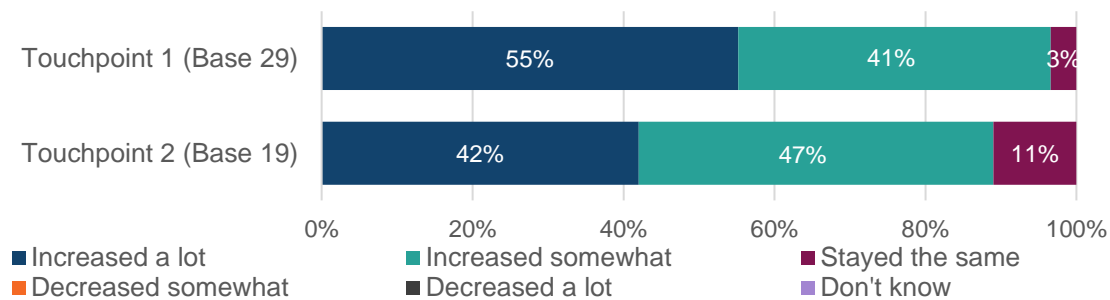
It is important to note that reduced reliance on UC from the JRP is not a complete measure of payback to the state given the subsidy of £3,600 paid to each employer per backfill candidate. It is also important to factor in other potential beneficial outcomes for backfill candidates, such as stronger work readiness, improved prospects for finding work in the future, and sustained employment within placement organisations where employers choose to offer this (explored further in the remainder of this section).

**7.6.2 Improved career opportunities**

Next, backfill candidates were asked the extent to which they felt the JRP overall had increased their career opportunities. This appears to be a strong area of success for the

pilot, with almost all (96%) saying this had increased ‘a lot’ or ‘somewhat’ at touchpoint 1, falling back only slightly to 89% at touchpoint 2 (Figure 16).

**Figure 16: Extent to which career opportunities have increased/decreased**



Among the eight surveyed backfill candidates placed with SMEs, a slightly lower proportion of 88% said their confidence had increased a lot or somewhat at touchpoint 1 (compared with 96% for the whole sample).

**7.6.3 Opportunity for long-term employment at the placement company**

At survey touchpoint 1, most backfill candidates (87%) said they were hoping to pursue a permanent position with their employer, though just under half (45%) said that their employer had discussed a more permanent position with them. This points to a relatively wide disparity between candidate expectations and the potential long-term employment outcome at the time of writing.

However, among the eight backfill candidates placed with SMEs, the gap is narrower. All those placed within SMEs (100%) said at touchpoint 1 that they were hoping to pursue a permanent position with the employer, and most (88%) said that their employer had discussed that with them. This suggests a closer alignment between candidate expectations and those expectations being realised across the SME placements.

These findings suggest that SMEs taking part in the pilot may be better placed to offer permanent positions to the relatively smaller number of individuals they had agreed to provide placements for. It also suggests that SMEs may have candidates whom they consider a better fit for the longer term. This ties in with feedback from employers. Indeed, most (but not all) participating employers stated that their intention is to take on their backfill candidates into long-term positions and for the backfill candidates to remain at the company.

*“I’m not sure how others are doing it but for us it wouldn’t make sense [to take them on] temporarily. We want people to come in and sustain long-term employment.”*  
Employer

*“I don’t have a problem with keeping either of them... we always have the intention to recruit long-term”*

Employer

One employer mentioned wanting to give candidates the best opportunities but some did not appear to be ready for the workplace. The employer is of the view it would take longer than the 12-week placement to help them get to that level, so would not be in a position to retain all of these individuals.

*“It’s about getting people to a place where they are ready to take on long term employment. One individual said ‘thank you so much for accepting me to take part – you’ve given me hope again for my career development’.”*

Employer

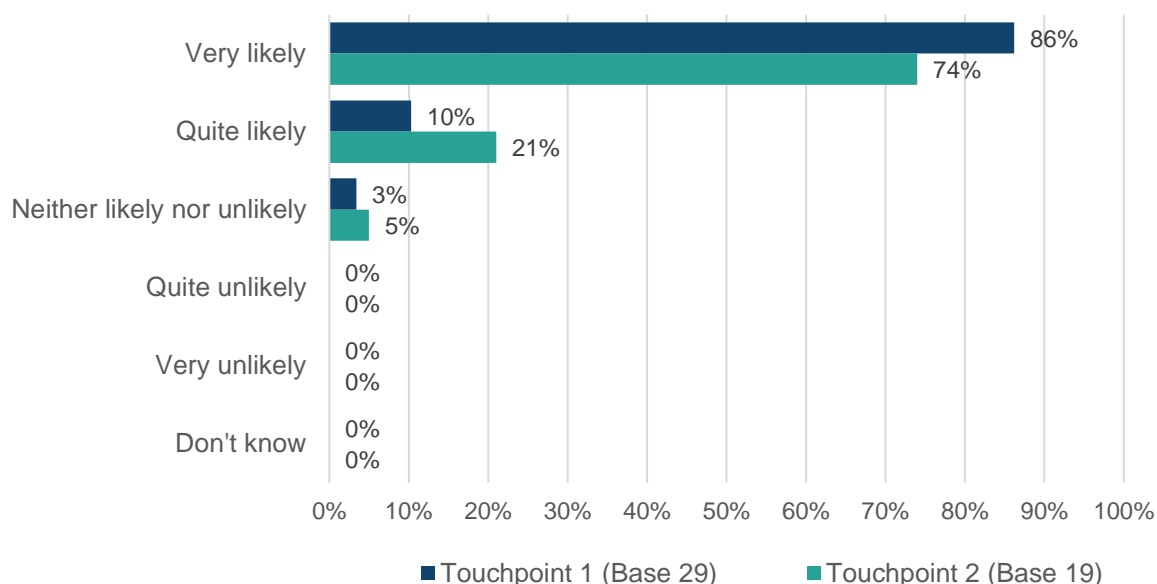
At survey touchpoint 2, a small minority (11%) said they had agreed a permanent position with their employer by this point. Of those that hadn’t, almost all (94%) said this was still something they were hoping to pursue. The disparity therefore between expectations for a permanent position and the offer of long-term employment remains wide. However, with placements still on-going at the time of writing, this remains an incomplete picture. It is possible therefore that the availability of permanent positions may rise as placements get closer to the 12-week mark.

Where a long-term position doesn’t materialise, employers see the pilot as providing invaluable experience that can help individuals with future work opportunities, through good experience, new connections and insight into how businesses operate.

## 7.7 Advocacy

Finally, there is evidence of strong advocacy among backfill candidates, with almost all (96%) at survey touchpoint 1 either very or quite likely to recommend the scheme to someone else looking for employment. The overall proportion is about the same at touchpoint 2 (95% very or quite likely to recommend) albeit with a slight dilution of strength in the proportion saying ‘very likely’ (Figure 17).

**Figure 17: Likelihood of recommending the JR scheme to someone else looking for employment**



Among the eight surveyed backfill candidates placed with SMEs, 88% said they would be very or quite likely to recommend the scheme at touchpoint 1 (slightly lower than 96% for the whole sample).

## 7.8 Case studies



### Backfill candidate – case study 1

*“I now have somewhere to put my energy to good use”*

After a short period of unemployment, this participant was recruited as a backfill candidate to support a senior staff member working in project management. They entered the placement with the hope of finding long-term employment and developing their digital skills.

The candidate found the employer’s in-house employability sessions to be really useful.

*“The sessions make you think and engage rather than just the employer feeding us information. That helps us to understand that mistakes will be made but it’s about correcting those and learning.”*



The individual experienced some initial difficulties getting used to the corporate environment and routine, but found the employer to be very supportive, providing them with guidance around upcoming opportunities and the possibility of a more permanent role within the company.

Overall, they found the placement to be immensely valuable, helping to improve their knowledge of the corporate working world, and framing a career pathway to work towards with motivation and confidence. In their view - *“you get out what you put in.”*



### Backfill candidate – case study 2

*“You're never bored here.”*

This participant found their placement via the Job Shop, having wanted to develop their administrative skills and obtain general work experience. They were very happy with the matching process at the Job Shop, stating: *“It's the fastest I've ever been interviewed and the Job Shop people are great at matching your skills to an opportunity.”*

Their position, combining customer service and administrative functions, has made for a varied and enjoyable role. They found their employer to have been very supportive throughout the placement, and the only main challenge was that the placement came at a very busy time for the company so sometimes it felt like quite a rush to complete work.

Overall, the participant feels the placement has been extremely valuable, allowing them to gain the skills they wanted and secure work experience much faster than might otherwise have been the case. Looking towards the future, they feel their career prospects and confidence in finding work has substantially improved and wouldn't hesitate at recommending the scheme to others.

## 8. Key Findings, Conclusions and Forward Considerations

### 8.1 Key findings

Table 6 summarises actual outcomes relative to target outcomes for the JRP, along with signposting to further information within the report.

**Table 6: Key findings in relation to intended pilot outcomes**

Target outcome	Actual outcome (correct as of 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025)	Report section
80 local residents claiming UC gain valuable skills and work experience	90% achieved (72 out of 80).	3.2
Key focus on young people, as well as residents aged over 50	Based on limited profiling data from Coventry City Council (i.e. not for the whole cohort) there appears to have been strong participation among young people (58% under 25) but limited participation among older residents (5% over 50).	3.3 and Appendix 3
75% secure long-term work as a consequence	At survey touchpoint 1, 45% of backfill candidates said that their employer had discussed a more permanent position with them (80% among those placed within SMEs). It is important to note that placements were only partially underway during the fieldwork window.	7.6.3
80 existing employees upskill, retrain and progress	80% achieved (64 out of 80).	3.2
Reduced reliance on UC benefits for those taking part	Evident among backfill candidates, among which 83% said the JRP had reduced their reliance on UC.  Sourcing of existing employees who were UC claimants proved to be prohibitive.	7.6.1  6.1.1
Employers realise performance benefits	Qualitative evidence of positive emerging outcomes for employers in relation to productivity, retention and reduced training costs.	5
Employers are more aware of local skills and in-work support offers	Evidenced, including onward participation in local/regional initiatives.	5.5.2

## 8.2 Conclusions

**10. The JR model has strongly supported employers to enable upskilling of their workforce across a range of sectors and job roles, and for different sizes of organisation.**

The JRP has successfully enabled upskilling of existing employees in industry sectors that tend to employ lower-wage roles, such as health and social care, warehousing and security. It has involved one large employer and nine SMEs, with all interviewed employers having successfully enabled upskilling opportunities through links with an external training provider (or in the case of the large employer, its own in-house training academy). The most commonly reported skills developed by existing employees include transferable skills such as management and leadership, communication and problem solving.

The effectiveness of the upskilling can also be measured through the satisfaction levels of employees taking part. A third (33%) said they were 'very satisfied' at work when reflecting back to before the upskilling, rising to 78% at the time of the survey. Their supporting reasoning includes the perception of being valued by their employer; better able to see how the company has shown interested in their development; in possession of greater knowledge; and more positive and confident about the future as a result.

**11. There is evidence that the JR model can bring substantial additionality to upskilling arrangements, along with wider, spillover benefits.**

Even among employers who said that upskilling would likely have happened anyway, the pilot either brought the upskilling forward or increased its scale – in the case of one employer unlocking the opportunity for invaluable hands-on line management experience that would otherwise not have been possible. There is evidence that the model can also create a spillover effect, with one employer saying that other (non-participating) staff have also become more motivated to think about their own development.

**12. The JR model has demonstrated its ability to facilitate the progression of existing employees, including (but not limited to) those in low wage roles.**

Most employers expressed a desire and confidence to promote existing employees. Furthermore, existing employees have evidently become better skilled and more marketable, with strong progression and promotion potential. Despite a limited survey sample and some employers still to organise roles for upskilling at the time of writing, close to a quarter of existing employees surveyed (24%) said their job titles had changed to a more senior role whilst part of the JRP and described how they had taken on senior responsibilities.

Additionally, more than three quarters of surveyed employees (77%) agreed that the training has improved their career progression opportunities, increasing to 100% among those based within SMEs. This may be due to a less competitive environment within small businesses for senior positions, and where it may be easier for the employer to promote from a more limited candidate pool.

**13. The Job Shop work readiness sessions organised as part of the JRP have provided valuable experience for local residents to help with their future job searches, even where not ultimately selected for a placement.**

Three quarters (75%) of backfill candidates said the topics covered in the work readiness sessions were appropriate to their needs, with particular praise for sessions on interviewing techniques and CV writing. A similar proportion (79%) agreed that the sessions helped to increase their motivations to find long-term work and more than two thirds (67%) agreed that the skills they have developed will help to create new opportunities.

**14. The work placements offered as part of the JR model can make a valuable difference for backfill candidates, with key outcomes including improved confidence, stronger perceived employment prospects and ability to overcome challenges.**

For the most part, JRP backfill candidates selected for work placements appear to have been well matched to an area of industry or job role that suited them (93% of this view). Employees placed with one employer took part in weekly employability sessions, thus providing additional transferable skills development which candidates largely found helpful, including such topics as digital skills, confidence building and more.

Backfill candidates rated the perceived value to them of the JRP at 8.3 out of 10 (rising to 8.7 among those placed within SMEs). The most commonly mentioned value-adds include good prospects for future job opportunities, valuable knowledge and experience gained in a relevant field, and increased confidence.

The pilot also appears to have made a strong difference to backfill candidates' confidence in different areas. For example, less than a third (29%) said they were very or quite confident in finding long-term employment when reflecting back to before the work readiness sessions, rising to 79% at the time of survey touchpoint 1. The finding is similar in terms of confidence in their own career potential, with 38% very or quite confident when thinking back to the before the placement, rising to 97% at survey touchpoint 1.

**15. Whilst taking part in the JRP has – according to backfill candidates – reduced their reliance on UC, this reduction in reliance on the state would need to be balanced against: i) the employer subsidy provided by the state for offering the placement; and ii) the sustained benefits for all those taking part.**

Most backfill candidates (83%) said the pilot had reduced their reliance on UC, although it was not possible to determine to what extent based on data available for this evaluation and its remit. Any reduction in UC also needs to be considered alongside the amount of the wage subsidy (£3,600) provided by the state to the employer. On that basis, it is important to consider the overall value of the pilot in boosting individuals' employability potential, their confidence as a result of the work readiness sessions and

placements, and their long-term career opportunities, which have been clearly demonstrated from the findings thus far. Furthermore, the pilot is unique in terms of providing the upskilling and promotion opportunities for existing employees, leading to higher wages and taxes being paid. Whilst employers feel the funding is vital for taking part in such a scheme, there is evidence that some have gone on to access other skills initiatives in the area, contributing to a longer-term business enhancement mindset.

**16. For employers, evidence suggests that the JR model has the potential to boost productivity, improve retention, reduce training costs, strengthen their buy-in to local skills initiatives, and potentially help contribute to wider economic growth**

Most interviewed employers taking part in the JRP believe it is helping to stimulate increased productivity within their companies, although they see this as difficult to measure at an early stage. Evidence of a tangible net productivity gain may also be more difficult for a large employer taking on bigger cohorts that involves a resource commitment over and above what might be the case for standard recruits, e.g. additional support and basic skills training.

Thinking about their existing employees being upskilled, employers taking part in the JRP are generally very confident that this will lead to improved retention, benefiting both the individual and the business. Additionally, some participating employers are now more aware of local skills initiatives, having found the JRP “eye-opening” to what is available, and (for two in particular) going on to access other initiatives and services.

A weaker aspect for employers is the JRP recruitment process, with several mentioning a greater time investment on their part than would normally be the case with recruitment, particularly finding the right people from the Job Shop work readiness sessions. This may partly explain why some employers chose to recruit to the backfill placements from outside of this pool.

**17. The JR model can lead to different types of benefits and trade-offs in the way it is operated by larger employers relative to SMEs, including prospects for backfill candidates’ long-term employment within the placement company.**

For larger employers, corporate and social responsibility objectives may be a key driver for taking part in a scheme such as this. For the single large employer taking part in the JRP, this applies particularly with respect to its long-term vision to improve life and work chances of individuals in the Midlands, including tackling the underlying causes of poverty.

A large employer brings the benefit of being actively able to support bigger cohorts of upskilling and entry level backfills for individuals who might otherwise face disproportionate barriers to employment. A large employer might also have greater capacity to provide additional support for knowledge and skills development. This was the case with the JRP, for example leveraging an in-house skills academy to upskill

existing employees, as well as organise weekly employability sessions for backfill candidates to boost their skills and awareness.

The benefit for all backfill candidates – whether placed with a large employer or an SME – is that they stand to gain valuable new skills that will stand them in good stead for the future. The trade-off is that backfill candidates placed with a large employer could be less likely than those placed within SMEs to secure a long-term position within the placement company. This could be due to factors such as: i) the employer being more motivated to support a short term opportunity to support a backfill candidates' skills and career potential rather than a long-term position; ii) insufficient long-term positions being available in the company at a particular point in time; or iii) the employer needing more time than a placement period would allow to train individuals to a point they would deem them to be sufficiently “work ready.”

This is backed up from evaluation findings. At survey touchpoint 1, most backfill candidates (87%) said they were hoping to pursue a permanent position with their employer, though just under half (45%) said that their employer had discussed a more permanent position with them. This points to a relatively wide disparity between candidate expectations and the potential long-term employment outcome at the time of writing. Among the eight backfill candidates placed with SMEs, 88% said that their employer had discussed a permanent position with them.

**18. Whilst the JR model is a unique type of offering that does not easily compare with similar other schemes and initiatives, evidence from the pilot suggests the model is able to deliver strong comparable outcomes.**

Qualitative evidence (albeit limited from the small-scale JRP pilot) points to the scheme's ability to deliver many outcomes that are at least as good (if not better) for individual participants than some other broadly comparable schemes. The added value for the JRP is that it uses a holistic approach to deliver outcomes for multiple audience groups simultaneously – unemployed residents (placed or not placed), existing employees, employers and (by virtue) broader economy.

The cost per participant for the JRP is higher than some other schemes and lower than others. Comparisons have identified the following overlaps in terms of outcome areas:

- Strong ties with local centres to help implementation
- Confidence and motivation building
- Advice and support for new job applications
- Ability to move claimants directly into employment
- Access to some form of training
- Receipt of on-the-job training
- Increased earnings
- Improved self-esteem and self-confidence
- Improved job performance
- Motivation to progress

- Overall employability
- A high proportion that would recommend the programme to others

See Appendix 3 for more detail relating to how the schemes compare across different outcome areas.

### 8.3 Forward Considerations

On the back of the broad range of positive outcomes identified from the JRP, consideration should be given to extending the pilot, and/or rolling it out to other areas in the West Midlands region or to other areas and regions of the country. The following forward considerations are intended to help when considering such a rollout.

1. **Importance of government funding:** This would be essential, as evidenced by feedback from all interviewed employers who found that an important enabler to taking part.
2. **Flexible adoption of the JR model:** The JRP has demonstrated that the JR model can be adapted flexibly, using a direct or indirect substitution approach, which could provide a useful basis for negotiating future participation with large and small employers like.
3. **Ensuring sufficient lead and delivery timescales:** Whilst the JRP experienced some unforeseen delays due to the General Election and mayoral elections, future scheme roll-out should ensure sufficient lead time to establish governance processes, galvanise and work with employers to complete onboarding processes, and ensure sufficient time for all rotations to be organised and completed within allowed funding period.
4. **Streamlining processes where possible:** Consideration should be given to where certain local administrative processes could be made more efficient to help make rollout as efficient as possible, e.g. reflecting on internal processes or information asked of employers that proved less useful, overly burdensome or unnecessarily time consuming as part of the JRP.
5. **Importance of good collaboration:** As demonstrated by the JRP, a strong collaborative approach is vital to help create opportunities for employers to network with skills system actors and understand more about the local skills offer through initial briefing/employer engagement sessions, and other events. These represent key ingredients that should be in place and that could be replicated for future, similar projects.
6. **A mutually supportive approach to accessing and engaging local SMEs:** Given that SMEs are the lifeblood of local economies, it is important that they are strongly represented to maximise opportunity creation across a broad range of priority sectors. This means reflecting on which engagement processes worked most and



least well as part of the JRP to help secure their buy-in. A key lesson from the JRP is that more employers across a range of sectors could potentially have been identified with greater sharing of employer contacts and relationships between partners, such as access to JCP data.

7. **Maximising the size of the candidate pool for employers:** The Job Shop work readiness sessions as part of the JRP provided vital support for local residents looking for work and have evidently made a difference to individuals' prospects. However, several employers did not select from these cohorts, or only partially selected from them. Whilst this does not appear to have deterred employers who would willingly take part again, it does potentially lessen the likelihood of individuals securing long-term employment if employers have concerns about the right fit or their confidence in being able to bring them up to speed over the course of 12 weeks. As such, future rollout should seek to maximise as far as possible the size of the candidate pool with support from the Job Shop and JCP, potentially offering additional incentives to residents, and building in flexibility for employers to select candidates in other ways to help manage their expectations.
8. **Accessing more reliable data to measure return on investment:** Return on investment could be more reliably determined if key partners and evaluators had access to information on UC claimed and ideally taxes paid by participating individuals pre and post intervention. It is appreciated that accessing and using DWP or HMRC data brings with it a range of complexities such as consent, data access protocols and data privacy implications that could make this difficult. It is also important to note that placement candidates are not determined well in advance but continuously over the course of the intervention; moreover, employers may be reluctant to share information about these candidates due to concerns about consent, data privacy and how this information might be used.
9. **Deployment of regular and robust monitoring tools:** As demonstrated by the JRP, these are important to make it easy to track and analyse participant numbers across different participant groups (including columns for numbers separate to textual information) along with information that makes it easy to track the profile and characteristics of those taking part. This may require upfront agreement with employers on the types of information they are expected to provide and when, as part of the condition of taking part, as well as an expectation that they would be contacted as part of any accompanying evaluation.



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## Appendix 1. Job Rotation Model – Further Evidence

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*To be read in conjunction with section 1.1 – About the Danish Job Rotation model*

### **Benefits of the JR model for unemployed individuals and employees**

As well as providing work experience for unemployed residents, the Danish Job Rotation (JR) model often results in these individuals being permanently employed. Danish schemes achieved a rate of between 70-80% of unemployed participants being permanently employed by the employer that carried out the work placement in the 2000s<sup>20</sup>. In 2021, this number was around 59% of unemployed placement workers<sup>21</sup>.

Previous research has compared employment outcomes with matched controls who had not taken part in JR through employment records from Danish databases (the DREAM and E-indkomst registries). Unemployed individuals who took part in a placement were later employed between two and three weeks sooner than unemployed individuals who hadn't taken part in a placement. However, these effects were only found for unskilled participants, and so this group likely benefits most<sup>22</sup>.

The JR model is considered one of the most effective schemes for improving employment of unemployed individuals, as shown in an analysis of six schemes used by Finland, all with the aim of improving employment rates for unemployed residents<sup>23</sup>. The JR model showed the second highest impact on a combination of short-term and long-term employability, only surpassed by job subsidies. The JR model has also been praised for its positive effect on reducing benefit dependency, as well as its relatively low-cost comparative to other training schemes.

Previous JR models in the UK have been small-scale but also show positive results for unemployed participants. Starting in 2004, unemployed Scottish residents took part in JR placements across North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire and West Dunbartonshire<sup>24</sup>. These residents included lone parents, women returning to work, young adults, and people claiming Job Seeker's Allowance. Following the completion of the placement, 21 of the 25 residents had then, or shortly after, entered employment.

There has been less of a focus on existing employees within evaluations of JR schemes, however, they have been shown to have particularly positive outcomes for older employees

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<sup>20</sup> Kruhøffer, J (2007) Job Rotation in Europe as the Feasibility environment for the Jobrotation e-Service, Berlin AOF

<sup>21</sup> The Agency for Labor Market and Recruitment (2024) Evaluation of relaxation of requirements for the job rotation scheme

<sup>22</sup> Sørensen & Arendt (2014) Effekter af ansættelse som jobrotationsvikar

<sup>23</sup> Sianesi, B (2005) Differential Effects of Active Labour Market Programs for the Unemployed

<sup>24</sup> Shiel, L, Clark, I & Richards, F (2006) Employability Initiatives In The Better Neighbourhood Services Fund

(55-64 years old). In particular, it can serve as a form of in-work training that can allow older workers to boost their skills and remain in employment <sup>25</sup>.

### **Benefits of the JR model for employers**

Most employers who participated in JR schemes in Denmark (60%) were daycares, care companies for the elderly and disabled, and other social institutions<sup>26</sup>. As a result, Denmark has been able to upgrade skills in the health and social care sectors in part due to JR<sup>27,28</sup>. One employer who had taken on many placements in Denmark noted that they were motivated by the prospect of their employees gaining qualifications whilst also providing training for new staff<sup>29</sup>. In the aforementioned Scotland-based JR scheme, 150 employers were engaged, providing further evidence of strong industry buy-in to the potential benefits<sup>30</sup>.

Despite interest from employers, it is important to consider motivations for taking part in scheme. Danish trade unions have previously reported concerns among employers using the scheme for cheap labour, especially from unemployed individuals whose pay is subsidised by the government<sup>31</sup>. Strong involvement from trade unions has therefore been recommended to combat this and ensure employees' best interests are considered.

### **Financial motivations**

Nine countries who joined the transnational JR partnership have had differing financial models, which have been compared for their effectiveness<sup>32</sup>. A review suggested that the success of these schemes is reliant on financial and legal motivations for the employer, employee and unemployed residents, including:

- Large subsidies for the employer to account for most of the pay to the unemployed placement worker, as well as most of the costs for the employee's training
- Good compensation for employees during training, and subsidies on any training costs
- Protection for employees against dismissal by the employer after returning to work
- A moderate increase in compensation for unemployed placement workers compared to their usual benefits
- Compensation for the unemployed placement workers equalling a large portion of the role's usual pay

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<sup>25</sup> Centre for Policy on Ageing (2016) Foresight Future of an Ageing Population - International Case Studies

<sup>26</sup> The Agency for Labor Market and Recruitment (2024) Evaluation of relaxation of requirements for the job rotation scheme

<sup>27</sup> EU Jobrotation (2000a) Job Rotation in Denmark: Statement of status and problem areas

<sup>28</sup> EU Jobrotation (2000b) Ideas for further developing and expanding Job Rotation

<sup>29</sup> Nordjyllands Arbejdsmarkedraad (1998) Evaluation of North Jutland's Job Rotation Projects—Employer's assessment of impacts

<sup>30</sup> Shiel, L, Clark, I & Richards, F (2006) Employability Initiatives In The Better Neighbourhood Services Fund

<sup>31</sup> Etherington, D. (2005) Economic Competitiveness And Social Inclusive Labour Market Policies: Lessons From The UK And Denmark

<sup>32</sup> Schömann, K, Mytze, R, & Gülker, S (1998) Institutional and Financial Framework for Job Rotation in Nine European Countries

In these areas, Denmark's model was noted by the review's authors as a good standard for compensation and subsidies. Large employer subsidies encourage employers to take on the unemployed placement workers, and there is good compensation for both the employees and the unemployed participants. This is aided by Denmark's high taxation rate (currently up to 52% of income)<sup>33</sup> and large funding for employment support.

However, as a result, the government costs for the scheme are an average of €25.94 per hour of employment of the unemployed resident<sup>34</sup>. This has led to concerns that the scheme is not recession proof and is liable to be cut in times of economic depression<sup>35</sup>.

At the time of the review (1998), it was noted that the UK had poor legislation and little involvement in training adults, to its detriment. However, there has been a subsequent uptick in schemes for adult training in both employed and unemployed groups, such as Kickstart, Restart and Step Up. Further analysis of such schemes and their impact can be found in Appendix 2.

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<sup>33</sup> PWC (2024) Denmark: Individual - Taxes on personal income

<sup>34</sup> Eurofound (2022) Job Rotation Factsheet

<sup>35</sup> Etherington, D. (2005) Economic Competitiveness And Social Inclusive Labour Market Policies: Lessons From The UK And Denmark

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## Appendix 2. Response Rates

The following table provides further detail on the response rates from different audiences taking part in primary research for this evaluation. This table should be read in conjunction with the methodology (section 2.2).

Audience	Method	Population size as of 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025	Achieved sample	Response rate
Key partner representatives	In-depth interviews and virtual group discussions	3	3	100%
Participating employers	Phone survey, supporting online survey, in-person surveying	7, with employees and backfill candidates in position at the time of surveying)	5	71%
Existing employees	Phone survey, supporting online survey, virtual (Teams) surveying	72, however:  38 in position at the time of surveying within consenting employers	18	25% of the total  47% when based on those in position at the time of the fieldwork
Backfill candidates	Phone survey, supporting online survey	76 (made up of 49 who attended Job Shop work readiness sessions and 27 who did not attend Job Shop work readiness sessions)  64 candidates were placed with an employer (including 8 of the 49 who attended Job Shop work readiness sessions) – the remaining placements were drawn from other sources  As such, 41 of the 49 who attended Job Shop work readiness sessions were not placed during the evaluation period	47	62%

## Appendix 3. Participant Profiling Data

The following table provides further detail on the characteristics of JRP participants. It should be read in conjunction with section 3.3.

These tables have been derived based on data supplied by Coventry City Council. They should be treated with caution as they only provide data on a limited subset of participants at the time of writing, especially for existing employees.

*Base for backfill candidates: 40*

*Base for existing employees: 12*

Age	Under 25	25-50	Over 50
Backfill candidates - placed	23	15	2
	58%	37%	5%
Existing employees	2	9	1
	17%	75%	8%

Gender	Female	Male	Prefer not to say
Backfill candidates - placed	25	14	1
	63%	35%	2%
Existing employees	7	5	-
	58%	42%	-

Ethnicity	Asian/ Asian British	Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British	White - British	White - Other	Other
Backfill candidates - placed	13	10	13	2	2
	33%	24%	33%	5%	5%
Existing employees	4	5	2	1	-
	33%	42%	17%	8%	-

Highest educational attainment level upon starting	None	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Backfill candidates only								
Count*	2	4	8	5	3	3	9	5
%*	5%	10%	20%	13%	8%	8%	23%	13%

\*One additional candidate reported an educational level between one and three.

Salary band	10k-20k	20k-30k
Existing employees only		
Count	4	8
%	33%	66%

NB: Data (base numbers) are very limited for this metric.

Training and upskilling offered	Employability Training	Machine Operator Training	Mandatory Theoretical and Practical Training
Backfill candidates only			
Count	37	1	2
%	93%	2%	5%

Training and upskilling offered	Breakaway Classroom Training	Leadership and Management	Management Shadowing	NVQ Level 3 Adult Care
Existing employees only				
Count	2	4	2	4
%	17%	33%	17%	33%

Training/ Upskilling Accreditation	Accredited	Non-accredited
Existing employees only		
Count	8	4
%	67%	33%

Training/ upskilling Level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Existing employees only			
Count	2	-	10
%	17%	-	83%

## Appendix 4. Scheme Comparisons

The JRP is a unique type of offer that creates a single co-ordinated holistic pathway from multiple existing and separate offers undertaken by different organisations. It combines work readiness support, a placement offer for UC claimants, alongside upskilling for existing employees. This makes the JRP difficult to compare with other programmes providing employment-related support, especially those operating at scale. This note of caution was raised by key JRP partners during interviews. However, the table below summarises broadly comparable programmes, including mapping of certain comparable outcomes from these programmes to those emerging from this JRP evaluation.

Overall, qualitative evidence (albeit limited from a small pilot) points to the JRP delivering certain outcomes that appear to be as good, if not potentially stronger, for individual participants than other schemes, including for multiple audience groups. In some cases, the JRP cost per participant is higher and in other cases lower.

Programme	Brief description	Target audience	Comparable outcome areas	How JRP compares
Future Bright 2018-2021 West of England Combined Authority (WECA)	Local authorities received funding to provide residents with light touch or full-service support for between 3 to 6 months to enable in-work progression. They also participated in outreach with employers about the advantages of supporting in-work	Adults 18 and above who are earning below the Real Living Wage and in receipt of benefits while in work	Support requested most: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Confidence and motivation building</li> <li>Supporting mental health and well-being</li> </ul>	<p>Existing employees: Described being more confident and motivated as a result of the upskilling (section 6.3) and employers' confidence in the pilot's role in improving retention (section 5.2) and progression/promotion potential (5.3)</p> <p>Backfill candidates: Inferred through improved outcomes relating to feeling supported by their employer; working in an area of industry or job role that suits them well; improved prospects in work or life; and being better equipped to overcome challenges in work or life (sections 7.3 and 7.6)</p>

Programme	Brief description	Target audience	Comparable outcome areas	How JRP compares
	<p>progression for their employees</p> <p>Target referrals: &gt;4,500</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advice and support for new job applications</li> </ul> <p>91% said they felt motivated to progress</p> <p>42% accessed some form of training</p> <p>90% said they would recommend the programme</p> <p>Strong ties with local centres can help implementation</p> <p>Reaching older people was difficult through referral routes (just over 10% were over 50)</p> <p>Source for above: Centrifuge Consulting (2021) <i>Future Bright Summative Evaluation Report</i></p>	<p>Backfill candidates: Delivered through Job Shop work readiness sessions and candidates' satisfaction with these sessions, including the usefulness of the content covered to help find work (sections 1.3, 7.2 and 7.5).</p> <p>Existing employees: 77% reported improved career progression opportunities (section 6.3)</p> <p>Existing employees: 100% receiving some form of upskilling/training</p> <p>Backfill candidates: 72% mentioned taking part in employability sessions during their work placement (section 7.3)</p> <p>Backfill candidates: 96% very or quite likely to recommend the programme (section 7.7)</p> <p>Evident through leverage by key partners of local networks, including Job Shop, JCP, existing local training provision and links with employers and local residents standing to benefit (sections 1.3 and 4.2)</p> <p>Similar challenges: 8% of existing employees aged over 50; and 5% of backfill candidates aged over 50 (section 7.7) – note data are incomplete at time of writing</p>



Programme	Brief description	Target audience	Comparable outcome areas	How JRP compares
Job Entry: Targeted Support (JETS)  2020-2022  England and Wales	Employment support for up to 6 months to help people get back to work following disruptions from the pandemic.  320,000 programme starts.	Residents who unemployed for at least 3 months and capable of quickly re-entering work. In receipt of UC and in the Intensive Work-Search Regime, or in receipt of New Style Jobseeker's Allowance.	Cost per participant was calculated after the programme at £823 per participant.  Support offered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employability support</li> <li>• CV writing</li> <li>• Job search and application support</li> <li>• Interview preparation</li> <li>• Careers advice</li> </ul> Outcomes for individuals in the scheme included securing employment, improving confidence, and a better understanding of their transferable skills.  Source for above: DWP (2025) <i>JETS (Job Entry Targeted Support) Impact Evaluation</i>	Higher cost at £4,625 per participant (section 3.1) which accounts for all associated programme costs  All offered to backfill candidates as part of the Job Shop work readiness sessions (sections 1.3 and 7.2)  Backfill candidates: Strong evidence of outcomes for individuals, including securing work placements (section 3.2) and increased confidence (section 7.5)
Kickstart  2020-2022  England, Scotland and Wales	Grant funding scheme to subsidise wages for employers to create jobs for young people. The programme grant-funded 25 hours of minimum wages for 6	Young people from 16-24 in receipt of UC (median: 6 months) and were considered at risk of becoming long-	As of 2022, cost per participant was estimated at around £7,000.  Source for above: House of Commons (2022) <i>DWP Employment Support: Kickstart Scheme</i>	Lower cost at £4,625 per participant (section 3.1) which accounts for all associated programme costs.

Programme	Brief description	Target audience	Comparable outcome areas	How JRP compares
	<p>months. The programme was a response to the effects of COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>163,000 placements completed.</p>	term unemployed.	<p>Of every 100 participants 11 were moved into employment due to Kickstart, and 3 were moved off UC</p> <p>70% of leavers were satisfied with their experience</p> <p>94% of people who completed the programme reported receiving on the job training</p> <p>75% reported that their job with Kickstart gave them opportunities to start a career.</p> <p>Source for above: DWP (2023) <i>Kickstart Scheme - process evaluation</i></p>	<p>Backfill candidates: At survey touchpoint 2, 11% said their employer had agreed a permanent position with them (section 7.6) – based on survey data only, does not include job offers made to non-surveyed candidates, and may be subject to change as placements were still on-going at the time of the evaluation</p> <p>Backfill candidates: 93% satisfied with the work placement at survey touchpoint 1 (section 7.3)</p> <p>Backfill candidates: 72% mentioned taking part in employability sessions during their work placement (section 7.3)</p> <p>Backfill candidates: 75% confident in finding long-term employment (section 7.5)</p> <p>Backfill candidates: 93% believe that the placement has given them the skills and experience to improve their prospects in work or life (section 7.6)</p>
Restart 2021-present England and Wales	Contractors were commissioned to provide a maximum of 12 months support to move people into sustained employment through	Jobcentre Plus customers, initially who had received UC for 12-18 months, then expanded to all who had	<p>Cost per participant estimated at £1,800 but since expected to be £2,429</p> <p>UK Parliament (2023) <i>The Restart Scheme for long-term unemployed people</i></p>	Higher cost at £4,625 per participant (section 3.1) which accounts for all associated programme costs

Programme	Brief description	Target audience	Comparable outcome areas	How JRP compares
	coaching and referrals to support services and employers.	received UC for more than 6 months	<p>The research identified that the support received enabled some Restart participants to achieve a range of intermediate outcomes including increased confidence and motivation, increased job-search self-efficacy, increased skills, and reduced job selectivity.</p> <p>Source for above: DWP (2024) <i>The Evaluation of the Restart Scheme</i></p>	Backfill candidates: Strong evidence of outcomes for individuals, including being better equipped from the work readiness sessions to find work (section 7.2), employability skills sessions delivered by some employers (section 7.3) and increased confidence (section 7.5)
Skills Escalator 2014-present London	Aims to bring about in-work progression for people with low household income through a mix of one-to-one support and referrals e.g. to training centres and to employers	Adults eligible for housing benefits	<p>Increased earnings, improved self-esteem, self-confidence, and job performance</p> <p>Source for above: L&amp;W Institute (2017) <i>Evaluation of the Skills Escalator Pilot</i></p>	<p>Existing employees: 77% believe the upskilling has improved their career progression opportunities (section 6.3)</p> <p>Existing employees: 94% very likely to stay with their current employer compared with 61% very likely when looking back to before the upskilling (section 6.4)</p> <p>Existing employees: Strong evidence of progression, with particular emphasis on line management training and evidence of additional duties reflective of career progression as a result of the pilot (section 6.5)</p>

Programme	Brief description	Target audience	Comparable outcome areas	How JRP compares
Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs)	The programme offers support to participants through delivery from JCP. Meets local vacancies and sector demands through providing participants with the skills for these sectors. Participants are offered training, work experience, and a job interview with an employer.	Individuals aged 16+ claiming Job Seeker's Allowance or UC. Particular focus on providing opportunities for lone parents aged between 18 and 24.	<p>Cost per SWAP estimated to be £428 – based on reported figures from DWP and DfE financial records 2021/22.</p> <p>Impact remains high over time, with the impact increasing quickly in the first six months after starting a SWAP</p> <p>Source for above: DWP (2025) <i>Sector-based Work Academy Programme: a quantitative impact assessment</i></p> <p>Starting a SWAP tended to have a higher impact for the more disadvantaged groups who have lower baseline employment outcomes.</p> <p>Claimants reported a range of outcomes from their participation in a SWAP, and most of these improved their overall employability (for example, qualifications gained or improved confidence).</p> <p>There was less evidence from this research that SWAPs moved claimants directly into employment, despite this being a key intended outcome for the programme.</p>	<p>Higher cost at £4,625 per participant (section 3.1) which accounts for all associated programme costs</p> <p>Existing employees and backfill candidates: Evidence overall points to lasting benefits from upskilling, promotions, as well as new skills and confidence developed among backfill candidates. However, it has not been possible within the time constraints of this pilot evaluation to assess long-term employment outcomes for backfill candidates, especially as job rotations, including work placements, were still ongoing at the time of the evaluation.</p> <p>Backfill candidates: The JRP targeted individuals claiming UC, including within traditionally low paid sectors, and a third of participants (35%) were qualified at Level 2 (GCSE/equivalent) or below (section 3.3/based on incomplete data).</p> <p>Backfill candidates: Strong evidence of outcomes for individuals, including being better equipped from the work readiness sessions to find work (section 7.2), employability skills sessions delivered by some employers (section 7.3) and increased confidence (section 7.5)</p> <p>The JRP has been successful at placing candidates, though at the time of writing, only eight out of 49 taking part in Job Shop work readiness sessions were selected. However, flexibility was built in for one employer to organise its own work readiness</p>

Programme	Brief description	Target audience	Comparable outcome areas	How JRP compares
			<p>For employers, SWAPs could help with job-matching and filling vacancies.</p> <p>Source for above: DWP (2024) <i>Sector-based Work Academy Programme: qualitative case study research</i></p>	<p>sessions via the Job Shop, and other employers were allowed to select candidates from other routes. At the time of writing, the backfill placement target is 72% fulfilled (section 3.2).</p> <p>For the JRP, this was enabled through the Job Shop work readiness sessions and Coventry City Council working closely with employers to identify opportunities for backfills. Most participating employers intend to provide permanent positions for their backfill candidates (section 5.3).</p>