



An Australian Government Initiative

Job Network

Disability Support Pension Pilot: Interim Evaluation Report

Evaluation and Programme Performance Branch
Employment Analysis and Evaluation Group

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Executive summary

Between December 2003 and June 2004, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations conducted a Pilot to explore strategies to engage Disability Support Pension (DSP) recipients with available Job Network employment services to help them find work.

The Pilot involved 12 specialist Job Network providers who deliver services for job seekers with a disability.

Key findings

Pilot Participation

Pilot providers used a range of tailored strategies to actively engage DSP recipients who did not have ongoing support requirements. The most effective of such strategies were direct marketing strategies and networking with other disability service providers, with these approaches engaging more than half of the participants in the Pilot.

During the period of the Pilot, the number of DSP job seekers with Pilot providers increased significantly.

- By 30 June 2004, over 1 100 job seekers met with a disability specialist provider about participating in the Pilot and 800 were assessed as eligible for services - resulting in 671 commencements in Intensive Support customised assistance by the end of September.
- Pilot participant characteristics were broadly similar to the DSP population in Job Network, although a significant proportion (37%) had been dependant on DSP for five or more years and 12% for more than ten years.
- 21% left the Pilot after commencing, 9% without having commenced assistance. Providers indicated that most had left because of a deterioration in their health or because the Pilot did not suit their needs.
- During the Pilot, 25% of those who exited and those found to be unsuitable for Pilot assistance were referred to alternative programmes such as Disability Employment Assistance, Vocational Rehabilitation Services or the Personal Support Programme.
- By the end of September, 36% of those who had commenced Intensive Support customised assistance had been placed in employment and education. Most job seekers were placed in employment. Out of all job seekers placed 39% were in casual employment, 31% were in part-time positions and 22% in full-time work. A further 8% had entered education. Many of those placed in employment have been receiving DSP for more than two years (over 70%) and over half of this group had received the pension for over five years.
- DSP participants recruited under the Pilot were generally retained on the providers' caseload after the Pilot concluded at the end of June for on-going assistance and providers are continuing to draw down on the Job Seeker Account. As a result, placements are continuing to increase.

A key finding emerging from the Pilot is that many of the participants who wanted to work were not previously taking advantage of available assistance.

- The majority of participants (62%) had already indicated a willingness to work by actively registering as looking for work but most did not have a current referral to Job Network services before their commencement, or were receiving Job Search Support Only services.
–DSP recipients were obviously attracted by the Intensive Support services being offered through the Pilot.
- Including Pilot participants who were not registered as actively looking for work prior to commencing in the Pilot, these findings suggest that over 80% of Pilot participants are now receiving the assistance they needed to find work that they had not accessed prior to joining the Pilot.

Pilot Services

Participating providers reported an improved understanding of the *Active Participation Model* flexibilities and how they could assist DSP job seekers as a result of the Pilot. The *Active Participation Model* was found to provide the degree of services required by DSP job seekers, provided they had access to Intensive Support customised assistance.

- Pilot participants reported improved prospects of finding work, a greater incidence of case management and higher levels of satisfaction than for DSP job seekers in Job Network services generally. They reported receiving more intensive servicing, and felt that the services offered were more likely to be appropriate for their disability and service needs.
- As at 30 September 2004, average expenditure on Pilot participants from the Job Seeker Account exceeded \$830 per person, higher than for other job seekers in Job Network. The total amount credited to the Account in respect of each Highly Disadvantaged job seeker is \$1350 and Job Network members are currently continuing to draw down on the Account to service these job seekers.

The Pilot highlighted a need to improve communication and collaboration between Commonwealth services to enhance job seeker access to the most appropriate services without undergoing delays leading to a loss of motivation.

- Low use was made of complementary programmes and services.
- Referral information was often out-of-date and difficult to update.

This impeded the efficiency of referrals between providers, and inhibited job seeker access to services. System requirements and Pilot policy were not well understood by providers, and attempts to communicate it via the Pilot website, emails and regular teleconferences were not successful. Some of these issues may have affected commencements as a few job seekers appear to have lost motivation after prolonged delays in the commencement process.

The high proportion of people in the Pilot with psychological/psychiatric conditions created service challenges for providers. They reported that case workers need time to understand the nature of mental health issues - reducing effectiveness of the initial assessment of service needs as a screening device. The episodic nature of psychological/psychiatric conditions also complicates the assessment of work capacity and interferes with continuous servicing. Some providers are uncertain about how best to handle servicing breaks within the *Active Participation Model* continuum.

To overcome these challenges, providers' awareness of flexible servicing arrangements available under the *Active Participation Model* and their general understanding of disability issues could be developed to enhance servicing for this client group.

General findings about DSP participation

A key message emerging from the Pilot is that work and participation are considered to be important by DSP recipients for self-esteem and community inclusion. Many DSP recipients want to work but are not accessing appropriate assistance. These views were expressed by both Pilot volunteers and those not participating in assistance. A strong desire to work was expressed by almost all focus group DSP participants and 90% of respondents to the DSP job seeker survey.

The evaluation has gathered evidence of significant disincentives and widespread ignorance inhibiting DSP recipients' take up of work opportunities:

- A major disincentive is the fear of losing the pension and/or associated concessions, and concerns about their ability to either retain the DSP as a safety net or re-establish eligibility for DSP
- There is little understanding of the work incentives available in the income support system such as income tests, the availability of concessions and pension suspension arrangements
- Under the current pension suspension arrangements, there are insufficient guarantees of a return to pension if a recipient leaves work for reasons other than their disability
- Many job seekers have had negative experiences with employers. Perceptions of discrimination by employers against people with disabilities discourage DSP recipients from testing their work capacity. Pilot providers also report that employer ignorance of disability issues and discrimination constitute major barriers to placing people with disabilities.

It is apparent that there is a need to ameliorate disincentives through coordinated whole of government communication strategies. The research findings suggest that Centrelink would be well placed to promote work and service options to suitable DSP recipients in the context of its routine interactions with clients.

Conclusion

Based on interim evaluation results, six key areas are identified to maximise access to Job Network by DSP recipients and to build on Job Network results in helping DSP recipients find work:

1. Remove disincentives to participation for DSP recipients.
2. Increase DSP recipients' awareness of available employment services and promote best practice in engaging with interested job seekers at the local level.
3. Promote flexible servicing arrangements that currently exist within the *Active Participation Model*.
4. Promote best practice, training and support mechanisms and tools for servicing DSP recipients.
5. Streamline administrative systems and processes associated with servicing DSP recipients.
6. Improve awareness in the labour market of the benefits of employing people with a disability.

Introduction

The DSP Pilot was conducted between December 2003 and June 2004 to look at ways of facilitating access to Job Network services by people in receipt of DSP who wish to enter the labour market.

There are currently around 700,000 DSP recipients. DSP recipients are Fully Job Network Eligible and may volunteer to use Job Network. While many DSP recipients are unable to undertake employment due to their medical condition, the Pilot sought to examine ways to engage with, service, and maximise job outcomes for DSP recipients interested in looking for work.

Twelve specialist disability Job Network members, across 37 sites, were contracted to deliver tailored marketing, promotion, networking, outreach and engagement strategies to attract eligible DSP recipients.

The Pilot was aimed at DSP job seekers who volunteered and were able to be assisted by Job Network. Job seekers were not recruited into the Pilot if they were already participating in another form of Commonwealth assistance. Job seekers with high-level, significant and ongoing workplace support needs - that is, beyond one-off workplace modification or the normal Job Network post-placement support period of around six months - were not included. DSP participants recruited under the Pilot were generally retained on the providers' caseload for ongoing assistance after the Pilot completed. **Appendix A** provides further details of the Pilot.

The Pilot was underpinned by a robust evaluation to assess the impact and suitability of strategies used. **Appendix B** sets out the methodology and data used in the evaluation. This report focuses on early findings from evaluation activity to 30 September 2004, three months after the conclusion of the Pilot.

- Part 1** describes the key features of the Pilot; the characteristics of DSP recipients participating in the Pilot; and early data on job placements for Pilot participants.
- Part 2** examines information from the Pilot on factors affecting DSP recipients' interest in participating and barriers to participation.
- Part 3** focuses on the types of practices used to engage DSP recipients in Job Network.
- Part 4** examines the services provided to Pilot participants under the Active Participation Model.
- Part 5** considers additional training and best practice strategies to assist in servicing DSP clients.
- Part 6** presents information on ways to streamline systems and processes for servicing DSP clients.
- Part 7** presents Pilot findings concerning the need to improve labour market awareness of the benefits of employing people with a disability.

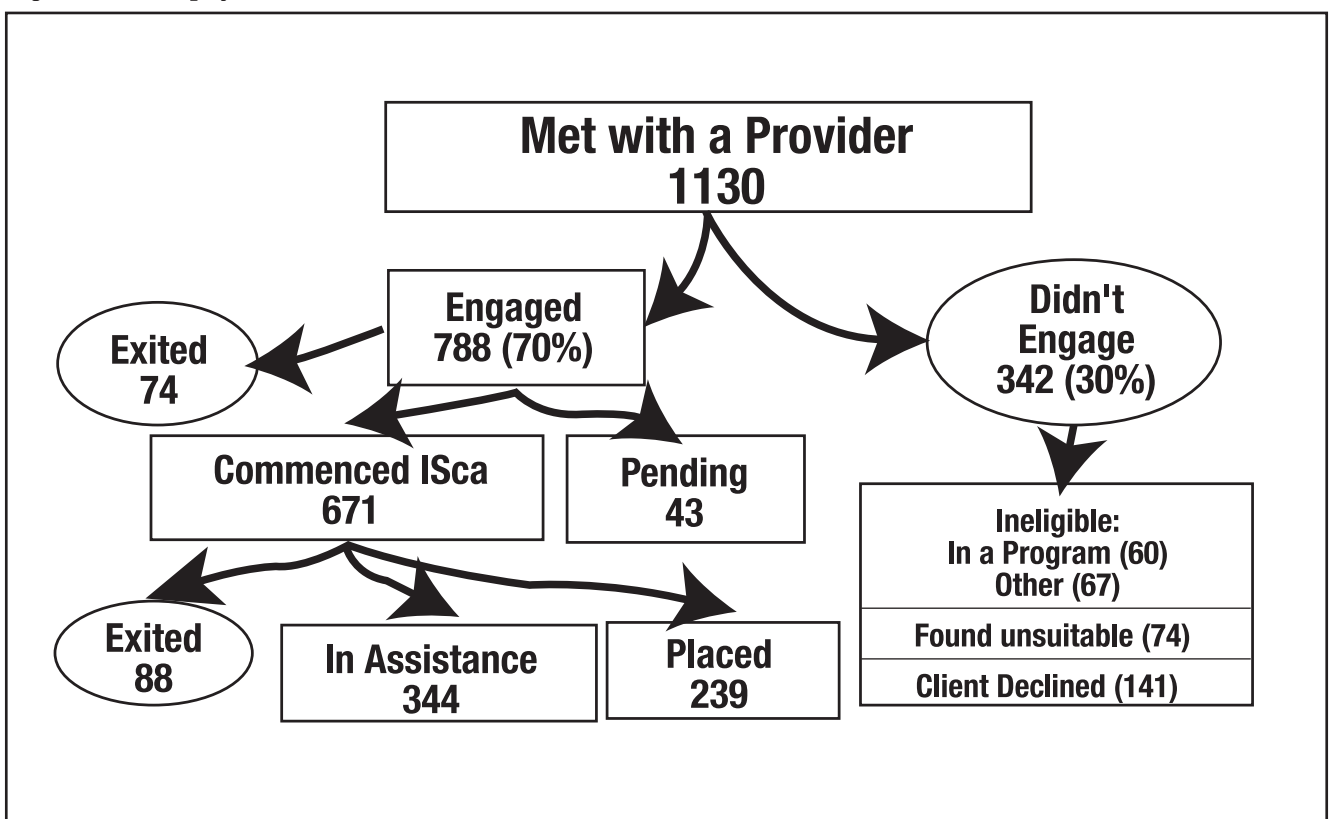
A final evaluation report will be prepared after longer term evaluation and post programme monitoring data are available for analysis.

Part 1: The DSP Pilot

Between December 2003 and June 2004, over 1 100 DSP recipients met with Pilot providers. Of these, almost 800 were selected for the Pilot. 671 (85%) had commenced in Intensive Support customised assistance by the end of September 2004 (see **Figure 1.1**).

- The main reason applicants were found to be ineligible for the Pilot was that they had been or were participating in another programme (47%).
- 21% left the Pilot - 9% without having commenced in assistance. At the end of June, Pilot providers reported that most had left because of a deterioration in their health or because the Pilot did not suit their needs. Further analysis will need to be undertaken to identify lessons for policy from these exits.
- During the Pilot, 25% of those who exited or who were assessed as unsuitable for Job Network assistance were referred to alternative programmes such as Disability Employment Assistance, Vocational Rehabilitation Services or the Personal Support Programme.
- By the end of September 2004, 239 DSP job seekers have been placed since the Pilot began (36% of all those who commenced in assistance). 220 of these job seekers were placed in employment and 24% of these jobs were full-time, 34% part time and 42% were casual jobs. 19 Pilot participants entered education, 17 full time and 2 in part-time study.

Figure 1.1: Pilot performance¹



¹ Data relate to people who commenced in the Pilot between January and June 2004. The status of these jobseekers have been followed up until the end of September 2004.

Source: Integrated Employment System and Pilot provider management reports

The Pilot was not specifically designed to market Job Network services generally. However, the data suggest there were some demonstration effects in locations where the Pilot was conducted, with the numbers of DSP recipients accessing Job Network increasing over and above the effects of the Pilot itself. DSP recipients are Fully Job Network Eligible and may volunteer at any time for Job Network services.

Provider efforts to actively engage DSP job seekers in Pilot services and Intensive Support customised assistance in particular, appear to have increased the DSP recipients' participation in Job Network overall. Although the DSP population at the non-Pilot sites remained largely unchanged between December 2003 and June 2004, DSP participation increased at a faster rate at the Pilot sites:

- The number of DSP job seekers registered with a Job Network provider increased by 15%;
- The number of DSP job seekers engaged in Intensive Support customised assistance increased by over 50%:
 - more than half of this increase occurred on the specialist caseload
- Disability specialists increased their share of the DSP caseload from less than 11% before the Pilot to 15%
- By the end of the Pilot in June 2004, over 30% of DSP job seekers being assisted in Intensive Support customised assistance were enrolled with Pilot providers - representing almost a four-fold increase in the number of DSP job seekers in Intensive Support customised assistance services with disability specialists.

This data suggest that better information about, and awareness of, Job Network services and of eligibility for full Intensive Support assistance amongst DSP recipients, led to increased DSP recipient take up of Job Network assistance overall.

Table 1.1: Change in DSP Job Network Participation

Population	As at December 2003	As at June 2004	Change (#)	Change (%)
Total DSP Population	688 264	696 742	8 478	1.2
DSP Job Seekers with Pilot providers (on specialist caseload)	918	1 137	219	23.9
DSP Job Seekers with all Job Network providers	13 577	15 692	2 115	15.6

Source: Integrated Employment System and unpublished FaCS DSP population data

1.1 Participant characteristics

Participation in the Pilot was voluntary, with DSP recipients choosing to respond to information and marketing about available Job Network services. The Pilot was not designed to recruit a representative sample of the DSP population, so some differences between the characteristics of Pilot participants and DSP recipients in general were to be expected. The composition of Pilot participants was influenced by the variety of outreach, marketing and referral sources trialled. These included Centrelink, public advertisements, direct mail and providers' networks with local disability, community and employment organisations.

DSP participants in the Pilot presented with a wide range of medical conditions. The most common types of main medical condition reported by participants were musculoskeletal (24%), and psychological / psychiatric conditions (35%). **Table 1.2** provides data on participants' main reported medical condition, compared with the general DSP population and with other DSP participants in Job Network who did not participate in the Pilot.

Table 1.2: Comparison of Job Seeker Main Medical Condition

Medical Condition	DSP recipients with generalist JNMs ¹	Pilot Participants ²	DSP Population ³
Acquired Brain Injury	2.6	1.3	2.7
Amputation	0.6	0.7	0.3
Cancer/Tumour	1.2	3.4	2.0
Chronic Fatigue/ post viral syndrome	1.6	2.0	0.8
Chronic pain	na	na	0.8
Circulatory system	2.2	4.0	5.6
Congenital abnormality	1.9	0.7	1.7
Endocrine and immune system	1.8	0.7	2.6
Intellectual/learning	13.8	4.0	11.1
Musculoskeletal and connective tissue	25.2	24.2	35.6
Nervous system	4.4	2.0	3.4
Psychological/psychiatric	33.6	34.9	26.0
Respiratory system	1.7	0.7	3.1
Sense organs	5.6	13.4	2.5
Skin disorders and burns	0.3	0.0	0.3
Visceral disorder	0.4	0.0	1.5
Not coded	0.0	0.0	0.1
Other	3.3	8.1	0.0

¹ DSP recipients registered as looking for work with a general (non-Pilot) provider of Job Network services

² All DSP Pilot participants registered by 30 June 2004

³ Characteristics of Disability Support Pension Customers, June 2003

Source: 2004 DSP jobseeker survey and FaCS DSP population data

Pilot participant characteristics were broadly similar to the DSP population in Job Network (see **Table 1.3**), although participants were slightly more likely to have post secondary education (24% versus 17%). On average, Pilot participants had been dependant on the pension for around four and a half years. A significant proportion (37%) had received DSP for five or more years and 12% for more than ten years.

The average age of participants was slightly less than the general DSP population. This may reflect the greater interest in work amongst younger DSP recipients, the bulge in the general DSP population aged 50 or over and/or any selection bias on the part of referral sources for the Pilot. Feedback from focus groups of DSP recipients and from the Pilot provider survey indicated some mature age DSP recipients may be discouraged from seeking work for reasons other than their medical condition and work capacities. Some respondents indicated that being mature age is a barrier in and of itself, and that employers do not want older workers, irrespective of disability.

Table 1.3: Comparison of Job Seeker Characteristics by job seeker groups

Job seeker Characteristics	Job seekers on caseload ¹ (%)	DSP recipients on caseload ² (%)	Pilot participants ³ (%)	Pilot participants ³ (%)
Gender				
Male	61.1	68.4	65.0	61.3
Female	38.9	32.6	35.0	38.7
Age group (years)				
under 18	4.8	1.3	0.4	(
18 - 20	14.1	6.3	4.9	(6.3
21 - 24	15.1	7.8	7.4	(
25 - 34	23.5	20.5	23.0	10.5
35 - 39	9.1	11.6	12.9	7.3
40 - 49	17.9	25.8	26.0	21.4
50 or more	15.4	26.6	25.4	54.5
Duration on income support				
0 to less than 3 months	21.6	20.6	7.7	(
3 to less than 6 months	17.6	12.3	3.9	(
6 to less than 9 months	9.9	8.0	3.4	10.4
9 to less than 12 months	7.3	6.6	2.1	(
1 to less than 2 years	17.1	14.5	12.3	(11.8
2 to less than 5 years	16.6	20.0	33.3	25.3
5 to less than 10 years	8.6	12.1	24.8	26.4
10 years or more	1.1	5.7	12.4	26.1
Educational attainment				
Less than year 10	23.8	32.7	18.1	na
Year 10	28.3	28.6	28.1	na
Year 11	9.9	8.1	10.8	na
Year 12	18.8	13.6	19.1	na
Trade/TAFE	12.9	11.8	14.8	na
Tertiary	6.2	5.2	9.1	na
Equity groups				
Indigenous Australian	7.5	7.7	1.6	na
Non-English-speaking background	14.7	12.1	11.4	na
Highly Disadvantaged	22.6	36.5	84.4	na
Reduced capacity to work				
8 to less than 15 hours	Na	3.6	7.7	na
15 to less than 20 hours	Na	3.3	7.6	na
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100

1 Job seekers actively registered with a Job Network provider and in receipt of income support as at 26 April 2004.

2 Disability Support Pensioners on the active Job Network Caseload as at 31 December 2003

3 All DSP Pilot participants registered by 30 June 2004

4 Disability Support Pension Customers, June 2003

Source: Integrated Employment System and FaCS DSP population data

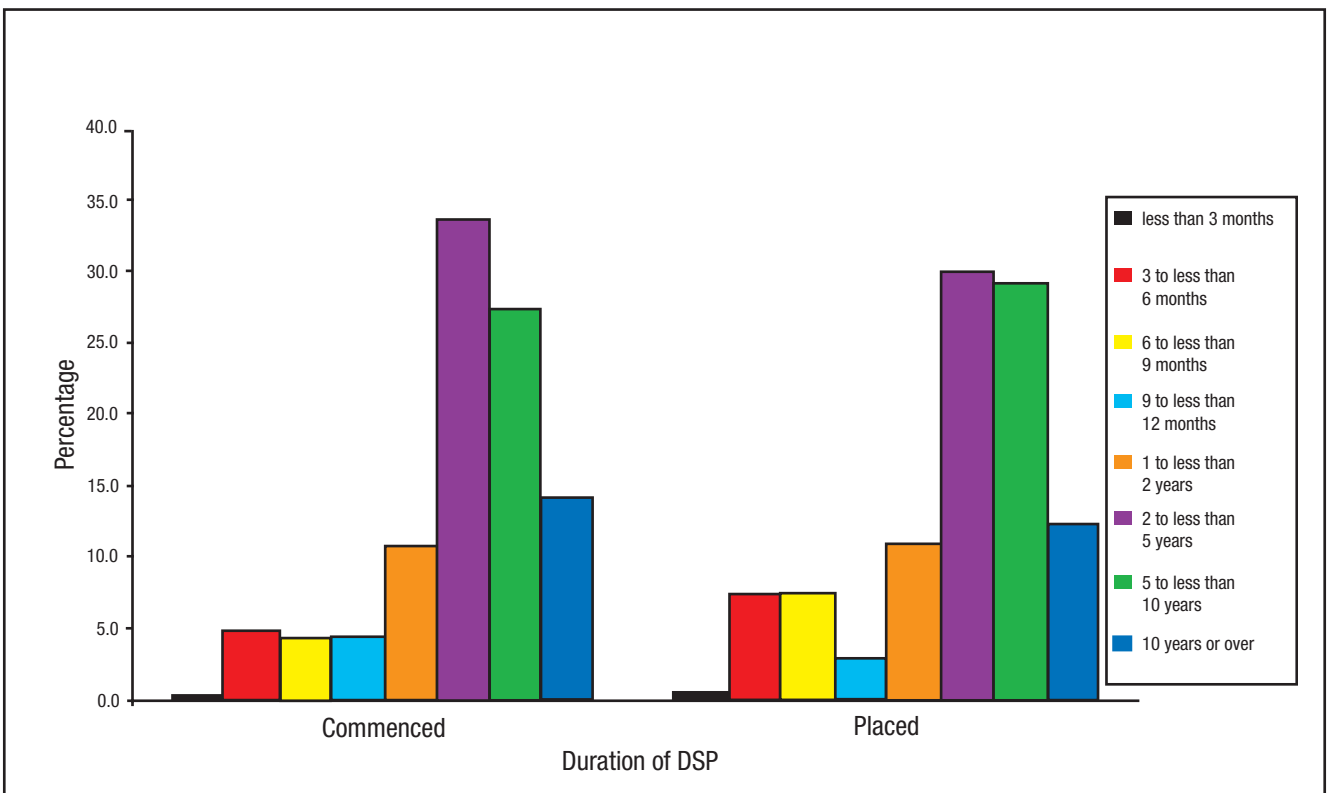
1.2 Job outcomes

As at 30 September 2004, 239 pilot participants had been placed in employment or education, attracting 64 paid Intensive Support Outcomes (for jobs that last 13 weeks or more). A further nine paid Outcomes are pending. The final evaluation will further analyse the Final Outcomes (jobs that last 26 weeks or more) and the sustainability of these outcomes.

The profile of those placed in employment closely reflects the characteristics of Pilot participants. Many of those placed in employment have been receiving DSP for an average of four and a half years. Over 70% had been receiving the pension for over two years, with over half of these receiving it for more than five years (see Figure 1.2).

The job placements occurred in a range of positions and industries. The most common types of jobs found were general labourers and process workers (18%), office workers and managers (18%), retail workers (11%) and trades (11%).

Figure 1.2 *Placed and Commenced by Duration of DSP*



Source: Integrated Employment System and Pilot provider management reports

Part 2: Disability Support Pensioner Participation

2.1 DSP recipient participation in the labour force

The DSP Pilot aimed to test strategies to better engage interested DSP recipients in available Job Network services to assist them into work. Associated with this, evaluation of the Pilot looked at the factors that may affect DSP recipients' interest in labour force participation, and any barriers to participation they may face.

There are nearly 700 000 DSP recipients, many of whom can and want to work, and can make a contribution to the Australian workplace. However, currently less than 10% of DSP recipients report any earnings and currently less than 2% are participating in Job Network.

Pilot providers identified the following key factors motivating Pilot job seekers to participate in the labour force and look for work through Job Network:

- A strong desire to participate in work, education and training, either to improve their financial situation or because of the non-monetary benefits of participation such as self-esteem, social status and community inclusion
- Information about eligibility for Intensive Support services, individualised assistance and training, help through the Job Seeker Account and about Intensive Support customised assistance
- The voluntary nature of participation in Job Network for DSP recipients.

Focus groups and surveys of Pilot participants were conducted to seek additional feedback on views about participation and barriers to participating. Other DSP recipients who were not attached to Job Network also took part in the focus group discussions.

Amongst the DSP focus group participants (which included Pilot participants, DSP recipients disengaged from JN and DSP recipients with no previous contact with JN), there was a strong sense of 'being there by choice', wanting to work and being highly motivated. Amongst the group of DSP recipients surveyed, 90% "really want to work" regardless of their demographic characteristics. Participating in work was reported by Pilot participants to have positive financial benefits (57%), contribute positively to self-image and self-worth (42%) and enhance community inclusion (32%).

2.2 Disincentives to participation

The evaluation has gathered evidence of significant disincentives and widespread ignorance inhibiting DSP recipients' take up of work opportunities and employment services. Disincentives to participation centred on fears about losing the pension and associated concessions as well as the difficulty in returning to DSP if a job did not work out.

DSP recipients reported several barriers to participation including:

- Difficulties in re-establishing eligibility for DSP due to stricter eligibility requirements and a lengthy claims process (forms, medical reports, etc). Many stated they would be more likely to take on work if they had a 'safety net' which allowed them to return to the pension if needed
- Testing employability could be risky without certainty of a return to DSP if the job did not work out. Most were either unaware of the current DSP suspension arrangements or were uncertain about how they operated
- Whether earned income would be sufficient to offset pension reductions or loss of concessions. For low paying or minimum wage jobs, it was not clear how the pension would be affected and whether they would be better off in work or not. Many believed they were "probably better off" on DSP. Continued access to concessions was important for medications, treatment and living costs such as utilities, housing and transport
- Uncertainty about the type and amount of work their disability would allow them to do
- Previous negative experiences with employers and perceptions of discrimination by employers, which discourages DSP recipients from testing their work capacity.

Currently, DSP recipients are only guaranteed a return to the DSP if they lose their job due to their disability. Many DSP recipients felt that employers would be unlikely to cite disability as grounds for dismissal (even if this was the case), nor did recipients particularly want this recorded on their employment history.

Providers also identified concerns among Pilot participants and other DSP job seekers about what would happen to them if a job did not work out. These concerns were thought to have kept some job seekers from joining the pilot as well as taking up work. A lack of a clear guarantee enabling DSP recipients to return to the pension if a job did not work out prevented providers from alleviating these concerns among their customers. Short term, contract or temporary jobs (that could provide valuable work experience and a stepping stone to more substantive work) were seen as particularly risky.

Few DSP recipients appeared to be aware that they could earn up to \$1 296 per fortnight before losing entitlement to the DSP and Pensioner Concession Card, and few appeared to have much knowledge about available post-DSP concessions such as the Health Care Card.

The focus groups also suggested that widespread and entrenched views about the passive nature of DSP and a lack of requirement to work can discourage the provision of guidance on job search and participation efforts. Some examples cited were:

- Asking Centrelink questions about work or study options, but being told you were not required to 'do anything' and feeling discouraged from asking further
- A lack of information from Centrelink about available employment assistance unless it was specifically requested.

Focus group discussions indicated that awareness of accessing employment services through Job Network was generally low. Most of the focus group participants had searched for jobs on their own, but were dissatisfied with their own unassisted efforts. Participants in the focus groups saw Centrelink primarily as an agency providing income support rather than as a source of help or information about employment, study or other opportunities.

While around one third of Pilot participants recalled that Centrelink had provided them with information about the benefits of working, available employment services, and entitlements, focus group participants expressed concerns about the reliability of such advice.

In addition to the above, feedback from Pilot providers suggested some DSP job seekers did not use Job Network because they wrongly thought this would make them subject to activity test obligations. Providers felt some DSP recipients feared that volunteering for employment assistance to look for work might lead to them being targeted for reassessment of their DSP eligibility. This is not the case.

These findings suggest there is room for DSP job seekers to be given more positive guidance on work and service options, including employment assistance. Currently no comprehensive information package is available to assist DSP recipients to participate.

Part 3: Engaging DSP recipients in Job Network

The Pilot contracted providers to develop and implement a range of innovative strategies to encourage the engagement of eligible DSP recipients with Job Network.

Pilot providers tailored strategies to encourage DSP recipients to consider paid work and volunteer for Job Network assistance. The most frequently used strategies adopted by providers were:

- Networking with local providers of services to people with a disability, local disability support groups, or community groups (76%) to promote the Pilot
- Direct marketing, usually through advertising in local media (primarily newspapers and radio) (60%)
- Promoting the Pilot to local Centrelink offices (40%)
- Promoting the Pilot to clients inquiring about or receiving other services (eg DEA services) offered by the JNM or its parent organisation (19%).

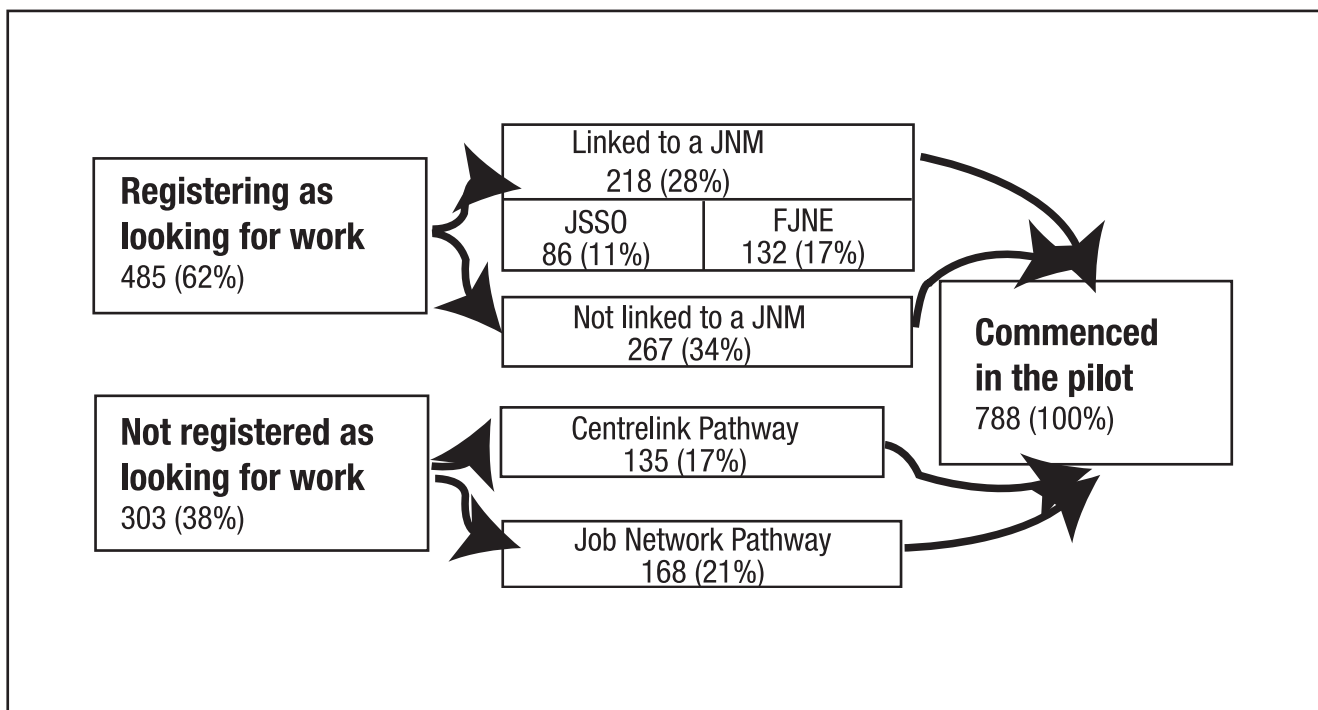
The messages focussed on raising DSP job seeker awareness of the employment assistance available, including the availability of the Job Seeker Account, and alleviating concerns about participation.

3.1 Source of Pilot participants

Analysis of evaluation data indicates that, prior to participation in the Pilot (Figure 3.1):

- 62% of participants were registered with Centrelink as looking for work
 - 218 of these had been referred to Job Network before. Around 40% of those referred to Job Network were registered as Job Search Support Only (JSSO), preventing access to Intensive Support services
 - the remaining 267 had not been referred to a Job Network member
- 38% of Pilot participants were not registered as looking for work and had not used Commonwealth Government services to help them find work.

Figure 3.1: New Connections with Job Network as at 30 June 2004



Source: Integrated Employment System and 2004 DSP jobseeker survey

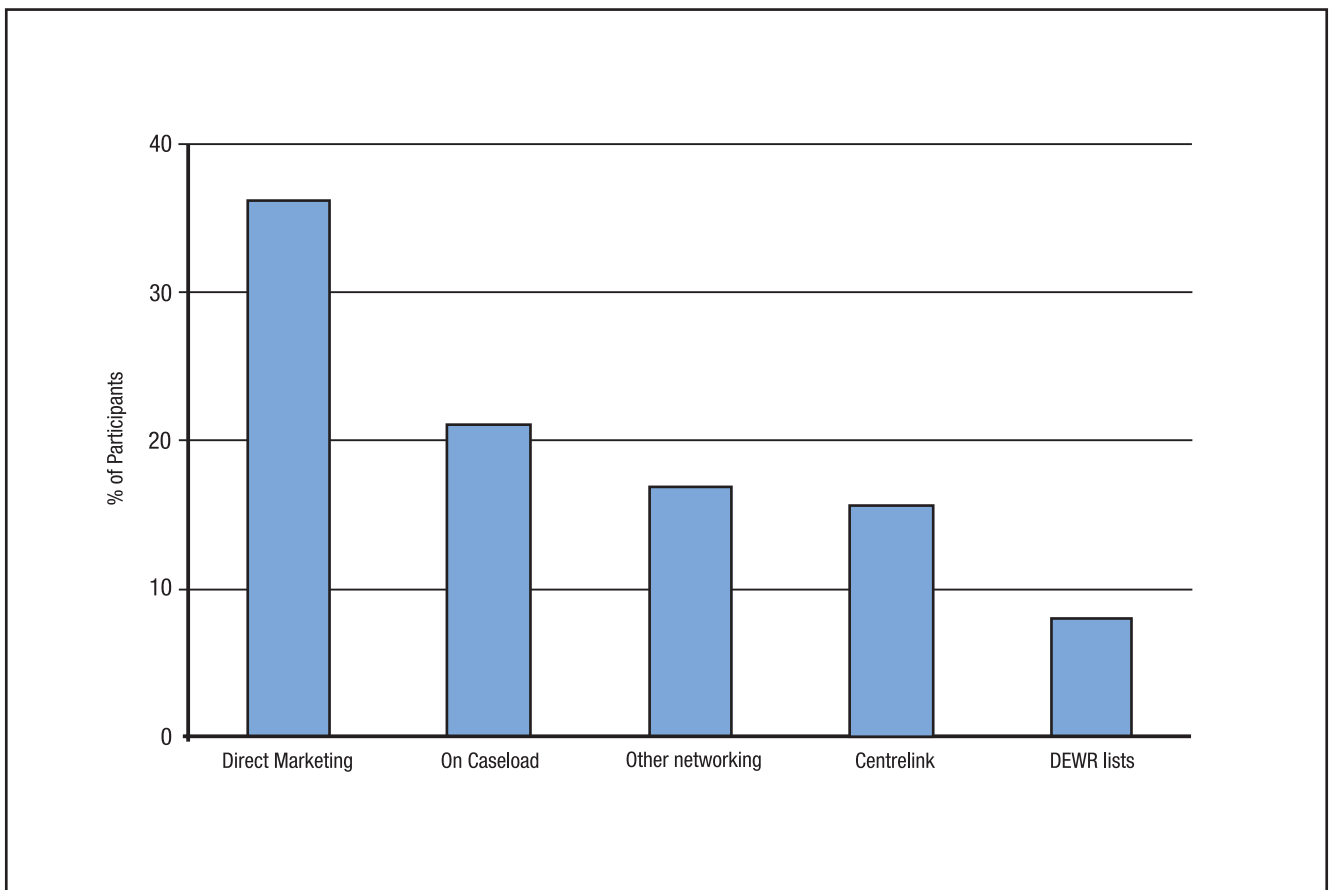
A total of 72% of Pilot participants were not accessing any Job Network services prior to the Pilot. These figures are of interest given that access to the Pilot was based on job seeker self-identification and volunteering to access services. They suggest that there exists an appreciable number of DSP recipients interested in work but not accessing the services available to them.

3.2 Effectiveness of engagement strategies

Direct marketing and networking with disability and community organisations were rated by providers as highly effective strategies for engaging DSP job seekers (Figure 3.2). The majority of Pilot participants first heard about the Pilot as a result of the providers' direct marketing (36%) or networking with other employment service providers and community organisations (17%). Cold canvass mail outs about the Pilot were generally seen as less effective.

Engagement strategies were effective in attracting a significant proportion (21%) of Pilot participants who were not previously looking for work, and who responded to marketing strategies by directly approaching a provider (Figure 3.1). This is a conservative estimate of the effectiveness of strategies for attracting new job seekers as some participants may have chosen to register with Centrelink.

Figure 3.2: DSP job seekers' response to engagement strategies



Source: Pilot providers' management reports

Most job seekers who approached providers in response to these strategies were found to be suitable for participation in the Pilot. Providers reported that the suitability of job seekers attracted by direct marketing was marginally higher (83% proceeded to services) than through networking (80%). Both strategies involved some resource costs, including dealing with enquiries from job seekers who were not able to be assisted or were better suited (or already connected to) other types of disability employment assistance.

Fewer participants (16%) originally heard about the Pilot from Centrelink, although the suitability of referrals from Centrelink was high (91% of Centrelink referrals commenced in the Pilot, compared to 80% from all sources). Providers who received more participants through Centrelink were more likely to report they had strong ongoing relationships with Centrelink.

Providers reported other benefits from stronger direct networks with local disability service under the Pilot. These included smoother referrals to and from non-Job Network services and improvements in their own awareness of local expertise and resources, which were subsequently purchased through the Job Seeker Account.

Some Pilot providers also deliver Disability Employment Assistance services through other parts of their organisations. These providers also reported benefits from improved communication, more co-ordinated servicing and more appropriate referrals or streaming of job seekers.

Providers reported that one effect of their engagement strategies was the need for extra resources to handle enquiries about the Pilot that did not lead to commencements and deal with job seekers who could not be included in the Pilot. These questions appear to have been resolved effectively at the local level. There were no complaints to the Minister or the Department's Customer Service Line from DSP recipients either about being "cold canvassed" about employment services, or being found to be not suitable for the Pilot.

3.3 Other findings

3.3.1 Direct access

As part of the Pilot process, Job Network members were able to register interested DSP recipients directly for services, without the need for separate registration or referral from Centrelink. In the pilot, 55% of participants who were not previously registered with a provider chose to register this way.

Reasons cited by participants for preferring direct access to Job Network included:

- The importance of choice, and being able to sound out different Job Network providers about services before registering. Some participants indicated that they preferred Job Network services to other employment assistance because being helped by Job Network did not stigmatise them in the eyes of employers, and did not reveal their disability to prospective recruiters until/unless they chose
- It was better not to have to go through other agencies
- Direct access was less burdensome in terms of administrative and/or assessment processes.

During the Pilot, direct access was achieved by a manual process which was not well understood by providers. Similar 'direct registration' functionality, with electronic advice to Centrelink, is available on the Job Network system for Transition to Work, Australians Working Together and other purposes and could be readily extended for this purpose.

3.3.2 Access to Intensive Support customised assistance

Analysis revealed that a significant proportion of DSP volunteers in Job Network were not accessing Intensive Support, despite their level of disadvantage. More than 40% of DSP recipients on the Job Network caseload at the end of June 2004 were prevented from accessing Intensive Support because they had been registered only for Job Search Support services or were flagged as eligible for Job Search Support Only.

3.3.3 Streamlining assessment

Providers reported delays in assessments of job seekers, in particular for access to Intensive Support customised assistance due to a lack of information about the person's disability and service history. Job seeker records that showed a current referral to alternative employment services were not eligible for the Pilot. Where these records were inaccurate or out-of-date, delays occurred while providers liaised between the job seeker, the alternative service provider, DEWR and sometimes Centrelink to have the records corrected. Pilot providers were keen to work co-operatively with other disability services and sought not to disrupt existing service relationships. Pilot providers reported that good local networks under the Pilot, including direct contact with other services, were helpful in sorting out such instances, as well as enabling mutual dialogue about the most suitable available service in the interest of the job seeker.

Although the majority of Pilot participants were registered quickly - 89% on the day of application and 93% within a week - providers felt that these delays caused some enquirers to lose motivation and withdraw from the Pilot.

For job seekers with mental health conditions, the episodic nature of the disability complicated the assessment process. It took time for the case worker to understand the nature of the disability issues faced and its implications for the work capacity of the job seeker.

3.3.4 Collaborative relationships across services

Feedback from Pilot providers remarked on the media coverage which occurred in the early stages of the DSP Pilot. While this in some cases may have had some benefits - such as increasing awareness of the Pilot and of the availability of Job Network services for DSP recipients -it may have caused unnecessary concerns among some potentially interested DSP recipients, community disability groups and other service providers. Effective local networking was needed to allay some concerns. Overall, Pilot providers were concerned to highlight the need for collaborative and whole-of-government approaches in the interests of all disabled job seekers.

Part 4: Job Network services for DSP recipients

Pilot participants received a range of personalised services including:

- The development of a personal Job Search Plan that focussed on addressing all barriers to employment, not only vocational ones
- Greater frequency of contact, longer average length of contact, and a greater likelihood of contacts with a single case manager
- Individual case management and advice about job search and referral to suitable vacancies
- Reverse marketing by providers with prospective employers about vacancies for which they would be suitable
- Financial assistance for job search from the Job Seeker Account.

Table 4.1: Interaction between job seekers and Pilot providers

	DSP recipients with generalist JNMs ^I
Amount and type of contact	
At least one visit per fortnight	49
Personal case manager	83
Visits last at least 30 minutes	49
Telephone contact at least once per fortnight	27
Still receiving assistance from JNM	76
Services	
Discussed Job Search Plan	70
Job Network Member included job seeker's input when developing the Job Search Plan	93
Advice to find work	61
Counselling	22
JNM feedback on unsuccessful job applications	22
Training (attend courses)	44
Financial assistance^I	
Helped pay for training courses	40
Help to pay for licences/certificates	34
Help to pay fares, such as bus/train ticket	35
Help to pay for any clothing or equipment	28
Help to pay for specialist equipment	17

1 At the time of the survey, the majority of participants had been in assistance for only a short time and so may not have yet required financial assistance.

Source: 2004 Survey of DSP job seekers

While Pilot providers considered DSP recipients to require high levels of individualised service, the majority of Pilot sites (62%) indicated they had not needed to develop new services as part of the Pilot nor significantly change their existing service approaches. Services of this type were provided as part of Job Network Active Participation Model. It was important that DSP recipients were appropriately classified as Fully Job Network Eligible and eligible for Intensive Support Highly Disadvantaged status, as it helped to retain job seekers in assistance. One of the reasons for disengagement from Job Network noted by focus group participants was that their expectations for intensive servicing were not met.

Pilot participants rated the services they received well, including high satisfaction with the level of intensive servicing and fairly high satisfaction with their input to their Job Search Plans and actions developed for them (Table 4.2). The majority indicated the services improved their chances of finding a job.

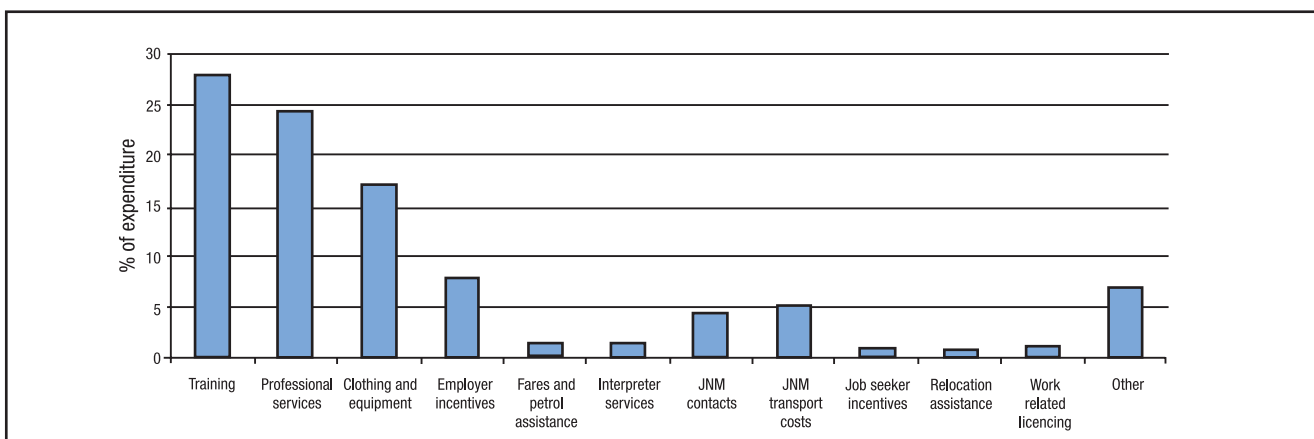
Table 4.2: DSP Pilot Service Satisfaction

Service satisfaction statements	Pilot participants who agreed or strongly agreed (%)
They treated you with respect	95
They gave you the time and attention you required	88
They took your individual needs and medical conditions into account	87
They made you feel like they wanted to help you	91
They treated your information confidentially	95
The information and advice you were given was accurate and correct	91
The information they gave you was easy to understand	90
The staff made you feel comfortable discussing personal issues with them	89
The office layout made you feel comfortable discussing personal issues	84
They clearly explained your rights when receiving employment services	80
Their premises were easily accessible by people with disabilities	85
They believed you could get a job	85
They helped you stay motivated to look for work	77
They improved your confidence in approaching employers	65
The service improved your chances of getting a job	73
Overall, satisfied or very satisfied with the service	80

Source: 2004 Survey of DSP job seekers

Pilot providers used the Job Seeker Account to attract and service DSP job seekers. Access to the Job Seeker Account was portrayed as one of the key features of participation in Intensive Support customised assistance. The focus of Job Seeker Account spending for Pilot participants was on training (28%) and professional services (24%), clothing and equipment (17%). Less was spent on wage subsidies or workplace modifications.

Figure 4.1: Job Seeker Account Expenditure by Category, January 2004 to September 2004



Source: Integrated Employment System.

On average, the per capita expenditure from the Job Seeker Account on Pilot participants was over \$830. This per capita amount is higher than for job seekers in Job Network generally (around \$500) but below the amount credited to the Account in respect of each Highly Disadvantaged job seeker (\$1350).

4.1 Managing non-activity tested DSP participants

DSP participants are not subject to activity tests and cannot be compelled to undertake particular activities (such as attending interviews), nor suffer any penalty for failure to comply with their Job Search Plan or suggested job search or training activity. This did not appear to affect the capacity of Pilot providers to work effectively with participants.

Providers did report some uncertainties around managing non-activity tested job seekers, in particular servicing around extended absences for participants with episodic illnesses including some mental health conditions. Providers also considered that longer periods of intensive servicing were needed for DSP recipients than other job seekers. This suggests that more information is needed about existing flexibilities to extend Intensive Support customised assistance services beyond six months to accommodate periods of absence, to purchase additional servicing through the Job Seeker Account, and other available flexibilities.

4.2 Existing flexibilities of the Active Participation Model

While Pilot providers and participants alike stressed the importance of individualised and flexible servicing, the services provided in the Pilot were accommodated within the existing Active Participation Model arrangements. Indeed, a majority of Pilot sites considered they did not need to alter their existing services as a result of the Pilot.

Utilising the flexibility of the *Active Participation Model* was greatly assisted where DSP recipients were accurately registered as Fully Job Network Eligible, usually at the Highly Disadvantaged level. Failure to so register DSP recipients - or flagging them for Job Search Support Only services - had the perverse consequence of precluding these disadvantaged job seekers from accessing the full range of individualised assistance for which they are eligible.

While a number of sites had referred unsuitable applicants to alternative services, use of complementary programs as part of a servicing strategy was low in the Pilot. Many Pilot providers indicated that referral of job seekers between Commonwealth services is cumbersome and unwieldy. For similar reasons, usage of the Workplace Modifications Scheme was also low.

Part 5: Training and support needs of Job Network providers

Providers reported that their participation in the Pilot improved their knowledge and understanding of servicing DSP recipients. Examples of this improvement included:

- A much better understanding of existing Active Participation Model flexibilities and how they can assist DSP job seekers
- Increased awareness of DSP payments and eligibility requirements
- Better understanding of the incentives for Job Network providers to service the most disadvantaged
- Reduced confusion about activity requirements and obligations.

Many DSP job seekers had constraints on the nature of employment they sought, or were looking for part-time employment of less than 30 hours per week. Pilot providers reported a greater understanding of the scope to take into account individuals' Restricted Work Capacity to gain paid outcomes under the *Active Participation Model*. Job Network members do not "miss out" by assisting DSP recipients with reduced capacity into suitable part-time jobs.

Most DSP job seekers are serviced by generalist Job Network providers and evaluation feedback suggested lessons about 'best practice' servicing developed by specialists need to be disseminated. It was suggested that a support network of employment consultants working with people with disabilities, including DSP recipients, would be a good mechanism for this.

Evaluation interviews with Pilot providers identified the following elements as important to successfully attract and service DSP job seekers:

- Be prepared to dedicate more resources to these highly disadvantaged job seekers than to general caseload
- Adopt an intensive and individualised service model
- Improve knowledge of specific disability issues and an understanding of the disability types being serviced and issues associated with servicing them
- Build networks in the disability services sector
- Develop trust with and show empathy toward DSP job seekers
- Establish good relationships with local Centrelink offices to encourage consistent messages about the benefits of work, and accurate information about available employment services and DSP suspension arrangements.

Part 6: Job Network systems and processes for servicing DSP job seekers

Pilot providers reported ongoing difficulties with the manual processes put in place for the Pilot to allow direct referral. A more streamlined, IT supported registration process would be required to support better and faster engagement with interested DSP recipients in larger numbers. This might be achieved by extending direct registration functionality in place for other purposes.

Job seekers with an open referral to another Commonwealth programme were not eligible to participate in the Pilot. DSP recipients and Pilot providers alike experienced difficulties in determining this and were often unaware of existing referrals and exemptions. Instances were reported where a referral had closed, or the DSP recipient had exited the programme, but this had not yet been updated on the job seeker record. Such system driven anomalies resulted in delays in the Pilot registration process. Procedures and on-line support for referral of job seekers between services were also reported to be cumbersome and capable of more streamlining. Generally, system requirements and Pilot policy was not well understood by providers.

Suggested solutions to these difficulties included better IT support, more up-to-date job seeker records, streamlining of referrals between services, and/or greater provision for parallel servicing of job seekers where appropriate.

The evaluation also identified the need for improved mechanisms for disseminating information to service providers about eligibility, service flexibilities, resources and tools for servicing job seekers with different disability types. This might involve better networks between employment consultants dealing with job seekers with a disability, and better engagement between the disability service industry and the Department for system information, best practice and consultant development initiatives.

Part 7: Improving labour market awareness

Given emerging labour shortages in Australia's economy, more could be done to promote to employers the role of people with disabilities in helping to meet their work force needs. This approach has not been used to date but may be a promising future strategy given increased employer awareness of work force shortages.

Up until 30 September 2004, three months after recruitment to the Pilot finished, a total of 220 participants were successfully placed into employment. Job placements occurred in both full- and part-time positions, across a range of occupations.

Due to the particular nature of these different requirements, most Pilot providers marketed Pilot job seekers to prospective employers on an individual basis, rather than seeking to match a job seeker to an advertised position. This approach also enabled providers to address any concerns raised by an employer about a job seeker's disability. Typical employer concerns included:

- Costs of making adjustments (to the workplace or work conditions)
- Reliability and productivity of the job seeker
- Changes to Occupational Health and Safety arrangements
- Insurance costs and likelihood of a workplace accident or injury
- Rights of dismissal
- Impact on other staff, customers or the public.

Many of these concerns were overcome by the provision of accurate information about the job seeker's disability and its effect on their work capacity, as well as the rights and obligations of employers towards employees with a disability. In giving this information, Job Network providers had to sell themselves as experts in employment as well as experts in disability. Other strategies for overcoming employer concerns included:

- Arranging no-obligation work trials to test the placement
- Providing training (including post-placement), wage subsidies or employer incentives to improve the job seeker's relative employability
- Sourcing, installing and training job seekers in use of workplace modifications
- Providing disability/diversity awareness training to the job seeker's co-workers
- Providing post-placement support for the job seeker and employer.

The costs of these interventions were generally met by the provider through the Job Seeker Account.

Some DSP participants chose not to disclose their disability to prospective employers. This was accommodated by providers assisting in job search but not reverse marketing the job seeker to employers as a person with a disability. Some providers acted as an advocate for job seekers who had found their own employment, by providing information and advice to the employer about the job seeker's disability and possible workplace adaptations.

Placement of Pilot job seekers involved matching their disability as well as their skills and qualifications. For some, no workplace adjustments were needed if they were placed in a role that was not affected by and did not affect their disability. These job seekers only needed access to common workplace arrangements such as flexible working hours, shift work, limited contact with the public, working from home or access to sick leave. Other job seekers required some modifications to the workplace such as adaptive technology, changes to job requirements or improved access to the workplace.

Pilot providers also observed that some employers were more likely than others to employ a job seeker with a disability. Positive employer characteristics included those with a commitment to social justice or workplace diversity, those who had previous or current employees with a disability and those with personal experience of a disability.

Providers also thought that more could be done by way of public education to address employer discrimination or concerns about employing a person with a disability. In focus group discussions, DSP recipients considered employer attitudes to people with disabilities a major issue. Specific concerns were:

- Negative attitudes of employers to the limited capacity of the job seeker prior to or after commencing work
- Lack of compassion and empathy
- Fear of dismissal once a wage subsidy ended or that the employer would find a reason for terminating their employment (compounded by the concern that this would adversely affect re-qualification for DSP)
- Discrimination due to gaps in employment history for periods of ill health, or being required to attribute job leaving to their disability in order to requalify for DSP
- Being mature-aged was a key barrier to gaining employment, regardless of disability.

These sentiments were confirmed by providers' perceptions that common barriers to finding employment for this client group were:

- General ignorance of disability issues and unfair discrimination
- Concerns about the capacity of people with disabilities to do the job
- Safety and workers' compensation insurance concerns.

Providers attempted to overcome these attitudinal problems by talking through the issues with employers and giving evidence to contradict false beliefs. Pilot providers also made use of the Job Seeker Account to make job seekers more attractive to prospective employers. The main expenditure of Job Seeker Account on Pilot participants was on training and services, however, instances also occurred of workplace modifications, employer incentives and some wage subsidies.

Part 8: Conclusions

The evaluation of the DSP Pilot includes two reports. The Interim Evaluation Report aims primarily to measure how successful the Pilot has been in strengthening voluntary participation and draws out the key messages emerging from the evaluation on best practice servicing arrangements and streamlined administrative processes. Analysis of outcomes for Pilot participants and comparison with the broader DSP population will continue with the final Evaluation Report, expected to be completed in early 2005. The timing and the extent to which issues are covered in different stages of the evaluation depends in large part on the availability of data.

Based on interim evaluation results, six key areas are identified for action to maximise access to Job Network by DSP recipients and to build on Job Network results in helping DSP recipients find work. These strategies can be implemented within the existing Active Participation Model for Job Network. Providers participating in the Pilot were asked to service participants within the normal flexibilities and resources of the Active Participation Model. The resultant strategies appear suitable for application beyond providers who participated in the Pilot, including generalist Job Network providers. This would need to be supported by appropriate tools including effective action to disseminate best practice, staff training and other resources.

1 Remove disincentives to participation for DSP job seekers

The Pilot identified that many DSP recipients were keen to seek work, citing benefits of increased income, independence, interesting activity and social inclusion. However, many had not acted on this prior to the Pilot due to major concerns about the impact of work on their DSP, concessions and/or risk to re-qualifying promptly if they gained and subsequently lost a job.

2 Increase DSP job seekers' awareness of available services and promote best practice in engaging with interested job seekers at the local level

Many DSP participants were not utilising the full range of Job Network services available to them prior to the Pilot. Job Network members in the Pilot reported on success in a range of local strategies to engage with interested DSP recipients. There is a need to adopt and encourage the use of good practice local engagement strategies and disseminate better information about available services and programmes.

3 Promote the flexible servicing that is possible under the Active Participation Model

Job Network members participating in the Pilot reported good lessons about using the flexibility of the Active Participation Model to assist DSP recipients. This included use of the Job Seeker Account to purchase a range of general, specialist and additional services tailored to job seekers. Classifying job seekers as Fully Job Network Eligible and eligible for Intensive Support Highly Disadvantaged enhanced providers' ability to keep job seekers connected to assistance. Many reported collaborative work, and appropriate cross-referrals, with other providers, including Disability Employment Services, Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service and others in the local community. More could be done to disseminate best practice and Pilot lessons.

4 Promote best practice, training and support and tools for servicing DSP job seekers

The Pilot achieved good job placement results for many participants. JNMs participating in the Pilot reported they learned much about good practice in servicing DSP recipients. Job Able (the on-line resource) could be used, together with other training and support mechanisms, to promulgate good practice in servicing DSP recipients.

5 Streamline Job Network administrative systems and processes for servicing DSP job seekers

The Pilot identified scope to connect DSP recipients more speedily with services by better on-line functionality. This includes automating registration of interested DSP recipients (all of whom are Fully Job Network Eligible). Other streamlining would include better access to service history, up-to-date information on any other referrals, cross-referrals to other services by agreement, and/or access to other personal information (such as Work Capacity) where the job seeker consents.

6 Improve awareness in the labour market of the benefits of employing people with a disability

Notwithstanding the positive job results obtained in the Pilot, DSP job seekers and Job Network providers in the Pilot reported the need for concerted efforts to address employer barriers (discrimination) to employing people with a disability.

Appendix A: Pilot objectives and operations

Objectives

The objectives of the Pilot were to:

- Actively engage DSP recipients at a local level and support their participation in the labour market (including but not limited to tailored marketing strategies and employment service initiatives)
- Develop transferable initiatives to be promoted as best practice to generalist Job Network members nationally
- Develop processes to enable all employment service providers to service this client group effectively.

Operations

The Pilot comprised three elements:

Engagement of DSP recipients and community

This element of the Pilot enabled participating Job Network members to develop tailored marketing, promotion, networking, outreach, engagement strategies and employment service initiatives to attract and service DSP recipients.

This component required the Job Network member to develop a brief concise plan outlining the operational activities proposed to meet the objectives of the Pilot, including but not limited to:

- Marketing and communication strategies to increase eligible DSP recipients understanding of Job Network and encourage them to participate
- Strategies to liaise, network and engage job seekers and employers
- Expectations as to the number of DSP recipients to be recruited.

The plan was required to demonstrate the participating Job Network member's capacity:

- Develop and promote innovation in the provision of employment services for DSP recipients
- Trial and develop strategies to identify best practice and share these with National Employment Services Association (NESA) and DEWR.

Provide support for eligible DSP recipients

Participating Job Network members were required to perform some additional work to register Pilot participants with DEWR, participate in the Pilot and provide ongoing Job Network services to DSP participants above their existing caseload.

Participating JNMs were contracted to develop and promote innovation in the provision of employment services for DSP recipients and build organisational expertise in these areas. Where necessary, they would also arrange and support job seekers through specific pathways such as:

- Seeking additional information from the job seeker and others, such as treating doctors
- Identifying work capacity or restricted work capacity where available, work capacity assessment will be matched to other such assessments for validation;
- Identifying whether the job seeker is best assisted under Job Network or should be referred to alternative programmes through Centrelink such a specialist funded disability services
- Considering the best specialist JNM to assist an individual (if for example a potential participant has specific needs that can best be met by an alternative specialist JNM).

If participating Job Network members did not make satisfactory progress against these deliverables, and engage DSP job seekers, their participation in the Pilot could be suspended. Participating Job Network members were required to ensure the Pilot had an adequate management framework and provide regular progress reports to the working group.

Ongoing servicing of DSP recipients

Pilot participants were to be serviced by specialist disability Job Network members consistent with the Active Participation Model, including the Service Guarantee, for the duration of their unemployment. Participating JNMs could tailor their services to suit the needs of individual job seekers, as not every Pilot participant needed the same type or amount of assistance or level of contact. The Pilot provided the opportunity to further explore service flexibilities under *Active Participation Model* to service DSP and non activity tested job seekers.

Service and Outcome fees were consistent with the *Active Participation Model*. Pilot participants became immediately eligible for Intensive Support customised assistance and identified as Highly Disadvantaged. DSP recipients on a specialist disability JNM caseload when the Pilot started were allowed to also volunteer to participate in the Pilot and therefore could have immediate access to Intensive Support customised assistance (Highly Disadvantaged).

DSP recipients who were participating in Commonwealth, State and Territory government funded programmes, other than Job Network, were not eligible for servicing under this Pilot (including waitlisted clients).

Job seekers on DSP with significant support needs for whom Job Network was not appropriate would be engaged with alternative service providers through existing arrangements. Transfers between specialists were encouraged and monitored, with any issues arising addressed through the working group or through provider to provider arrangements, such as a locally initiated protocol.

Outcome fees will equate duration of unemployment to the amount of time the participant has been receiving DSP allowance, as an incentive for participating JNMs to secure sustainable employment.

Appendix B: Methodology

This report contains findings from both qualitative and quantitative elements of the evaluation of the DSP Pilot. This includes:

- A survey of DSP job seekers (conducted in June 2004)
- Focus groups with DSP recipients in the Victoria, NSW and the ACT (conducted in June 2004)
- Interviews with all Job Network disability specialist providers participating in the Pilot (conducted in July 2004)
- Preliminary analysis of DEWR administrative data
- Participation data collected by Pilot providers
- Preliminary analysis of qualitative progress reports submitted by Pilot providers.

Almost 1000 interviews were conducted with DSP job seekers. All individuals interviewed had been in receipt of DSP and were concurrently registered as looking for work at some time in the first four months of 2004. Three distinct groups of DSP job seekers were surveyed. The first group contained DSP job seekers participating in the Pilot. The second contained DSP job seekers who had participated in some form of Job Network Assistance, covering both Job Search Support and the various elements of the Intensive Support stream of the Active Participation Model continuum, in the first four months of 2004. The final group comprised DSP job seekers who had not been referred to Job Network or had been referred but did not commence in Job network assistance (i.e. didn't engage with Job Network) and those who commenced in Job Network assistance but exited before completing the assistance without achieving a positive outcome (i.e. disengaged from Job Network). The objectives of the survey were to assess the level of Job Network assistance provided to DSP job seekers, to compare the level of services provided by Pilot providers to that provided by generalists, and explore the reasons for some DSP job seekers becoming disengaged or failing to engage with Job Network.

Seven focus groups, involving 51 DSP recipients in total, were conducted in Geelong, Parramatta, Canberra and Melbourne between 22 June and July 2004. Two of these focus groups were conducted with DSP Pilot participants, two with DSP job seekers who were registered as looking for work but had not engaged with Job Network and three with DSP recipients who were not registered as looking for work. The aim of the research was to gather information about DSP job seekers' knowledge and awareness of employment services, particularly those provided by Job Network, and their awareness of the DSP Pilot. The research also sought to investigate DSP recipients' attitudes to work and the disincentives to participation they face.

In-depth qualitative interviews of 1 to 1.5 hours were conducted by telephone with 26 Pilot provider representatives, between them representing all providers participating in the Pilot. The primary objective was to gather detailed information on engagement and servicing strategies employed by the individual providers/sites, the key issues arising from the implementation of these strategies and the effectiveness of these strategies from the providers' perspective.

Providers participating in the DSP Pilot were required to submit regular summary reports of the Pilot activities undertaken. The summary reports covered activities relating to recruiting and servicing Pilot participants, methods for engaging employers and general comments on inquiries about and commencements in the Pilot. They were also required to provide data on the characteristics of each individual who met with them to discuss the Pilot, and the outcome of this contact (including those who did not ultimately participate in the Pilot). This information included details that would not otherwise have been available for the evaluation, such as where they heard about the Pilot, why they didn't commence, what their disability was and what assessment and/or referral processes they went through. Although not all the providers submitted all the information requested, the summary reports provided insights into how the Pilot was progressing and the individual specific data covered 85% of Pilot participants.

Basic analysis of these data and DEWR administrative data has been undertaken. In depth analyses of information gathered through the surveys, focus groups and summary reports, combined with data to be received from FaCS, is being undertaken. The results of these analyses will be included in the final evaluation report.

Other research has been undertaken into the issues faced by employers when employing people with disabilities. The findings from focus groups conducted with these employers, including the impact of disability on recruitment decisions, will also be incorporated into the final report.



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