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# Glossary

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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>CBI</td>
<td>Confederation of British Industry</td>
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<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
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<td>CV</td>
<td>Curriculum Vitae</td>
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<td>DWP</td>
<td>Department for Work and Pensions</td>
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<td>ESA</td>
<td>Employment and Support Allowance</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>GVA</td>
<td>Gross Value Added</td>
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<tr>
<td>HA</td>
<td>Housing Association</td>
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<td>HM</td>
<td>Her Majesty’s</td>
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<td>HMT</td>
<td>Her Majesty’s Treasury</td>
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<td>IB</td>
<td>Incapacity Benefit</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organisation</td>
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<td>JCP</td>
<td>Job Centre Plus</td>
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<td>JSA</td>
<td>Job Seekers Allowance</td>
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<td>LA</td>
<td>Local Authority</td>
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<td>LEPs</td>
<td>Local Enterprise Partnerships</td>
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<td>LFS</td>
<td>Labour Force Survey</td>
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<td>NAO</td>
<td>National Audit Office</td>
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<td>NEET</td>
<td>Not in Employment, Education or Training</td>
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<td>ONS</td>
<td>Office for National Statistics</td>
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<td>PbR</td>
<td>Payment by Results</td>
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<td>UC</td>
<td>Universal Credit</td>
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<td>USP</td>
<td>Unique Selling Point</td>
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<td>WP</td>
<td>Work Programme</td>
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Executive Summary

In 2012, UK-based Social Enterprise ‘Participle’ was funded by the JP Morgan Chase Foundation to build a prototype version of the ‘Backr’ service; a relationships based approach to employability and employment outcomes for those out of work and for those in work.

The underlying premise for the Backr initiative is a recognition that individuals’ capabilities (soft skills), are a crucial and currently under-utilised component in addressing a range of social issues, including employability.

Participle commissioned PwC to independently evaluate the Backr service and its potential contribution to the employability landscape. This report presents the findings and recommendations of our two year evaluation programme, which gathers together the extensive primary and secondary research evidence collected over this period.

Backr has operated in the last two years within a challenging context, with a positive upturn in the macroeconomic environment together with a Central Government policy that has focused on continuing with the Work Programme as per its original design principles, as opposed to encouraging further innovation – particularly from smaller providers with distinct offerings reflective of the changing market needs. Backr, however, has sought to innovate through enhancing how the intervention has been delivered in response to both direct feedback from participants as well the changing employment sector landscape.

Key findings

With this context in mind, our evaluation provides compelling evidence that participants have benefitted in various ways from the Backr Programme:

1. **Backr has positively developed participant capabilities (i.e. self-esteem and motivation).**

   - Backr participants, as evidenced and described in more detail later in this report, have been positively impacted across a range of critically important capabilities that are directly linked to the ability to secure, and journey towards employment. This includes personal capability improvements in belief and self-esteem to find, sustain and progress in employment. This is evidenced within the most recent survey sample, with 87% of respondents stating they have made ‘some or strong’ progress following Backr’s support in their ability to progress towards employment and improving their overall employability.

2. **Backr has significantly improved the confidence of its participants – a core constituent capability in the journey towards employment.**

   - The majority (81%) of Backr’s participants, including the long-term unemployed (78%), have reported an improvement in confidence that they will access contacts and connections to help move towards work, together with an improvement in confidence with regard to talking to those they don’t know about their skills and experience.

   - This is all the more important in the context of our literature review, which quite clearly indicates that soft skills – including confidence, motivation, determination, relational skills and positive attitude have a significant influence on both employability and employment
outcomes. It is also the very skills that employers are increasingly seeking and having difficulty in obtaining.

3. Backr is delivering positive [hard] employment outcomes, supporting people into work and work-readiness.

- Our survey data suggests that the employment rates for Backr participants improves after individuals have completed the programme, although caution is urged with regard to the relatively low sample sizes that this is based on. For example, within Backr’s most recent cohort, 33% of respondents stated that they were currently in employment (over 16 hours per week).

- This has more than doubled from the 14% in employment prior to their involvement on the Backr programme, reinforcing that not only has the programme positively impacted participant capabilities but has also supported the transition into employment.

- As of June 2015, data gathered from DWP and Participle suggests that approximately 53% of Backr ‘participants’ with an identifiable work status are currently employed and no longer in receipt of benefits, however, this does not account for other variable factors that may have influenced these outcomes which remains an issue for many smaller employability providers.

4. There is evidence of a causal link between the soft skills developed by Backr and social capital, employability and ultimately employment outcomes.

- Our literature review has evidenced a causal link between the types of soft skills developed by Backr and social capital, employability and ultimately employment outcomes. It has also made the case for identifying the monetary value of the UK’s soft skills deficit – estimated to be £8.4bn by 2020 – together with how the interventions developed by providers like Backr could support in the reduction of this deficit and the savings that could be generated as a consequence.

- Backr is clearly innovating in this respect and is improving the very capabilities that job-seekers require, that employers increasingly need and with which the overall economy is experiencing a deficit. This represents a significant opportunity for Backr and similar capability enhancing programmes, if appropriately scaled, to actively address these vital issues.

- Additionally, our survey findings for a comparative group (later identified as 0.3 pre and post intervention) supports this analysis. For those who identified as ILO unemployed in October 2014, 42% of these people moved into employment, with a further 16% enrolled in higher education and or training schemes by June 2015.

5. Beneficiaries were largely positive about Backr, with the vast majority of survey respondents recommending Backr to a friend.

- Backr has focussed on upskilling and improving the capabilities of its beneficiaries, with participants valuing its ability to develop their personal capabilities. These are inherently linked towards soft skills, and the capacity to generate positive employability outcomes.
The views of Backr were largely positive, and reflected an appreciation of the Backr approach. Across all of the surveys undertaken, nine out of ten people said they would recommend Backr to a friend.

The Backr journey

In an environment where policymakers and Job Centres are focused on traditional approaches to tackling the employability challenge, Participle’s achievements with Backr should not be underestimated and have arguably been innovative in how they have been delivered and how the offering has evolved in response to feedback provided.

Backr has been delivered with a unique offering focusing on the practical ways in which participant capabilities could be improved and harnessed. The service has been agile and flexible in order to adapt to changing circumstances together with the ability to build meaningful relationships with participants, volunteers and Job Centres in delivering the programme. One of the main reasons that the Backr offering has evolved and changed over the two-year evaluation period has been as a result of listening and responding to the emerging evaluation insights provided. For example, the decision to shift from purely networking events to be more focused on developing practical networking skills and facilitating full-day introductory sessions to allow for greater accessibility for those with caring or parental needs.

In undertaking all of this, Backr has helped people to develop both their capabilities and in some cases to achieve a positive employability outcome.

Our evaluation also makes a number of recommendations to Participle based on the evidence we have collected over the past two years. Our evidence demonstrates that capability building is clearly valued by Backr’s participants and leads to a variety of positive outcomes. This is a critical USP that underpins the whole programme and on this basis Participle should design any future offering to build upon this core offer. Participle have the opportunity to innovate further here, tailoring and taking the service to regions or localities where this would have the greatest impact.

Equally, in thinking ahead to future service offerings, Participle should also be mindful of the existing provider landscape in which they are operating. Demonstrating, and attributing, [hard] employment outcomes are key to being commissioned for employability projects so having a capability-based offer is not enough. Participle will have to continue to prove that Backr can lead to these hard outcomes on a larger and wider scale including more specifically accounting for their attribution to identified employment outcomes. Establishing attribution is a challenging objective, and one faced by a range of employability providers, however in the context of payment by results contracts has become an increasingly important priority for Commissioners.

To this end, Participle should consider how and in what ways it can better track, monitor and remain engaged with participants – particularly long after the intervention has completed. Continuing to build a compelling outcomes narrative will offer Participle a strong foundation and afford them the support for their continued efforts to innovate further.

However, whilst others have focused almost specifically on a “work first” approach, often without considering the type, nature or sustainability of this work, Backr has focused – and positively impacted – upon building participants’ capabilities so that they are better equipped not simply to find work, but to sustain and ultimately progress thereafter.
“Confidence matters in the employability journey. The significance of confidence as a trait varies across client groups – e.g. some people merely need a ‘shove in the right direction’ whereas others need much more intensive support and capability building initiatives”

External Stakeholder Consultations
1. Introduction

Overview
This section sets out the context and scope for this evaluation. It is structured under the following headings:

- Background and terms of reference;
- Methodology; and
- Scope and structure of the report.

Background and terms of reference
In 2012, UK-based Social Enterprise ‘Participle’ was funded by the JP Morgan Chase Foundation to build a prototype version of the ‘Backr’ service; a relationships based approach to employability and employment outcomes for those out of work and for those in work. The underlying premise for the Backr initiative is a recognition that individuals’ capabilities (soft skills), are a crucial and currently under-utilised component in addressing a range of social issues, including employability.

In recent years there has been increased recognition of the role that social and psychological factors play in determining people’s life outcomes, including their employment. This review identifies and analyses literature that focusses specifically on the contribution that soft skills make to employability, employment outcomes and career progression.

In June 2013, Participle appointed PwC to undertake a longitudinal evaluation of the contribution that Backr makes to individuals’ networking capabilities, behavioural and job outcomes, and therefore its potential contribution to the employability landscape.

The terms of reference for the evaluation centre on the following key questions:

- Has Backr operated efficiently and effectively within the project’s context and parameters?
- To what extent does a networking and relationship based approach to employment lead to improved employability and behavioural outcomes, including new jobs?
- What are the potential cost savings (both actual and preventative) for the State in scaling this approach with a focus on long-term employability?

Methodology
Our longitudinal evaluation of Backr has been completed across three core stages:

1. **Baseline** - summarised in our Baseline evaluation report, November 2013
2. **Interim** - summarised in our Interim evaluation report, November 2014
3. **Final** – summarised, inclusive of stages 1 and 2, in this final evaluation report, September 2015.

We also completed a detailed literature review entitled ‘Soft skills, hard outcomes’ in January 2015. Figure 1.1 provides a schematic overview of the methodology we have deployed throughout the two-year period.
Scope and structure of report

This final evaluation report provides a concluding summary of the effectiveness and impact of Participle's employability programme Backr, it considers:

- Relevant context i.e. economic climate and other employability schemes such as the Work Programme; and
- Findings and evidence based insights from across the longitudinal evaluation including over twenty consultations and interviews, 314 telephone surveys comprising of Backr participants and a programme of qualitative research with both strategic stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The report provides conclusions about the overall performance of Backr and how the service has evolved over time. This also provides an overview of the specific programme components that our evidence base indicates as having the most profound and sustained impacts and, potentially, forms a basis for how these could be further developed / refined with other stakeholders in future, for example, with Local Authorities.

The remainder of this report is structured into the following sections:

- Strategic Context: Identifying the wider trends and changes at the political and macro-level, and understanding the parameters within which Backr has operated; and undertaking an examinational approach to the cost of provision of employability expenditure at the macro-level, and by providers using publicly available information where appropriate.
- The Backr Programme: Establishing the core values and delivery of the Backr service, and identifying and explaining its evolution over time and the rationale for this;
• Literature Review: *Examining the views and studies within this sector, particularly on the role of soft skills and capabilities which have been used to inform Backr’s existing and future strategy*;

• Primary Research Findings: *Providing an evidence base as to the performance of Backr within the past two years; identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and areas for improvement or greater focus*; and

• Conclusions & Recommendations.
“We are approaching a phase where the claimant count will no longer be the biggest concern for policymakers; attention will shift to upskilling those who have been traditionally the hardest to reach”

External Stakeholder Consultations
2. **Strategic context**

**Overview**
This section of the report sets out the strategic context within which the Backr service has operated over the past two years. It is structured under the following headings:

- Recent Developments;
- A Conservative Government: Policy Implications;
- Devolution & Decentralisation;
- The Employability Context: The Work Programme & Alternative Approaches; and
- Summary.

**Recent developments**
More than two years have passed since the beginning of this longitudinal evaluation. During this time, there have been a number of contextual developments that have influenced the landscape within which Participle and the Backr network operate today. This has included:

- An improving economic outlook; unemployment has decreased rapidly and GDP growth has remained steady. The UK is now the fastest growing economy in the developed world;

- The Scottish independence referendum; while the UK will remain united, the referendum has brought alive a debate about devolution and decentralisation. All political parties are committed to pursuing this agenda. Further powers will be devolved to regional governments (e.g. Scotland will get additional fiscal powers) but the English regions are also set to benefit with ideas such as the *Northern Powerhouse* being developed and, in the case of Manchester, beginning to be implemented. These powers include those over welfare, which offers an opportunity for employability schemes to work with regional Governments; and

- The May 2015 election returned a Conservative majority government; this sets out a mandate for the Conservative party to fully implement their manifesto commitments including reducing the welfare budget (£12 billion), fully implementing Universal Credit and continuing their welfare-to-work programme (The Work Programme).

**A Conservative Government: policy implications**
In the May 2015 General Election, the UK electorate unexpectedly returned a majority Conservative Government to power. The first Queen’s speech and emergency Summer Budget have clearly indicated the direction of travel that this Government is looking to take in terms of welfare reform, welfare-to-work and the broader employability challenge. Specifically, policy implications in addition to devolution and decentralisation will include:

- The Government’s stated objective is “full employment” – in particular young people are being targeted with increased investment in apprenticeships. Well-developed apprenticeship programmes continue to be one of the best ways to ensure a young person is well-placed to have a fulfilling career with a firm foundation in hard and soft skills;
• The Work Programme will be recommissioned in 2016 as the Government’s primary welfare-to-work scheme. The structure of the programme is likely to be similar to what has existed to date, although changes may be made to contractual arrangements with Prime Providers. However, this is unlikely to significantly change a participant’s experience on the programme;

• Changes to welfare, the benefits system and tax credits will be significant – this Government is pursuing a radical agenda including the full implementation of Universal Credit, an overhaul of tax credits, and changes to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)/Incapacity Benefits (IB). Young people (under 25) will also no longer have any right to housing benefit. The Government’s guiding principles for reform are to simplify the benefits system and to highlight that work is always seen as the most attractive option in financial terms; and

• The package of welfare reforms announced are complemented by a commitment to introduce a nationwide living wage of £9 per hour by 2019/20 for all workers aged 25+. Many low skilled workers will benefit from this change, but from an employer’s perspective this may be challenging in the context of lower than anticipated economic productivity. Those who are furthest away from the labour market at this stage in time may find it increasingly difficult to find work as recruitment is likely to remain very competitive – reinforcing the importance of targeted, outcome-focused interventions.

Devolution and decentralisation

Welfare-to-work initiatives will increasingly become the responsibility of devolved Governments and regional organisations / agencies. The new Government has stated in both the Queen’s speech and Summer 2015 budget that they are going to pursue radical devolution and decentralisation policies. At a regional level, the Treasury is encouraging local authorities to become combined authorities led by a directly elected mayor. Greater Manchester looks to be the first place to embrace this opportunity. In the agreement reached by HM Treasury and Greater Manchester leaders, the region will now benefit from:

• Control of the Apprenticeship Grant for employers in the region;

• Control of an expanded “Working Well” pilot scheme; and

• The opportunity to be a joint Commissioner with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for the next phase of the Work Programme in the region.

A scheme like “Working Well” is a welcome addition to the support that ESA claimants can access. The scheme is designed to target individual ESA and IB claimants who have not found employment while part of the Work Programme. One unique feature of the programme is the focus on the family unit and consequent links it will build with the Troubled Families programme. Support teams will include expertise in health & social care, skills, education and housing. The scheme is relatively new and still growing, therefore at this stage it is not possible to comment on outcomes, but this scale of investment and tailored support delivered in a local setting has great potential to achieve what a conglomerate programme like the Work Programme has not been able to.

In relation to welfare-to-work and skills development, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) may also take on an enhanced role around the country. Since their inception, LEPs have traditionally had a remit for helping to create employment locally and ensuring those seeking employment are ready for the workplace. According to a joint piece of research between the Smith Institute and PwC, LEPs vary enormously in size and nature and are evolving at different rates. Given the impetus for regions to take
a greater level of autonomy over apprenticeship programmes, this may be an opportunity for well-developed LEPs to take a first step into pursuing a wider employability agenda. These policy changes, however, also potentially represent opportunities for smaller, niche and innovative providers to become more prominent than previously – particularly those that can objectively demonstrate how their interventions tangibly improve people’s skills and capabilities to not just find employment but to sustain and progress once in employment. The latter remains both a key challenge and a priority for DWP.

The Employability Context

During the past two years, unemployment has fallen significantly. Unemployment rates have reduced quite considerably during the Coalition Government’s tenure (Figure 2.1). During the baseline evaluation period (June –November 2013), the unemployment rate was 7.5%, whereas the most recent release (May-July 2015) illustrates that this has reduced to 5.5%. Such a sharp fall could not have been predicted.

![Figure 2.1: UK Unemployment Rate (Q2 2010 – Q2 2015)](source: PwC Economic Outlook)

During this time, however, the national dialogue shifted from a focus on job creation to a debate on the nature of jobs being created, including full-time versus part-time versus zero-hour versus self-employment and in each case the opportunities for employee development and progression. Therefore, in many respects the nature of the employment context policy debate has changed with a more sustained focused on the nature of employment being created as opposed to job creation in isolation.

Since the economic downturn in 2007/08, the composition of jobs being created has quite dramatically shifted, including an increase in the creation of part time / self employed jobs. For example, 13% of all jobs in the UK identified as self-employed in 2008, reaching 15% in 2014. However, these trends have changed somewhat in the last year with 51,000 fewer self-employed in 2015 than 2014.

In addition to the composition of job creation, we have also explored the impact on wage growth. Again the trends seen in prior years have started to reverse within the past 12 months. Between May 2014 and May 2015, in real terms the ONS found regular pay for employees in Great Britain increased by 2.9%.
National Welfare Expenditure

As part of our evaluation into the impact of the Backr programme, we have sought to understand the level of expenditure on national welfare (total spend and spend on benefits) before examining the resource devoted to the Work Programme and other employability programmes. It is important to note that a significant amount of information, e.g. what a Prime Provider actually spends on the Work Programme on a per outcome basis (rather than what they get paid) is considered commercially confidential and therefore has not been published – which has been a key challenge for this evaluation. Other programmes such as the Talent Match programme (funded by the Big Lottery grants scheme) have produced more comprehensive programme cost data and hence are included in this analysis.

Welfare spending, including both “benefits” and employment support programme investment, is managed by DWP. A relatively small proportion of the 2013/14 DWP budget was assigned to labour market activity and programmes – i.e. 1.1% of the £171.8bn total allocated funds or 24% of the Department’s funds minus welfare spending.

In the financial year 2013/14, the UK government spent £251 billion on welfare - representing total welfare spending – not just that managed by DWP. This £251 billion made up 37% of all government spending. Of this spend, just under £5 billion (circa 2%) went on unemployment benefits – see Figure 2.2. There were 791,800 people out of work claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance and Universal Credit in May 2015. This number has decreased by 26.9% compared with the previous year.

Figure 2.2: ONS Breakdown of National Welfare Spending 2013/14

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pensions (state and public service)</td>
<td>£104,442m</td>
<td>42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incapacity, Disability and injury benefits</td>
<td>£37,537m</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployment benefits</td>
<td>£4,945m</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Benefits</td>
<td>£26,386m</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family benefits, income support and tax credits</td>
<td>£44,934m</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal social services and other benefits</td>
<td>£33,028m</td>
<td>13%</td>
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Source: Visual ONS, 2015

The Work Programme

The Government’s flagship Work Programme initiative has operated since 2012 with the aim of supporting people into sustained employment. Broadly speaking, the Work Programme is aimed at addressing the employment-related outcomes of three core groups, namely people claiming:

- Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) who are aged 18 – 24;
- JSA who are aged 25 and over; and
- ESA.

Since our interim evaluation in November 2014, a limited amount of new research has been published on the impact and overall success of the Work Programme. This is to be expected, given that many think tanks / commentators during an election year have switched perspectives from analysis of
current Government policy to the development of new ideas for the next Government. The 2015 election did not include an in-depth debate about supporting people into work, or what kind of employability opportunities are being created - albeit there was some focus on zero-hour contracts in the context of the sustainability of the economic recovery plan.

The Work Programme continues to deliver mixed results. During its interim evaluation, research highlighted that the Work Programme had delivered mixed results for different categories of claimants. Over the past year, there have been no significant shifts in the overall trend, with the employment outcomes for the JSA cohort continuing to improve while outcomes for the ESA cohort remaining somewhat static. One exception to this, however, is a dip in successful outcomes for JSA claimants aged 18 – 24. Nevertheless, this does not align to the employability context given that this group is deemed closest to the labour market when compared to other JSA / ESA claimants. For example, youth unemployment has not risen sharply in the past year.

It is also important to bear in mind the findings of the National Audit Office (“NAO”) Work Programme outcomes evaluation (July 2014) where the average Prime Provider was found to have reduced their spending on ESA claimants by 54%. ESA claimants require more intensive levels of support, therefore reducing spending is an unexpected finding and brings into question whether Prime Providers feel the Work Programme can support the individual needs and requirements of this cohort.

Figure 2.3: Percentage of each work programme intake with at least 3 or 6 months in work after a year (ESA groups – 3 months, JSA groups – 6 months)

In summary, the Work Programme has struggled to meet the original expectations set by Prime Providers. The evidence continues to call into question whether Prime Providers have been innovative enough and / or sufficiently incentivised to deliver results closer to the DWP’s expectations.

The Work Programme is skewed towards a “work first” approach and does not seem to place the same emphasis on social or human capital based interventions. In their evaluation of the Work Programme, Meager et al. (2014) found that 64% of participants had been offered help with their CV / interview preparation versus 17% who had been offered some form of human capital based intervention e.g. skills development programmes. Further to this, the Work Programme evaluation refers to the growing body of evidence suggesting that “work first” approaches are more cost effective than human
capital based programmes. It is in some respects easier to evaluate the impact of a “work first”
approach as opposed to a human capital approach whereas both are integral to the long term
outcomes of the target cohort – with further exploratory analysis of this detailed in section 4 of this
report.

The UK Commission for Employment and Skills (“UKCES”) argues that “work first” approaches focus
on a reduction in the claimant count but do not always have the same impact on assisting people to
create sustainable pathways once in employment (2011a). The Government has acknowledged that
addressing both aspects is a vital component of any successful intervention - hence why Prime
Providers were given such an extensive mandate as part of the Work Programme. At this stage, it is
not clear if it is possible to design and incentivise any one programme to take on such a wide remit,
particularly as a result of the payment by results focus of many of the contracts.

There is a significant market opportunity to help Work Programme participants who return to the Job
Centre after two years on the Work Programme. The latest figures reflect that 66% of participants
return to the Job Centre, most without having ever worked during their time on the Work Programme.
This cohort represent the hardest to help or those furthest from the labour market, with a succession
of interventions failing to sufficiently address their specific requirements.

Research from Meager et al. highlighted a series of interesting insights relating to the profile of Work
Programme participants that helps to contextualise this finding:

- Two thirds have been out of work for a year with one in six having been out of work for over 5
years; and
- Of those who were out of work for 5 years or more, this represented 20% of the JSA 25+
intake and over 40% of each intake who had previously been on Incapacity Benefit.

On the basis of these findings, some might ask why the Government has not committed to further
innovation at a policy level to design a more effective intervention. The reality is that the Work
Programme is producing outcome results that are comparable to previous programmes, but also offers
better value for money to the state (being the first of these national schemes to introduce payment by
results). We cannot speculate what a future Work Programme will look like but on this basis it is
understandable why the Government is committed to continuing with a recommissioning process of a
similar programme post March 2016.

There is no obvious solution to tackling long-term unemployment. “Work first” works for some,
especially those closer to the labour market - typically JSA claimants. However, there is less evidence
that it is working for those who might be facing a range of recurring and complex barriers that makes
life itself a struggle before any consideration of employment is taken into account. Providers who
believe in the value of social / human capital have an opportunity to define what a successful
intervention could look like for this cohort and clearly demonstrate how tailored interventions can
suitably support those in most need.

Cost of Employment Support Schemes

The Work Programme

The Work Programme is predominantly a ‘Payment by Results’ model, meaning that Providers are
paid once they have achieved defined and contractually agreed outcomes (see Figure 2.4).
Employability ’03: Final evaluation report

The expenditure data presented on the Work Programme to date all relates to the cost this programme has incurred to the taxpayer (see Figure 2.5).

This is because Prime Providers have not published any information about their actual programme spend. It is therefore difficult to establish a baseline around how much this programme has cost to deliver which has been somewhat challenging for this evaluation and this makes it virtually impossible for potentially innovative providers – like Participle – to fully understand how competitive their approaches are within a value for money context.

---

**Figure 2.4: Work Programme Payment Mechanism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payment Type</th>
<th>2011/12</th>
<th>2012/13</th>
<th>2013/14</th>
<th>2014/15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>£m</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>£m</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attachment Fees</td>
<td>£267m</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>£180m</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Outcome Payments</td>
<td>£13m</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>£142m</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainment Payments</td>
<td>£3m</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>£131m</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£283m</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>£453m</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: DWP, 2012*
Figure 2.5: Annual Work Programme Payments by Payment Category (2011 – 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Payment Group</th>
<th>Customer Group</th>
<th>Year 1 attachment fee</th>
<th>Job outcome fee (max.)</th>
<th>Job outcome paid week</th>
<th>Sustainment payment per 4 weeks</th>
<th>Maximum number of 4 weekly sustainment payments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>JSA 18-24</td>
<td>£400</td>
<td>£1,200</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>£170</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>JSA 25+</td>
<td>£400</td>
<td>£1,200</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>£215</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>JSA early access</td>
<td>£400</td>
<td>£1,200</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>£250</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>JSA ex-IB</td>
<td>£400</td>
<td>£1,200</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>£250</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>ESA volunteers</td>
<td>£400</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>£115</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>New ESA claimants</td>
<td>£600</td>
<td>£1,200</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>£235</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>ESA ex-IB</td>
<td>£600</td>
<td>£3,500</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>£370</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>IB/IS (England only)</td>
<td>£400</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>£145</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>JSA prison leavers</td>
<td>£400</td>
<td>£1,200</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>£200</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Figure 2.6, however details total expenditure for each category of claimant referred to the Work Programme and the outcomes achieved between 2011 and 2014 and therefore provides a cost per outcome estimate (to the taxpayer). Some of these figures are quite high – representing the low number of successful outcomes the Work Programme has generated for particular claimant groups.

Figure 2.6: Work Programme Cost per Outcome (to the taxpayer) 2011 – 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Estimated Spending</th>
<th>Number of attachments</th>
<th>DWP spend per participant</th>
<th>Number of outcomes</th>
<th>DWP spend per outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JSA 18-24</td>
<td>£233,788,500</td>
<td>258,990</td>
<td>£903</td>
<td>60,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSA 25+</td>
<td>£527,433,250</td>
<td>618,820</td>
<td>£852</td>
<td>114,680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSA early access</td>
<td>£293,096,500</td>
<td>271,780</td>
<td>£1,078</td>
<td>39,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSA former incapacity benefit</td>
<td>£13,365,000</td>
<td>24,000</td>
<td>£557</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESA volunteers</td>
<td>£20,840,500</td>
<td>53,940</td>
<td>£386</td>
<td>2,690</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Attachment and Job Outcome fees can vary by contract year and provider.
A recent benchmarking exercise completed on behalf of Greater London Authority encountered similar methodological challenges in terms of estimating the cost per unit of the Work Programme (Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, 2015).

The report did, however, provide estimates of cost per starter and cost per job entry for c.20 employability programmes ranging from £448 to £7,324 and £1,728 to £62,745 respectively depending on the target group. Whilst such estimates are interesting in terms of comparing relative delivery costs and efficiency they do not take into account wider outcomes such as increased confidence or improved motivation, communication, networking and team working skills that increase social capital and help individuals to move towards sustainable employment - which our review of the literature, stakeholder interviews and beneficiary surveys all identified as being particularly important for the target groups that programmes, like Backr, aim to support.

**Alternative approaches to the employability challenge**

Other initiatives to tackle the employability challenge have been commissioned in the last five years (independently of Government) and have operated at varying scales. Examples include programmes such as the ‘Talent Match’ scheme (funded by Big Lottery) which focusses specifically on youth unemployment. This programme is not primarily based on the “work first” approach, rather it is based on building individual social capital and moving young people towards meaningful and sustainable employment outcomes.

Young people participating on the scheme are assigned a professional mentor who will design a unique programme of experience that may include work placements, skills workshops and the opportunity to participate in setting up small-scale Social Enterprises. A preliminary study by the Centre for Economic and Social Research (“CESR”) found 26% of participants were in work after six or twelve months on the programme indicating this level of tailored support and resource can generate positive, hard outcomes.

‘Timebanking’ is another initiative, often operated on a smaller local scale, which has been applied in the employability market. For example, the ‘Engage’ project in East London or ‘Broadway Skills Exchange’ worked with young people and the homeless respectively. Both schemes encourage people to volunteer their time as mentors with the core aim of assisting participants to develop their employability skills e.g. organising teamwork simulation exercises.

An evaluation of the Broadway timebank found: “Utilising previously untapped skills and resources ranging from manual work to gardening to hairdressing or language instruction amongst many others, Time Banks are able to value work which is normally unrewarded and more importantly
value contributions from people who often find themselves marginalised from the conventional economy.” (Bretherton and Pleace, 2014, p.7). While both of these timebanking initiatives operated on a smaller scale, they demonstrate the type of interactions which are essential for relational welfare (Cottam: 2011) and may demonstrate the foundations of what a “sharing economy” approach to the employability challenge might look like.

In this regard, innovation is considered a key part of addressing the employability challenge, through the prototyping and experimentation of new approaches to employability, such as the Backr programme which aims to develop capabilities. This is echoed by recent research from Nesta (2012, p5) which states that “more systematic innovation is needed across many parts of the labour market system...no one institution or government department currently owns this problem in its entirety, and innovation is therefore also needed in orchestrating this system and ensuring it works effectively.”

**Comparator schemes: Talent Match**

As referenced previously, Talent Match is a national programme aiming to use innovative methods to support young people (aged under 26) into the workplace. The emphasis of this scheme is not work first, rather it aims to build individual social capital and move young people towards meaningful and sustainable employment outcomes. From this perspective we consider it to be more comparable to Backr as its objectives and target beneficiaries are more aligned to Backr’s than that of a work first scheme such as the Work Programme.

The first evaluation of the Talent Match programme has included a detailed breakdown of anticipated programme spend as illustrated in Figure 2.7. This demonstrates that programme models with an anticipated cost of between £1,603 and £7,248 have been approved by the Big Lottery fund. It also reflects that there are significant regional variations in the accessibility of the local labour markets and readiness of young people to compete in these markets who are not already in education or training. This also indicates that different providers will have different methodologies for supporting young people over the scheme’s lifetime, e.g. some will include more intense support including one to one sessions.

**Figure 2.7: Talent Match Beneficiary and Employment Targets per Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partnership</th>
<th>Beneficiary target</th>
<th>Employment target</th>
<th>Employment target (%)</th>
<th>Cost per beneficiary (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>4,250</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>1,603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds City Region</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>897</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2,987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Manchester</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Marches</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5,976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coventry &amp; Warwickshire</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6,296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall &amp; Isles of Scilly</td>
<td>1,075</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1,608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3,978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Anglia</td>
<td>1,590</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>1,690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stock on Trent &amp; Staffordshire</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Lincolnshire</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3,053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humber</td>
<td>1,455</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>3,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Country</td>
<td>1,417</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool City Region</td>
<td>1,625</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Birmingham &amp; Solihull</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northamptonshire</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3,590</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary

Beyond 2016, any Government initiated successor to the Work Programme is likely to continue to focus on a “work first” approach. The national approach to employability is focused on the headline unemployment rate. “Work first” clearly provides positive outcomes for some participants as demonstrated by the successes which the Work Programme and Job Centres have achieved in the last 2 years, with almost 1 million people having completed the Work Programme and 280,000 of this group having not returned to the Job Centre thereafter.

As it is more challenging to align outcomes with social / human capital interventions (which are often not primarily focused on reducing unemployment as their sole objective) these approaches have largely been ignored by Prime Providers in the Work Programme - who have had the freedom to innovate. As the Work Programme and Job Centre support does not always work for everyone, it is possible to conclude:

- The changing employability landscape is still in flux, but early indications around the direction of travel with reducing unemployment and a higher proportion of FTE positions being created should be welcomed;

- The Government is ambitious when it asks Prime Providers in the Work Programme to take on responsibility for helping people to find work while simultaneously helping them to develop their capabilities / ability to sustain opportunities. These are two different agendas and require different forms of intervention;

- Linked to the second point, how dual aims are incentivised in any programme going forward should potentially be reviewed; and

- Prime Providers have been incentivised to help people remain in work for two years – but this does not necessarily mean their employability outcomes have been sustainably improved or enhanced as a result.

Finally there is a general sentiment that social / human capital approaches in the UK employability market have been undervalued to date. There is a challenge here for providers to find better ways of demonstrating the value these approaches bring and demonstrating that they can help Government and policy makers to address the challenges faced in a cost effective, and outcomes focused, way.
“The way in which Participle have delivered Backr has been excellent. I’ve been particularly struck by their focus on relational working supported by a robust evidence base. They understand claimant groups and have a programme unlike anything else we’ve seen”

External stakeholder
3. The Backr Programme

Overview

This section of our report summarises the Backr programme offering and how it has developed over time. It is structured under the following headings:

- Rationale for intervention;
- Programme aims and objectives;
- Programme design;
- Backr target groups;
- Programme delivery;
- Backr stakeholders;
- Putting Backr programme costs into perspective; and
- Summary.

Rationale for intervention

During the 2008 recession and throughout the recovery, the unemployed, inactive and the employed have found it harder to find new employment opportunities (Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, 2014). Further evidence indicates that job-finding still presents a challenge for young and older people in particular. In a September 2014 report entitled ‘Ready for Work’, Impetus PEF noted that “Even in recovery, there is still a youth unemployment crisis in the UK today, with almost one in five young people out of work.” More concerning still is the fact that approximately one quarter of employers are leaving entry-level jobs unfilled.

Participle believes that the three most important factors in finding work and moving up the skills curve are a diverse social network (and the ability to use it), taking up opportunities to practice life skills in real life settings, and engaging in reflection to make the most of current and future opportunities.

Programme aims and objectives

Through Backr, Participle seeks to support individuals in building the skills necessary to establish and cultivate the social networks that will develop their individual narrative, advance their capabilities and ultimately create productive opportunities. The Figure overleaf provides an overview of Participle’s approach to employability and employment outcomes. However, Participle’s approach also takes into account the need to adjust and tailor its services to reflect other developments within the labour market, including levels of skills and productivity and wider macroeconomic trends. Since June 2013, unemployment across the UK has been consistently falling, and as such, the issue has been less prominent within the national policy debate, as other policy issues such as deficit reduction, welfare reform, national productivity and immigration have climbed the agenda. This does not take into account the underlying assumptions about the quality or pay levels of the respective gains in employment.
It is therefore important to note that Backr’s offering is not solely about getting people into employment, but rather has consistently aimed to offer a holistic approach in **upskilling, training,** and **improving confidence** to help people either get back into work and to stay in gainful employment, or to support those transitioning between careers or advancing in current roles.

### Programme design

Initially, in June 2013, Participle set out to plan and design a pilot service which could be fully operational and scaled across the UK beyond the JP Morgan funding period (ended as of 30th June 2015). This service focused on the hosting of networking events in which users could attend and be supported to use a relational approach in finding employment.

In line with Participle's leading design and innovation methodologies the service has been iterated to build on what was learnt through working with people and to further respond to their needs as illustrated within Figure 3.2.

Throughout the development and evolution of Backr, its approach has been tried, tested, evaluated and refined accordingly to best meet the needs of its users, as reflected by the insights gained from the views of each cohort.

This development ultimately fed into Participle's objective of incrementally piloting and adjusting the programme to allow it to become fully operational and scalable across the UK, beyond its funding period. Backr was designed and implemented in the wake of severe recession in which the UK has experienced unprecedented central Government budget reductions. There have been significant shifts in the political and economic context since the outset of this evaluation, with Backr evolving to fit this context.
Backr target groups

Backr began to support greater proportions of individuals that had been out of work for longer, and in doing so forged good relationships with south London Job Centres. As a result the majority of new members coming to Backr within its second year were unemployed JSA claimants. This was in stark contrast to the pre-Baseline phase in which the majority of Backr members were drawn from existing south London networks, and via word of mouth. Backr therefore took the decision to focus more on these ‘harder to help’ referrals, including Work Programme returnees, in order to provide closer alignment with Participle’s overarching organisational objectives. This strategic decision was also informed by some of the emerging findings collected through the early phases of this evaluation which, in our view, is reflective of an organisation that is agile in response to feedback.

Programme delivery

The Backr offer was tailored to meet these needs and now focuses more on a structured programme of face-to-face sessions. Since June 2014, the Backr service comprised a sequential set of four face-to-face group sessions and offered one-to-one coaching sessions provided by a voluntary Backr coach. Backr members are not mandated to attend all or any sessions and further coaching support is also based on a self-referral model.

The online aspect of Backr remained as a tool to support face-to-face sessions and skills development that supported people to make the most of it and other networks of people on and offline. The degree of innovation provided to the Backr offer by the online network element gave way to allow for a focus on the basic and practical needs of a harder to help group (mainly JSA claimants). This shift provided Participle with resources and practical skills required to support ‘harder to help’ individuals understand and leverage the value of a networking approach to finding work.

Backr stakeholders

Backr’s impact on capabilities and relational outcomes has been consistent. A similar percentage of participants (c.73 percent of survey respondents) reported that Backr helped them think differently about what they could do for work during our baseline and interim evaluations.
It is, however, important to note that given the previous discussion about changes to the UK economy, Participle is aware that increasing the size of Backr and its provision is not necessarily conducive to a successful strategy and implementation. Rather, Participle wishes to focus on packaging tools and content from the programme and engaging with stakeholders to deliver capability led skills and employability training across the UK.

These stakeholders include Housing Associations, Local Authorities, and Local Economic Partnerships. Given the political landscape and the Government’s current decentralisation agenda, these organisations will play a crucial role in the influence Backr can have on improving people’s capabilities within the labour market – beyond the scale and reach that it has operated within over the past two years.

**Putting Backr programme costs into perspective**

A key question for this evaluation concerns the extent to which the Backr programme, as delivered to date, represents value for money in the context of potential or actual savings to the State. This is particularly significant in the context of the positive impact upon participant capabilities that has been identified. However, partly as a result of the nature of Backr - as an innovation programme that has evolved and changed over the two year period - this has presented a range of challenges, including:

- Identifying [and valuing] attributable employment outcomes to Backr over a relatively short time period;
- Agreeing relevant and potentially comparable employability programmes in the context of delivery costs - largely as a result of the fact that Backr’s intervention is quite different to the ‘work first’ approaches adopted under the Work Programme and others; and
- The lack of transparency of provider delivery costs on larger employability programmes, often considered as commercially sensitive information which also reinforces the difficulty that smaller, niche employability provider’s face in making a robust value for money proposition.

Therefore, as a result of these factors we have concluded that it is not possible to directly compare Backr to the Work Programme, and the delivery costs of providers that work under this programme or any other employability initiatives due to the number of unknown, unquantifiable or inappropriate variables. Despite this, in the table overleaf we have detailed the known cost information we have been able to draw together from publically available sources, largely from the premise of assessing Backr costs – and the types of outcomes it positively contributes to – in the context of overall expenditure and costs per outcome through the Work Programme.

The following points should be taken into account when assessing this data:

1. Backr costs represents the actual costs of delivering the programme drawing upon data collected and verified over the two year programme.
2. Conversely, the Work Programme costs are costs to the State (“the funder”) as opposed to those of the Prime Providers (“the delivery organisations”).
3. As detailed above, Prime Providers do not publish their own programme costs as these would be considered commercially sensitive.
4. We have used Work Programme costs averaged across all claimant demographics to reflect the fact that Backr does not just work with one demographic of claimant.
5. The Backr outcome sample sizes are too small to make meaningful calculations around the cost per outcome. Therefore, we have adopted a hybrid methodology to make this calculation - assuming hypothetical thresholds of 10%, 20% and 33% of participants who progress to secure [hard] employment outcomes.
6. These thresholds are in line with results which the Work Programme has achieved and are not designed to reflect anything else written in this report about the outcomes that Backr have achieved.

Table 3.1: Employability Programme costs: Backr and the Work Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Backr programme</th>
<th>Work Programme (cost to the state)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programme expenditure per participant</td>
<td>£356</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assumptions underpinning costs

- Backr costs per user = £265.
  - This includes 10% of personnel time spent on innovation plus the costs and additional time each quarter dedicated to recruitment.
- The coaching offer cost per month = £763
  - This includes Coaching support for the team / coaches
- The overhead costs per month = £2,337
  - Cost for overheads and coaching is per month.
  - During the period between November 2014 and May 2015 Backr worked with an average of 34 people per month
  - This equates to a coaching offer cost per user of £22 and an overhead cost per user of £69
- Total cost per user of delivering Backr (based on numbers seen) = £356
- Total DWP expenditure on the Work Programme = £1,212,619,450
- Number of attachments = 1,441,340
  - Attachments represent the fee paid when a new participant joins the Work Programme
- These figures represent all categories of claimant, including:
  - JSA 18-24, JSA 25+, JSA early entrants and JSA formerly incapacity benefit
  - ESA volunteers, New ESA, ESA formerly incapacity benefit
  - IB / IS volunteers
  - JSA prison leavers
- DWP expenditure per participant is calculated through dividing total programme spend (£1,212,619,450) by the number of attachments (1,441,340)
- Total Work Programme costs per participants = £841

Cost per outcome

Assumptions for Backr:

- 10% of participants secure employment = £3560
- 20% of participants secure employment = £1,780
- 33% of participants secure employment = £1,079

Average costs per outcome, under the Work Programme, are calculated by:

- Dividing total expenditure (£1,212,619,450) by the total number of outcomes (251,640)
- Average costs per outcome = £4,819

Participle cost calculations and IPPR (Alright for Some: fixing the Work Programme, June 2014)
Summary

- **The evidence shows that several groups of people have found it harder to find new employment opportunities both during and after the 2008 recession.**

  Participle believes that by developing people's soft skills and capabilities you can improve their employability and build social capital and thus deliver improved employment outcomes. It has launched the Backr programme to provide people with the opportunity to develop and further harness these skills, particularly in the context of larger scale programmes that have placed emphasis upon ‘work first’.

- **Backr aims to not only get people into employment, but also to upskill, train, learn and improve confidence - to support people transitioning, progressing and advancing in their work place.**

  Since Backr started out as a pilot in June 2013 it has developed to meet the needs of its users and fit within the prevailing political and economic context. This was shown in the shift of people drawn from existing networks and via word of mouth, to people being referred from the Job Centre, prompting Participle to change the focus of Backr, tailoring the intervention to support those often described as “furthest from the labour market” or with the most complex barriers.

  Since June 2014 Backr has therefore provided more face-to-face support as well as a one-to-one coaching service.

- **Evaluating the cost savings to the state of smaller employability interventions such as Backr is more difficult than undertaking VfM analysis of larger schemes.**

  As noted previously, Backr has developed and evolved over time and has been less focused on the Payment by Results model of outcomes and prioritised the intervention on upskilling and improving the capabilities of its participants. Whilst this is a welcome intervention, due to its size and capacity, this means that is difficult to fully understand the outcomes of Backr participants and cost them accordingly e.g. time in work, type of work, pay associated with work etc.
“Soft skills do not get the attention or recognition that they deserve. All forms of learning, and not just those that lead to qualifications, help people build confidence, progress to other skills and are crucial to ensure they thrive in their lives and careers. Soft skills are also what every employer needs from their workforce to be successful.”

External stakeholder
4. Literature Review

Overview
This section summarises our review of the current literature on soft skills and employment outcomes. We accessed more than fifty sources in order to assess:

- The extent to which soft skills are important for finding and sustaining employment;
- Whether improvements in soft skills contribute to better employability, increased social capital, and employment outcomes;
- The degree to which soft skills and hard skills are complementary, so that having both will improve employability outcomes.

The remainder of this section is structured under the following headings:

- Defining soft skills;
- Soft skills, capabilities & the economy;
- Soft skills, social capital and employability;
- Soft skills and hard outcomes; and
- Summary.

Defining soft skills
The term 'soft skills' has been used to describe a wide range of personal attributes and character traits, as well as more formal non-technical work based skills. This sub-section presents the results of an extensive cross referencing exercise, through which a definition of soft skills has been identified for the purposes of this review.

Participle has identified the following core set of capabilities, linked to soft skills, as being key for individuals and communities to flourish in the 21st century:

- **Relationships**: the capability to build and sustain relationships.
- **Work & Learning**: the capability to participate in structured learning and working activities.
- **Environment & Community**: the capability to participate in, and contribute to, community events and one's local living environment.
- **Health & Vitality**: the capability to enjoy life while maintain positive self-esteem and good health.

The capabilities approach is developmental – Backr participants are given the opportunity to build their capabilities through support and practice in real life settings. For example, relationships - and the capability to build and sustain them - are fostered in Backr through practice during networking skills sessions, coaching sessions and by taking part in activities in the real world including attending events and volunteering.

It is Participle’s belief that the four core capabilities identified above – to build and sustain relationships, participate in structured learning and working, contribute to your environment and maintain positive self-esteem – support the development of soft skills such as confidence,
communication, and networking, all of which have particular relevance in the modern employment landscape. Therefore, throughout this evaluation we refer to both capabilities and soft skills interchangeably and highlight the linkages therein.

Historically, the term “skills” refers to the technical expertise and knowledge an individual needed to be economically productive. However, developments in modern psychology and constant changes in the nature of work and the workplace (Stasz, 2001) have meant that the definition of skills is evolving.

In modern human capital theory, “skills” are usually divided into two broad categories; hard, and soft. Hard skills have come to encompass the traditional definition of skill, are easily quantifiable and include both physical abilities and recognised technical knowledge.

Literature relating to soft skills, however, suggests that there is no singular definition of this set of skills. They are referred to by some as “process skills” (Woods et al., 2001), “social skills” (Pauw et al., 2006) or “generic skills” (Campbell et al., 2003).

In a recent study Impetus PEF gave the following definition of soft skills:

> **Soft skills are “intrinsic factors that primarily have value to the individual. They are hard to cultivate, demonstrate and measure, but they are the lynchpin of future success and the short-term and intermediate outcomes that all work-readiness programmes should commit to achieving.”**

(Impetus PEF, 2014)

In a review of soft skills entitled *Using the head and the heart at work*, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) found twenty-three separate definitions spread across different studies (CIPD, 2010). Ultimately the review defined soft skills as:

> “Experientially acquired self, people- and task-related behaviours that complement the use of technical knowledge and skills.”

(CIPD, 2010)

As it derives from one of the most recent and comprehensive reviews of soft skills, this review adopts the overarching definition of soft skills as put forward by CIPD.

Similarly, when identifying the different types of soft skills, this review considers Robles’ (2012) description of soft skills as “character traits that enhance a person’s interactions, job performance, and career prospects” as most relevant.

Figure 4.1 depicts the set of soft skills that Backr identifies as being particularly important for both finding and sustaining work. PwC surveys have found that Backr helps to develop these soft skills in its participants as highlighted in more detail in section 5 of this report.
This list of Backr soft skills has also been cross referenced against several other sources as part of this review to check for consistency and credibility. This review can therefore conclude that the 'soft skills' that Backr identifies as important are also widely recognised as such. (See Appendix B of our standalone Literature Review Report, *Soft skills, hard outcomes* (PwC, 2015), for corresponding cross referencing.)

Our interim evaluation of Backr asked participants a series of questions regarding a range of soft skills, all of which are consistent with the above definitions.

These results demonstrate the positive impact that Backr is having on what are widely acknowledged as highly important soft skills. The findings of our primary research activities are explored in depth in the following section (*5. Primary research findings*) which indicates notable increases in all areas including confidence, control, self-belief, motivation, pro-activity and networking.

The remainder of this section seeks to understand the extent to which these positive impacts on soft skills translate into social capital and employability, and ultimately employment outcomes.

Subsequent sub-sections explore three key hypotheses, namely:

1. That soft skills are important for finding and sustaining employment, and make a significant contribution to the UK economy;

2. That improvements in soft skills increase social capital and contribute to better employability and employment outcomes;

3. That soft skills and hard skills have an innate complementarity; having both will improve employability and employment outcomes.

**Soft skills, capabilities and the economy**

The starting point for this review is a fundamental assertion that soft skills are important for the world of work. This sub-section draws on the literature to test our first hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 1: Soft skills are important for finding and sustaining employment and make a significant contribution to the UK economy.*
In its report, *A business case for soft skills* (2012), CIPD suggests that soft skills are an essential foundation for business and for life. CIPD also suggests that soft skills “help us to connect as human beings, maintain relationships, understand and influence others and manage and control ourselves” (CIPD, 2012). Other sources, including Robels’ (2012) extensive research into executive perceptions of soft skills, have also echoed similar sentiments.

“Soft skills predict success in life, they causally produce that success, and programmes that enhance soft skills have an important place in an effective portfolio of public policies.”  

(Heckman and Kautz, 2012)

Soft skills can therefore be considered an enabler for individual competencies that are necessary to find and succeed in business and in life more generally. There is also evidence that soft skills are just as important as hard skills, and in some cases more important. Wats and Wats (2009) found that “hard skills contribute to only 15% of one’s success, whereas 85% of success is due to soft skill.”

While these studies do not deny the importance of hard skills, nor suggest that an individual can succeed without them, they serve to underline the significance of soft skills.

It is widely acknowledged within the literature that a soft skills gap exists within labour markets. A 2010 survey of two thousand executives in the USA, conducted by the American Management Association, found nine in ten respondents thought soft skills were important to support business expansion, yet less than half of these executives thought their employees had an above average set of soft skills.

This has been echoed by the British Chamber of Commerce (2014) who found 57% of employers thought young people lacked the appropriate soft skills necessary for employment. This is significant as two independent studies in two different countries have both arrived at the same conclusion; employees, and young people in particular, lack the soft skills demanded by modern business.

The American Society for Training and Development (2012) also considered the perceived commercial impacts of the skills gap², as shown in Figure 4.3 overleaf. Lower productivity, reduced efficiency and missed opportunities ranked as the most significant impacts.

The effect of this skills gap is felt across multiple fields. In an article in nursing journal Nursing Educator it is noted that “not networking and not promoting our own abilities are the number one way soft-skill deficits can harm our careers and job prospects” (Pattillo, 2013).

Soft skills are therefore part of a recognised skills deficit and as such they also have economic consequences. New research by Development Economics (2015) working in partnership with a range

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² Note: this survey covers the perceived “skill gap” – created by the absence of all skills (hard and soft) – however given all of the context presented in this literature review around the contribution soft skills make when in employment, these findings are still relevant to considering the impact of the soft skills deficit.
of organisations such as Impetus PEF and the CBI found that soft skills are worth over £88 billion in Gross Value Added to the UK economy – accounting for approximately 6.5% of the economy as a whole. They have also estimated that over 500,000 people will be held back by a soft skills deficit by 2020. The resulting loss of productivity could potentially cost the UK economy up to £8.4 billion per year.

Figure 4.3: What are the impacts of having a skill gap? (respondents were asked to rank their top 3 choices)

Source: American Society for Training and Development, (2012). Bridging the Skills Gap

Soft skills, social capital and employability

Recognising that soft skills are important both for individuals’ progress, and the UK economy more broadly, this sub-section tests our second hypothesis linking improvements in soft skills to social capital, employability and employment outcomes.

Hypothesis 2: Improvements in soft skills increase social capital and contribute to better employability and employment outcomes.

There is considerable evidence to support the assertion that improvements in soft skills, and in particular relationship building and networking, increase social capital and contribute to better employability and employment outcomes. Fugate et al. (2004) found social capital was a key component of an individual’s employability.

Trefalt (2013) found that, “Networks and the social capital that they carry enable people to get things done, to prosper in their careers, and to feel supported.” In this sense, social capital offers a vital contribution to securing strong employability outcomes. McArdle et al. (2007) argue that in particular social capital provides support that can, “ameliorate the destructive consequences of stressful events such as unemployment.” While soft skills may be assessed during recruitment, it is apparent that social capital can define how effectively an individual is able to handle the challenges that they face both in and out of employment.

Similarly there is strong evidence to indicate that improvements in soft skills, including confidence, motivation, determination, relational skills and positive attitude have a significant influence on employability.
The Department for Work and Pensions (2004) published research into critical skills required by occupation – the results are shown in Table 4.1 overleaf. While the state of the UK economy was considerably different at the time of the research, the findings still resonate with more recent research e.g. British Chamber of Commerce (2014) and Development Economics (2015). Table 4.1 demonstrates how in some industries there are likely to be lower skill requirements (such as in elementary occupations e.g. bar staff, packers, security guards etc.), while in others (e.g. professionals and managers), recruiters are more likely to look for a range of skill categories.

Across each occupation, soft skills such as interpersonal skills and teamwork rank high on the list of recruitment criteria. Motivation and flexibility ranked almost as highly as job specific skills among professionals and skilled trades, and ranked higher than job specific skills in managerial and elementary roles. Two thirds of employers also consider verbal communication skills as critical for professional occupations. This demonstrates the importance of soft skills not just in entry level jobs, but across a spectrum of occupations.

"Developing and maintaining relationships with others for the purpose of mutual benefit can help individuals search for and secure employment opportunities, gain access to information or resources, and obtain guidance, sponsorship, and social support. Such networking skills are crucial for enhancing social capital and career success; however, many individuals feel uncomfortable with, or unskilled in, networking."

(de Janasz et al., 2013)

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<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Skilled trades</th>
<th>Professionals</th>
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<td>41</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Vocational qualifications</td>
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<td>Mean demand in occupation %</td>
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<td>27</td>
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Source: Jobcentre Plus Employer (Market View) Survey 2004

Subsequent UK government research has supported DWP’s findings regarding the relative importance of soft skills. The UKCES suggests that employability skills have an important bearing on success in the workplace, including future earnings. These skills, such as team working, communication, problem solving, and self-management, are highly valued by employers, often far more than educational qualifications (UKCES, 2009).

Similar messages regarding the importance of soft skills for employability also emerge from outside government, including from industry bodies and highly regarded think tanks. For example the CBI’s annual employer survey consistently rates employability skills as the greatest priority when recruiting graduates, with 82% of respondents valuing these as important in 2011 (CBI, 2011).

Demos, the think tank, have found that graduates can struggle to fulfil basic daily tasks in employment because they lack sufficiently well-developed soft skills (2006). Their research found that when soft communications skills are lacking:
• 43% feel awkward challenging senior colleagues;
• 35% feel awkward making presentations;
• 28% feel awkward speaking in meetings;
• 25% feel awkward negotiating; and
• 13% feel awkward answering the phone.

Soft skills are widely recognised as contributing to employment outcomes, both in terms of securing employment, and making progress in work.

The literature provides examples from across sectors at the entry level end of the labour market. For example, in retail, there is evidence from a variety of sources that soft skills matter more than other selection criteria such as qualifications, as illustrated in Figure 4.4 below. UK employers were asked which criteria had been relevant in selecting a recent recruit, and how important each criterion was. Soft skills such as reliability and motivation were reported as being significantly more important to employers than hard skills (technical competence). This supports the findings of Nickson et al. (2011) that basic skills and motivation are more highly regarded than specific technical competence and vocational qualifications.

![Figure 4.4: Relative importance of different selection criteria for jobseekers](image)

Soft skills are therefore acknowledged as contributing towards both securing employment, and the rate of progression within employment. For some entry level jobs, soft skills alone can be enough to secure a job opportunity.

“There is a strong recognition that front line service workers require soft skills both to get and to do jobs.”

(Nickson et al., 2011)

Soft skills are recognised as being particularly important for young people. For example, young
people with low self-esteem are considered to be less likely to attain post-secondary education and to be employed later in life (Waddell, 2006). Poor self-esteem is linked to job quality and the required degree of supervision in a job, and can be a good predictor of future earnings (Feinstein, 2000; Waddell, 2006). An individual’s ‘locus of control’, or the degree to which they feel they have autonomy over their life, is also associated with earning potential (Coleman and Deleire, 2003).

PwC’s 18th Annual Global CEO Survey found that nearly three in every four CEOs interviewed (73%) expressed concerns over the availability of key skills, including soft skills. The survey also found that both hard and soft skills were at the top of the modern CEO’s talent agenda, with 81% reporting their organisation is looking for a broader range of skills when hiring than in the past (PwC, 2015).

Studies have also shown that possessing perseverance and passion for long-term goals, is linked to successful educational and career outcomes (Duckworth et al., 2007). Research suggests that these characteristics are a more accurate predictor of a child’s academic and occupational success than cognitive ability (Roberts, 2009). Empathy, a person’s ability to understand and appropriately respond to their own and others’ emotions, is an important attribute when working with others. Employers place great value on emotional capabilities such as empathy, particularly so with the increase in service sector jobs (Birdwell et al., 2011).

Having a positive attitude to work is linked to improved employment outcomes. More than two fifths (42%) of fourteen year olds who disagree strongly that having a job or career is important are not in education, employment or training (NEET) four years later (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008). In recent national surveys of employers, having a positive attitude and being motivated was identified as one of the attributes most lacking in education leavers (UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2012; UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2010). Other studies also endorse this view, with employers reporting that they place more value on a good attitude than on basic skills when hiring low-skilled workers (Holzer and Wissoker, 2000).

Soft skills also play an important role beyond entry-level employment. Saloner (2010), in an article for Stanford Business, stated that “skill at interpersonal interactions” is “at least as important a part of the leader’s skill set as is training in the more traditional business disciplines”. Furthermore, Gillard (2009) found that project managers cannot be successful “with a technical skill set only”, and highlights “the need for excellent interpersonal or soft skills” as “necessary requisites for success”.

An analysis conducted by the Harvard Business Review (Bonnstetter, 2012) found that goal orientation was a “critical skill for entrepreneurial-minded people”. It also noted that persuasion, leadership and personal accountability were important soft skills for entrepreneurs to possess, with interpersonal skills being “the glue that holds the other four skills together”.

Even at the very highest level of corporate employment soft skills play a vital role. PwC’s 18th Annual Global Survey of 1,322 CEOs found a self-reported need for “the soft skills of leadership, including vision, agility, flexibility and humility” as personality traits for CEO’s across the globe to possess in today’s business world (PwC, 2015).
Soft skills are important at all levels of employment, from entry level to the highest levels of corporate leadership.

“We often read news stories about how employers feel that applicants who've left school, college or university lack the 'soft skills' they want. These skills are transferable skills, so they can be used in many different types of jobs. They are personal qualities and attitudes that can help you to work well with others and make a positive contribution to organisations you work for.”

(National Careers Advice Service, 2014)

Soft skills and hard skills

This review has evidenced the importance of soft skills for capabilities and the economy more generally, and outlined the contribution that soft skills make to employment at all levels, including entrepreneurship. There is, however, strong recognition that more formal technical or ‘hard’ skills are also important for finding and sustaining employment, and moving up the skills curve. This sub-section therefore tests our third and final hypothesis regarding the link between soft and hard skills, and the effect of having both.

Hypothesis 3: Soft skills and hard skills have an innate complementarity; having both will improve employability outcomes.

Prior analysis within this review points to clear complementarity between hard and soft skills. Klaus (2010) helps contextualise this with the example of a medical student who requires soft skills including “empathy, understanding, active listening and a good bedside manner.” In addition to this the hard skills required are “a vast comprehension of illness, the ability to interpret test results and symptoms and a thorough understanding of anatomy and physiology.” Both sets of skills are working in unison – the medical student is dependent on both to operate effectively in their daily role.

Given that both soft and hard skills are vital to performing many roles, a range of sources have identified that it is easier to secure a job when you have both and are able to use them together. A large study into employability also supports this perspective concluding: “A graduate can be very intelligent and pass their degree with distinctions but if they do not display a fair amount of the necessary soft or generic skills they can jeopardise their chance of employability” (Paadi, 2014).

Employers are looking for rounded individuals at every level of their organisation – they will choose to recruit individuals on the basis of how close they are to having the right balance of soft and hard skills.
While research in this area focuses higher levels of education, it is still relevant for low skilled / entry level jobs. At this level, soft skills may be the most important factor to securing the opportunity, and developing complementary hard skills will enhance the opportunities for progression.

Research also suggests that soft skills can help an individual to secure opportunities which lead to the development of hard skills. The Department for Work and Pensions in their review into what employers look for when recruiting the unemployed and inactive supports Dench’s finding that “technical and occupation skills can be taught on-the-job if the recruit has the right soft skills, such as motivation and willingness to learn” (Dench et al., 1998). Kodz et al.’s (1998) research also builds on this perspective, noting “employers use soft skills as an indicator of people’s ability to learn occupational skills.”

Soft skills help an individual to stand out, to communicate their ambitions and to be taken seriously by employers. This ensures that employers are sufficiently motivated to help employees reduce any technical skill gap which still remains.

**Summary**

- **Our evaluation of Backr has highlighted tangible improvements in a range of soft skills.**

A comprehensive review of soft skills research highlights that the soft skills developed by Backr are commonly recognised, consistent with other categorisations, and accepted as being important for improving employability and employment outcomes.

- **Soft skills are clearly important for finding employment, and contributing to the economy more broadly.**

In the UK, the significance of soft skills has been recognised by the Government, industrial bodies and think tanks. It is also accepted that soft skills are part of a recognised skills deficit in the UK.

- **Skill deficits amongst employees cost businesses through reduced productivity and/or increased training costs.**

Development Economics’ research has found that by 2020 the contribution soft skills make to the UK economy is expected to grow, reaching £109 billion. By delivering improvements in soft skills, Participle’s Backr programme is contributing towards recognised economic value.

- **Soft skills are important regardless of levels of employment, from entry-level employment to high-end careers.**
The Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (CESI, 2014) have suggested that building the skills, confidence and motivation of job seekers is important, particularly as part of a strategy to help people escape persistent poverty and secure prosperity.

“Skill at interpersonal interactions” is “at least as important a part of the leader’s skill set as is training in the more traditional business disciplines” (Saloner, 2010).

Project managers cannot be successful “with a technical skill set only”, and “excellent interpersonal or soft skills” are “necessary requisites for success” (Gillard, 2009).

Goal orientation is a “critical skill for entrepreneurial-minded people”. Persuasion, leadership and personal accountability are also important soft skills for entrepreneurs to possess, with interpersonal skills being “the glue that holds the other four skills together” (Bonnstetter, 2012).

At the very highest level of corporate business, CEOs report a need for “the soft skills of leadership, including vision, agility, flexibility and humility” as key personality traits for today’s business leaders to possess (PwC, 2015).

- **The literature evidences a widely recognised link between improved soft skills, increased social capital, employability and employment outcomes.**

  Soft skills help to build social capital (de Janasz et al., 2013; Trefalt, 2013) and make what is widely recognised as a significant contribution to employability and employment outcomes. (Birdwell et al., 2011; Roberts, 2009; Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2008; Duckworth et al., 2007; Waddell, 2006; Holzer and Wissoker, 2000).

  Soft skills can help an individual to secure employment and improve their employability whether in or out of work.

  There is evidence that in many industries (for example, entry level retail roles) soft skills can be more important than hard skills for securing employment.

- **There is evidence of a causal link between the soft skills developed by Backr and social capital, employability and ultimately employment outcomes**

  This review has therefore evidenced a causal link between the soft skills developed by Backr and social capital, employability and ultimately employment outcomes. It has also made a case for attaching monetary value to Backr’s soft skills outcomes vis-à-vis the UK’s soft skills deficit.
Backr provided, “intelligent comments on re-packaging my experience for new, prospective employers... genuinely useful service... gave me a boost in confidence when it was much needed.”

Backr beneficiary
5. Primary research findings

Overview
This section of our report presents our analysis of the primary research activities to inform this longitudinal evaluation. It is structured under the following headings:

- Backr 0.1, Backr 0.2 and demographic analysis;
- Backr 0.3 and comparative Analysis;
- Backr 0.4.

These sections reflect the findings of our primary research activities with representatives and beneficiaries across the various cohorts, in line with Backr’s development and evolution over the past two years.

Backr 0.1 and 0.2
Identification of a baseline sample

In November 2013, we undertook a baseline evaluation exercise in which 129 Backr participants were identified for our survey. This group is referred to as Backr 0.1, i.e. the first cohort surveyed. The views and perceptions of this cohort were collected and analysed against those of a control group, consisting of 377 individuals (taken from a six week survey across three Job Centres and a Job Fair).

It is important to note that this exercise is to be used as a benchmark for progress in service provision; direct comparability is not possible for all questions answered by participants given that this survey acted as a ‘pilot’ to inform the survey questions within Backr 0.2, 0.3 and 0.4.

The survey respondent profile is illustrated within the appendix. The overall findings are included within the baseline report; however, key findings included:

- Participle has identified five key capability areas in which they expect Backr to make an impact – which were relationships, work and learning, community/environment, health and vitality and productivity and progression (including traditional employment outcomes). In doing so they have set clear targets which span across the core areas of the Backr network;
- Seventy-six per cent of Backr participants surveyed said that they would recommend Backr to a friend or someone in a similar position;
- More than one quarter (twenty-six per cent) of Backr participants surveyed had made contact with other Backr members outside of formal Backr events and activities; and
- Approximately three quarters of unemployed Backr participants responding to the survey indicated that Backr helps them connect with people who could help them progress.
**Demographic Analysis**

As noted previously, the Backr 0.1 – 0.4 cohorts consist of 314 respondents. As such, we can undertake a demographic analysis to understand the profile of those using the Backr service, as identified through our surveys as a collective group.

**Age**

A total of 291 (93%) of respondents answered this question with a set age. The survey sample reflects a relatively even distribution of age demonstrating Backr’s engagement with a large spectrum of individuals irrespective of age. A slight majority (56%) of respondents are under the age of 35, with the smallest group being those over the age of 50 (21%).

**Gender**

For all survey participants across the cohorts, gender is evenly split, with 49% of those being male, and 51% female.

**Ethnicity**

Of the 314 respondents, 309 answered this question, with five refusing to answer. Of these respondents, Figure 5.6 highlights that the majority of participants are white (51%), with the next largest group identifying as black/African/Caribbean/Black British (30%).

**Skills**

Respondents were asked within Backr 0.2, 0.3 and 0.4 (n=185) what the highest qualification they had was (with the responses matched against the Labour Force Survey for wider comparability). This question was put forward as a meaningful addition following the pilot survey of Backr 0.1, of which 180 (97%) of respondents answered. 45% of the sample responded that they had a bachelor's degree or above.

**Introducing the findings of Backr 0.3 & 0.4**

As noted in Section 3, each Backr cohort represents a tailored and varied intervention, given the dynamic nature of the service provision which is informed by the views and outcomes of the prior intervention. On this basis, whilst we can pool together some of the survey findings regarding age, ethnicity, qualifications, and gender, it is not possible to group the views and verbatim of Backr participants across each cohort into a collective sample size, as the underlying service provision may have changed, and this would run the risk of bias and false attribution. This is largely reflective of the fact that our emerging conclusions – included within both our baseline and interim reports – have been used to inform and refine how interventions are designed and ultimately delivered.

Therefore, this section will undertake a review of the 0.3 cohort (and the follow-up group from this cohort to allow for a comparative assessment of outcomes), and subsequently consider the views and findings from the most recent Backr 0.4 cohort, surveyed in August 2015. Backr 0.1 and 0.2 exercises were undertaken to inform a baseline and the initial findings from the cohort; these are included within the interim report undertaken for Participle, and as such a summary is included within the Appendices. We therefore place greatest emphasis on the most recent findings of Backr 0.3 and 0.4.
Findings from the 0.3 Cohort

The 0.3 cohort was established in October 2014 as being able to select a sample of individuals undertaking the Backr service to be surveyed and identified as a ‘pre-intervention’ group. This consisted of 70 individuals who were revisited in June 2015 with a ‘post-intervention’ survey.

This post-intervention survey gained 27 responses (i.e. 39% of the original group). Of the 70 people, the remainder either were not available for contact due to invalid phone numbers, persistent voicemail, or refusals due to personal time constraints. Additionally, seven individuals commented they did not wish to support the survey, which will be addressed later in this section.

On this basis, we present the summary findings from the 70 respondents in October 2014. We subsequently will present the post-intervention findings from the 27 respondents, and compare these to the views and outcomes of those 27 individuals prior to their use of the Backr service. Additionally, we will consider these findings against wider trends over this nine month period through the use of Labour Force Survey (LFS) data from September 2014 to June 2015. This is all with a view to assisting our objective understanding on the impact and contribution to participant’s employability and employment outcomes.

Participant perspectives on Backr operations

Figures 5.1 and 5.2 highlight respondents’ views of what Backr is: a) doing well, and in a unique way; and b) suggested areas for improvement. The most significant positive response was that Backr ‘provides you with networking skills’, with sixteen percent of respondents offering this. Respondents were also positive towards the ‘friendliness and empathy of Backr staff’, and felt that Backr made them ‘think differently’.

Figure 5.1: What, if anything, do you believe is unique or different about Backr?
The majority of respondents felt that Backr’s sessions were unique (75%) and easily accessible (79%) compared to other employment support services. Forty-two percent of respondents felt that Backr provided them with the knowledge and skills that they would not have obtained elsewhere – reinforcing the overall theme of positivity on the nature and delivery of the interventions of Backr.

Some of the areas which Backr could improve in, suggested by respondents, focused on providing more work experience (twelve percent). Other respondents also felt Backr could utilise online resources and improve their website to further assist them when searching for events and opportunities. When this question was asked, it is also important to note that fourteen percent of respondents argued that Backr had ‘no need for improvement’ and was a beneficial service.
Case study: focussing on the individual

In-depth interviews with Backr participants provided an insight into the difference between the support provided by Backr and the Job Centre. One in-depth interviewee (a middle aged white male from the inner city Vauxhall area of London, called Jack for the purposes of this write up only) had been in employment as a teacher and “paying taxes” for thirty years. As a pro-active job searcher Jack had applied for approximately seventeen roles in a little over three months via his engagement with the Job Centre. With no success from his engagement with the Job Centre, Jack became frustrated with what he perceived to be a lack of individual focus in his dealings with the Job Centre stating that “they just don’t get you” and feeling particularly frustrated by the suggestion that it might help if Jack “wore a tie to interviews”, which he already did. Moreover, he began to question the relevance of his skills, and his confidence in his own ability to find employment. Jack found out about Backr via an independent internet search and “just turned up” to two Backr ‘Shake up Your Job Search’ sessions in the nearby Brixton area and subsequently attended a coaching session in Croydon. Jack felt that in contrast to the Job Centre, he was “treated as a peer” by Backr staff rather than a “teacher pupil relationship”. Jack was particularly impressed with the professional style and positive approach taken by Backr staff, and the focus they placed on his individual situation. Backr provided Jack with “intelligent comments on repackaging my experience for new prospective employers” and that Backr staff “listened to what you had to say, and acted as a sounding board”. While Jack admits that it is likely he would have found a job anyway, Backr “provided a genuinely useful service” that he “would be happy to pay taxes” for, and one that “taught him to be a realist” and “definitely gave me a boost in confidence when it was much needed”.

Outputs compared to other sources of support

When those that had completed Backr 0.3 (n=51) were asked about the employment related activities they had taken up as a result of Backr - compared to the other employment support they had received - 0.3 respondents indicated that Backr resulted in more opportunities to meet new people (almost twice the number of respondents), and marginally more volunteering opportunities.

This insight is encouraging given the decision taken by Backr to focus on face-to-face sessions as a core component of the intervention. In contrast to results from the Backr 0.2 cohort, respondents from the 0.3 cohort suggested that the Job Centre resulted in more workshops or employment related training sessions (although it should be noted that the programme delivered to the Backr 0.3 cohort is in itself a series of workshops compared to the 0.2 cohort programme which was based around participation in a one-off workshop).

Figure 5.4: Have you been involved in any of the following activities as a result of the employment support you have received over the past 12 months?

![Graph showing activities compared to other sources of support](source:PwC (n=51))
Figure 5.5: Has the support you received to get into work achieved any of the following…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Backr</th>
<th>Job Centre*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helped me build my confidence in relation to finding work</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has it helped me to contribute to someone else’s progress</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has it helped me use contacts or connections to make progress</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided new opportunities for work that I could not have found otherwise</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me to actively seek work</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped me think differently about what I might be able to do for work?</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been aligned with my work or career goals</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PwC (n=51)

The majority of respondents viewed Backr’s support as more beneficial to them than that of Job Centre. The largest difference between Backr and the Job Centre for respondents was that Backr helped them to think differently about what they could do for work (seventy-three percent, as opposed to twenty-three percent). Thirty-three percent of respondents felt it provided them with new opportunities for work they could not have otherwise found.

Eden, Dov; Aviram, Arie Jun (1993) found that training designed to boost self-efficacy increased reemployment for individuals who were initially low in self-efficacy (confidence in their own ability to find work). This suggests that training of this nature helps those low in confidence, and is encouraging given that more than twice as many respondents reported Backr as having helped build their confidence in relation to finding work compared with the Job Centre.

It is clear that participants recognise that Job Centre has directly assisted in helping a greater number of participants to find work placements. This is not surprising given the emphasis that Job Centre management place on this as a means of generating positive outcomes with regard to employability. However, on this basis, we suspected that the 0.3 cohort would have answered more positively to the supplementary question about achievements demonstrated above.

As highlighted at Figure 5.6, respondents were asked how they rated, on a 1-5 scale, the following elements within their lives. It is clear that Backr’s input has increased the confidence, control, and belief of respondents in finding work significantly. The number of respondents feeling either quite/very high about ‘my ability to be proactive regarding my employment’ and ‘my confidence in talking about myself’ more than doubled (from thirty-five percent to seventy-six percent, and from thirty-seven percent to eighty percent respectively).
Backr 0.3 respondents reported a notable increase in confidence/self-esteem following their involvement in the sessions. The implications of these outcomes are supported in relevant academic literature, including:

- Liu, S. et al. (2014) who found that job search interventions effectively promoted employment only when both skills development and motivation enhancement (including boosting self-efficacy, encouraging proactivity, promoting goal setting) were included.

- Creed, P. A. et al. (2001) found that personal development training courses brought immediate benefits in self-esteem and job-search self-efficacy. They also found this training to have long-term benefits in job-search self-efficacy.

- Schmit, M. J et al. (1993) who found that self-esteem is positively related to assertive job-seeking behaviour.

Source: PwC (n=51)

Source: PwC (n=51)
Forty-two percent of Backr 0.3 respondents reported making “strong progress” towards their career goals after their involvement with Backr, as opposed to just seventeen percent beforehand. Eight percent of respondents reported making “no progress” after using Backr.

**Findings from the Pre/Post Intervention 0.3 Survey**

As noted previously, the 0.3 post-intervention cohort (n=27) represents those upon which we had information in both October 2014 and June 2015. The most effective mechanism for understanding changes in outcomes over this time is to assess the current employment activities of the group over time.

*Figure 5.8: LFS Outcomes for Backr 0.3 Participants (October 2014)*

For the 27 people surveyed at the endline, we have matched these respondents with their views provided in the interim survey to understand the original LFS status of the group in October 2014 against that in June 2015.
Overall, ILO unemployment has fallen from 44% to 33% with employment/self-employment rising from 26% to 37%. This reflects a delivery of positive outcomes; however, it should be noted that full attribution cannot be assigned to Backr services only due to other potential employability drivers that this analysis does not consider.

However, it is worth considering the outcomes of those who identified as unemployed in October 2014, to measure if these historically harder to help individuals have been able to secure tangible outcomes. For those twelve individuals who identified as ILO unemployed in October 2014, 42% (n=5) of these have moved into employment or self-employment, with a further two in education or training. Whilst it is important to note that this this represents a small sample size, it does reflect a positive development.

To highlight the contribution which Backr has made to these outcomes, we need to understand firstly the wider macroeconomic context (i.e. to what extent outcomes have varied across the labour market in London), and secondly, the degree of attribution which beneficiaries have placed upon the intervention and their ‘personal outcome’ i.e. moving into employment or training.

Firstly, Figure 5.11 reflects the change in ILO unemployment (minus 25%) exceeds that experienced at the macro level (minus 3.5%). This suggests that Backr has outperformed the base case scenario which these twenty-seven individuals would have likely experienced if not subject to the Backr intervention.

To highlight the contribution which Backr has made to these outcomes, we need to understand firstly the wider macroeconomic context (i.e. to what extent outcomes have varied across the labour market in London), and secondly, the degree of attribution which beneficiaries have placed upon the intervention and their ‘personal outcome’ i.e. moving into employment or training.

Firstly, Figure 5.11 reflects the change in ILO unemployment (minus 25%) exceeds that experienced at the macro level (minus 3.5%). This suggests that Backr has outperformed the base case scenario which these twenty-seven individuals would have likely experienced if not subject to the Backr intervention.
Attribution as placed on a personal level towards outcomes is also a powerful indicator as to the extent to which Backr has helped people meet their employment objectives. Within the 0.3 comparative cohort, there are eight individuals who were not in employment in October 2014, but are currently employed/self-employed as of June 2015.

Of these eight individuals, seven provided an attribution to an individual or body responsible for their employment. Of these seven, one person stated that the Job Centre was responsible for securing their employment, two people stated Backr, and four people attributed this to their own efforts.

Whilst caution should be exercised with regards to the sample size, of the two people who noted Backr as being primarily responsible for their current employment status, they offered that:

> “Backr helped me with networking, making connections, and building confidence in myself.”

> “A representative of Backr gave me the confident to approach an [employment] idea I had from a different viewpoint.”

Additionally, given the majority of respondents placed their employment upon their personal efforts, this may be likely to capture all activities they had undertaken to date, including use of the Backr service. This in itself is a positive outcome as it highlights that individuals are confident enough to attribute their outcomes to their own skills and capabilities.

Another interesting point to note is that of these seven individuals, six provided the length of time for which they were out of work prior to their current employment. Of these, three were out of work for more than twelve months, and three were out of work for less than twelve months, suggesting that Backr’s approach has the capacity to help those regardless of previous length of unemployment (albeit this is within a small sample size).

Which groups have benefitted from the Backr intervention? (0.3)

For those eight individuals which have moved into positive tangible outcomes (i.e. employment and training), it is important to consider their background and skills to consider who benefits from the Backr service.

*Figure 5.12: Highest Qualification of those with positive employment outcomes (10) vs no change/negative change (17)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Positive Outcome</th>
<th>No Formal Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree or equivalent</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCE, A-level or equivalent</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GCSE or equivalent (5 A*- C)</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other qualifications</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No qualifications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PwC (Job employability outcome n=10, No formal outcome n=17)
Figure 5.12 suggests that those who moved into employment or training outcomes were more than twice as likely to have higher education or above as their highest qualification. Given the pre-established link between hard skills and outcomes, this reflects general trends within the labour market that those with qualifications will have access to a larger pool of employment or employers.

Additionally, for those eight people in employment, on average this group has been out of employment for four months prior to securing their job outcome i.e. this suggests that tangible outcomes for long-term unemployed are more difficult to secure than for those frictionally unemployed and with higher education qualifications. In this regard, it is important to reconsider the offering of Backr as not only aiming to deliver upon tangible outcomes, but to upskill and improve the capabilities of its users.

**Figure 5.13: Capability Building (27 Backr 0.3 respondents): Backr vs Job Centre**

Amongst the 27 respondents, they reported more positive outcomes as a result of the Backr intervention with regards to their capability building - compared to the support of the Job Centre - particularly with regards to confidence, being able to think differently about work, and being aligned with career and work goals. The most identified statement about Backr was its ability to help people build confidence in relation to finding work with 81% noting this, compared to 40% of people attributing this to the Job Centre. This is a core and recurring theme regarding the overall impact of Backr and is a key overall conclusion from this evaluation.

As highlighted at Figure 5.14, those identified as ‘harder to reach’ i.e. the longer-term unemployed are of particular interest for this evaluation given that their outcomes may not be as easy to identify as a result of their lower propensity to attain [hard] employment outcomes.

For the Backr 0.3 respondents, 14 of the 27 had stated they were currently unemployed and had been for twelve months or longer, or they were currently employed but had previously been unemployed for more than twelve months prior to their current role. Of these 14 people, the majority recognised Backr’s ability to support them to build confidence, which is noted as a key driver for providing motivation and helping people to get back into work.

Most notably, 72% of these 14 respondents stated that Backr helped them to actively seek work. This compares to 35% attributing this outcome to the Job Centre. When placed alongside the views of the overall Backr 0.3 endline cohort (27 people), the longer-term unemployed tend to have a more positive...
view of Backr’s capacity to help them actively seek work (70%), and to think differently about work (79%) than those who have been out of work for less than one year.

*Figure 5.14: Capability Building (14 Backr 0.3 respondents with >1 year unemployment (current or previous)*

This suggests than a non-traditional approach to seeking employment has greater resonance with the longer-term unemployed, thereby highlighting greater satisfaction with Backr than the Job Centre among this cohort with regard to building their personal capabilities to seek work.

This theme of capability building with regard to self-esteem, confidence, and motivation will be developed further within the data findings as taken from Participle’s use of participant monitoring forms and the views of the most recent cohort, Backr 0.4 from June 2015.

*Figure 5.15: Monitoring Form Data (Pre & Post Backr Session; >1 year unemployed)*

Source: PwC (n=14)

Source: PwC (n=36)
Findings from 0.4
In June 2015, we undertook a final survey with the Backr 0.4 cohort. This reflects the final group which have undertaken the Backr intervention within the confines of this evaluation. This group undertook a similar exercise to those within Backr 0.3, but rather than four sessions, they undertook two full-day sessions with lunch provided. This was in response to participant requests for a more accessible format which worked around other daily pressures e.g. childcare and family care.

This cohort consists of 56 respondents, and the survey questions were within the same parameters as Backr 0.3. Backr 0.4 reflects a different intervention to 0.3 at a different point in time. For this reason, we can invoke some comparability between the cohorts, but will focus upon the direct findings, views, and outcomes as highlighted by the survey findings.

Current Employment Status
A significant proportion of respondents to the 0.4 survey reported having attained employment since becoming involved with Backr, with 33% of participants now in employment. However, whilst this represents a single point in time and full attribution cannot be provided, this does lend credibility to the assessment that positive outcomes can be extracted as a result of the intervention.

Figure 5.16: Were you in employment (>16 hours per week) when you first got involved with Backr, and are you currently employed?

The employment status of Backr participants will be examined further within the analysis of DWP work outcome data as gathered by Participle between August 2014 and June 2015.

Participant Perspectives on Backr (0.4)
Figures 5.17 and 5.18 highlight respondents’ views towards what Backr is a) doing well, and in a unique way; and b) areas for improvement. From our qualitative analysis of the verbatim responses, most participants welcome the ability to meet new people and to be able to gain confidence which comes through the sessions.

This is further evidenced by the views as captured through Backr’s monitoring forms for new members, of which confidence can be a real issue. Other respondents welcome the positivity and supportive nature of the sessions and the coaches, and appreciate its informal yet professional nature.
Figure 5.17: What, if anything, do you believe is unique or different about Backr?

Source: PwC

Participant Comments:
“It looks at the longer term... people might stay in a job.”

“I enjoy meeting other unemployed people as being unemployed can be isolating.”

“It made me stop, and completely rethink my approach to job searching.”

Figure 5.18: What could be improved, if anything, about Backr?

From our coding of the verbatim responses, most participants have signalled a desire for further follow-up from Backr coaches and staff once they’ve completed sessions.

There is also a desire for an improvement in resources available to Backr, with a demand for more one-to-one time which can allow for services to be specialised and tailored to individual needs e.g. age, career path etc.

Participant Comments:
“People need to be followed up with. They [Participle] should encourage ongoing involvement so that Backr remains part of everyday life.”

“I was only contacted when they needed feedback... my experience was bad, and I don’t feel that it has helped me.”
Views on Backr vs Other Methods of Supports

0.4 respondents (n=56) were asked if support from Backr and the Job Centre helped them with the following objectives. The most significant positive findings relating to Backr’s provision relate to confidence (48% v 18%), the ability to think differently (69% v 41%), and the help to actively seek work (56% v 20%).

However, interestingly, and in contrast to previous cohorts (26% in 0.3 endline), 57% of respondents felt that the Job Centre helped them to use contacts or connections to make progress; more than the 46% who viewed the same as Backr. This may be attributable to referrals by the Job Centre to schemes such as Backr.

Figure 5.19: Backr 0.4/Job Centre Comparison – All Respondents

Participants also reflected improvements in their own personal rating with regards to their self-esteem, belief, and motivation following the Backr intervention, as highlighted within the appendices.

Backr Contribution to Outputs and Outcomes

Respondents were asked if they felt they were making progress in relation to work or their career goals, both before and after Backr.

Within 0.3, all respondents felt they were making progress following a Backr intervention. In 0.4, the effects are less clear, with 89% of respondents already purporting to be making some or strong progress prior to using Backr.

However, following the 0.4 intervention, the number of respondents reporting to be making strong progress did more than double from 9% to 23%.

9% of respondents felt they did not know their progress status following the use of Backr, but this may be due to difficulty between separating between ‘some’ and ‘strong’ progress and so on.

Overall, only 4% of respondents felt they were making ‘no progress’ under Backr 0.4, representing that most users do notice a tangible improvement with regard to their progress in meeting their work and career goals.
**Other Findings: Monitoring Forms, LFS, DWP Outcomes.**

Whilst the majority of our primary data consists of the results from the commissioned surveys and key stakeholder interviews, it is also important to note that throughout this evaluation process, Participle have gathered internal information through the use of monitoring forms, and tracking the job status of members involved referred through the Job Centre.

We have verified and validated this data prior to analysis, and it has offered the following insights to support the findings within the survey data.

**Monitoring Forms**

The monitoring forms were undertaken over the course of the evaluation to act as an internal identifier as to the views of Backr participants before starting the service, and subsequently after one week into the service to identify how their views and outcomes had varied.

This focused upon three core questions, scored on a 1-5 basis, 1 reflecting the lowest possible score, and 5 the highest. These three questions consisted of:

- How confident are you that you will access your contacts and connections to help you move towards finding work?
- How important do you feel it is to make contacts and connections when looking for work?
- How confident are you in talking to people you don’t know about your work related skills and experience?

In total, seventy individuals have been identified as having filled in a pre and post monitoring form at a session held between September 2014 and March 2015.

The overall findings highlight that confidence prior to the support is an area in which members have identified they could improve upon, and in line with the monitoring forms, there are marked improvements in identified confidence by this group (increases of 3.6%, and 7.4% in confidence scores respectively). The score assigned to the importance of making contacts and connections has remained static at 4.49, suggesting that these members have continued to understand and support the key principles of the service.
Participle undertook an exercise alongside the Job Centre in which any referral to the service was identified using a Unique ID and assigned a current work status. Subsequently, any change to the work status of each individual could be identified at a later stage in time to understand changes in outcomes. This exercise commenced with a collection of work statuses in August 2014, and was updated in June 2015. Data was gathered on 1,696 individuals as referred to the Backr programme in August 2014. By June 2015, 539 individuals have an identifiable work status. Of these, 288 people are attributed to having moved into work or off benefits (53%). This reflects a static point in time, and hence means that currently, of those who have previously been in receipt of benefits in the past two years and have used Backr, 53% of those known have moved off benefits and into work. This reflects a positive change over time; however, it is not possible to identify the time or the length of participation in the programme by each person with an identifiable work status.

However, it is possible to cross-compare 54 individuals with a pre-and-post work status to identify the impact of the Backr intervention over a defined period of time i.e. August 2014 to June 2015. These 54 all reflect individuals with comparable outcomes who have attended at least one Backr session, and this provides this evaluation with a greater understanding of how outcomes are changing over time, having developed their capabilities.
These findings reflect positive outcomes over time, with a significant increase in those moving off benefits into work (33% in August 2014 to 54% in June 2015). However, it is noted that it is not possible to attribute these effects directly to the Backr intervention, as this data is only collected on static outcomes, and did not place any emphasis upon attribution.

**Labour Force Survey**

In order to draw statistically-meaningful comparisons between the Backr group i.e. 0.3 endline of 27 respondents who were surveyed and more general non-Backr employability services available to those who are unemployed, a comparison group is required. Rather than surveying members of the general public to create this comparison group, we have attempted to use data from the UK Labour Force Survey (LFS) as the comparison group.

The inherent challenge with the Backr model is that those who access the Backr programme effectively ‘self-select’ into the programme. As their selection into the Backr programme is not random, there is a great potential for bias to be introduced into any statistical comparisons made at the next survey point when attempting to establish if the Backr programme results is better employment outcomes. This bias stems from the fact that there may be something inherently different about those who join Backr that could make them more likely to gain employment over the general population even if they were not using Backr services.

Due to the sample size of 27 respondents, we would not be able to provide statistically meaningful comparisons between the Backr 0.3 cohort and the wider public. However, we have reduced the LFS data to the London level, and used this to help assess and understand the wider context within which Backr operates.

With regard to the fall in ILO unemployment identified within the Backr 0.3 cohort, we have assessed this against the fall in ILO unemployment within the Labour Force Survey. As Backr 0.3 were originally surveyed in October 2014, and subsequently in June 2015, we have used the LFS from October–December 2014 and April–June 2015 as our comparison. Backr 0.3 consists of 27 respondents, and the LFS consists of 10,599 respondents across both dates.

As the LFS does not survey the same individuals over time, unlike the 0.3 survey, it is not possible to link changes in outcomes to individuals. However, given the extent of the sample size, it is possible to identify the wider change in LFS outcomes over this six to nine month period.
We have focused upon the drop in unemployment as illustrated in Figure 5.23:

Figure 5.23: Backr 0.3 Outcomes & London LFS Outcomes (Oct 14 to June 15)

This essentially means that Backr has outperformed (25% fall) what would have happened to the 27 individuals within a base case scenario (3.5% fall) i.e. without the support of Backr. In other words, if this group had not undertaken the Backr intervention, it is assumed that unemployment as a percentage of the group would have fallen by approximately 3.5% (as opposed to 25% with use of Backr). However, it is worth considering the significant variation in sample size, and as such, this cannot be taken as fully reflective of the Backr intervention.

For additional understanding, this exercise also sought to identify a profile of LFS unemployed, particularly with reference to skills to understand the background against which Backr is participating within. In this regard, as highest qualifications are identified as having a causal link to employment outcomes, these identifiers were sought for the wider London LFS group.

Figure 5.24: ILO unemployed in London (LFS): Highest Qualifications

Of these, we additionally sought to highlight the skills and qualifications of the longer-term unemployed (data available on those out of work for over one year). This reflects the status of the harder to reach groups, and emphasises the need for support at both a ‘hard’ level i.e. educational attainment and work experience, in addition to support through the provision of soft skills.
Overall, we have analysed the data provided through the use of four Backr cohort surveys, Participle’s data gathering of Job Centre outcomes and monitoring forms, and the use of external information such as the Labour Force Survey together with our detailed secondary literature review.

There are a number of core themes to be drawn out from our findings, including:

- **Backr participants are largely positive about the support they received.**
  
The response to Backr by participants is largely positive, with 92% of respondents recommending Backr to a friend within the most recent cohort.

- **Backr has delivered upon providing employability outcomes.**
  
Backr has delivered tangible employability outcomes, with regard to helping ILO unemployed back into work, education and/or training.

- **Backr has emphasised the role of improving capabilities, and participants value this approach.**
  
Backr has focussed upon upskilling and improving the capabilities of its members, with participants valuing its ability to develop their personal capabilities. These are inherently linked towards soft skills, and the capacity to generate positive employability outcomes.

- **Backr is found to be significantly helpful by those in long-term unemployment.**
  
Those in long-term unemployment (over one year) found that Backr was more useful in supporting them back to work (72%) than the Job Centre (35%) or the overall Backr cohort (60%).

*Figure 5.25: ILO Long-Term Unemployed in London (LFS): Highest Qualification*

![Figure 5.25: ILO Long-Term Unemployed in London (LFS): Highest Qualification](image)

Source: PwC (n=94)
Additionally, 78% of long-term unemployed (and 81% overall) Backr participants stated that it helped them build their confidence (35% for the Job Centre) suggesting that Backr resonates particularly with developing the confidence and motivation of the harder to help groups.

- **Education attainment and job outcomes are inherently linked.**

Educational attainment plays an important role in the delivery of tangible job outcomes, with those with higher education or above more than twice as likely (70%) to have a job outcome than those with lower than higher education (30%). This suggests outcomes are attributed to a mixture of educational attainment, skills (both hard and soft), and previous work experience. This isn’t unique to any organisation, but rather stresses the link between hard skills and outcomes. On this basis, attribution of outcomes against employability activities can only provide a certain degree of insight. The remainder can consist of a multitude of other social, economic, and behavioural factors, of which we have identified a number through our literature review.
“The most useful thing about Backr is being able to meet other people; being unemployed can be very isolating.”

Backr beneficiary
6. Conclusions & recommendations

Overview
This section sets out the key conclusions and recommendations arising from our independent evaluation of the Backr programme. It is based on the findings presented throughout this report and is structured under a series of themes which have been aggregated from our overall analysis as most pertinent to the overall evaluation questions. The recommendations have also been framed to be as constructive and forward looking as is possible, linked to the data and research that has been undertaken.

These thematic conclusions are listed below with further explanatory detail provided in the sections that follow:

- Developing capabilities: self-esteem & motivation
- Improving confidence: bringing people back to the labour market
- Delivering positive employment outcomes: supporting people into work and work-readiness
- Which groups have benefitted most from the Backr intervention?

Throughout this evaluation, we have sought not to make direct comparisons between Participle and other employability programmes. This remains the case in this final section, primarily as a result of the unique nature, scale and type(s) of intervention provided through the Backr programme. It is neither appropriate nor methodologically robust to draw direct comparisons due to the lack of visibility and knowledge of the prevailing context and overall parameters of other programmes. Therefore, our focus here, and throughout this report, is on the development, impact and potential limitations with Backr solely.
Conclusions

1. Developing Capabilities: self-esteem and motivation

*The capabilities of Backr participants, e.g., self-esteem, building relationships and motivation, have been positively improved and enhanced through the Backr intervention.*

The literature review evidences the fundamental importance of capabilities such as self-esteem, building relationships and motivation in identifying, sustaining and progressing once in employment. This relates to a skills gap which smaller, innovative and bespoke programmes, like Backr, can help to address.

There is an economic cost of this skills gap, and employers place most emphasis upon the reliability, motivation, and basic skills of potential staff when undertaking recruitment exercises. On this basis, interventions such as Backr which focus on improving these criteria for individuals are helping to bridge a significant skills gap and a growing demand from employers of all sizes and across all industry sectors.

Backr participants, as evidenced by the data described within this report, have reported positive impacts upon their capabilities both directly and indirectly as a consequence of the Backr programme. Within the most recent cohort (0.4), the following categories all achieved a personal capability improvement of between +0.39 (11%) and +0.69 (20%) following their Backr intervention:

1. Sense of control over my work life;
2. My belief that my skills and experience could be valuable to someone else;
3. My belief in myself to find work;
4. My motivation to find work;
5. My ability to connect with people I know who may be able to help me progress towards work;
6. My confidence generally;
7. My confident in talking about myself; and
8. My ability to be proactive regarding my employment.

The most significant single impact was in relation to participants’ ability to connect with people who may be able to help them progress towards work, followed closely by belief and motivation to find work.

**Key messages:**

- Within the parameters, scale and geography that Backr operates, this is a consistently positive series of impacts that is addressing some of the most pressing issues and barriers facing both job-seekers and employers.

- The style, method, frequency and engaging way that the interventions have been provided have been the foundation for this improvement and, if developed on a wider scale, suggests that the programme is objectively addressing and improving these core capabilities.
**Recommendation One:**

- Participle should be encouraged and heartened by these findings but, importantly, remain focused on and committed to the original design principles which underpin the Backr programme.

- A capability based intervention, supported by a robust academic evidence base of relational welfare, is very different to other employability programmes. This is what differentiates Backr and should be the platform upon which the next phase of its evolution is built from.

- Participle should not be afraid to innovate further to develop the full potential of this style of approach, but apply this in different areas, tailored to a variety of population needs and be bold in communicating the impact that this has already had.

- In identifying new localities to apply and ultimately implement these principles, Participle should carefully consider both the demographics and demand for this style of intervention and the recognised benefits it will deliver for participants. This will ensure it can continue to have the greatest impact for people who need support in developing their capabilities as they embark upon the journey towards employment and the key preparatory stages in between.

2. **Improving Confidence: bringing people back to the labour market**

*The Backr intervention has significantly improved the confidence of its participants – a core constituent capability in the journey towards employment.*

The literature review identified that soft skills - including confidence, motivation, determination, relational skills and positive attitude have significant influence on employability and employment outcomes. Any intervention which can objectively support people’s confidence is a positive, and arguably critical step in preparing for, actively seeking and ultimately gaining employment.

**Key messages:**

- For the long-term unemployed (more than one year) amongst our overall Backr evidence base, they have reported an improvement in confidence (+0.19 on the five point scale), that they will access contacts and connections to help move towards work, and an improvement in confidence (+0.2) with regard to talking to those they don’t know about their skills and experience.

- All of Backr’s participants have noted personal improvements in their capabilities and attributed this improvement to the Backr intervention. This indicates that Backr’s approach to improving capabilities with regard to building up confidence prior to entering the labour market has resonated with, and positively impacted its participants. While the Backr programme has operated on a smaller scale compared to other employability initiatives, the significance of this conclusion and our evidence should not be underestimated.

- All of our research suggests confidence is a fundamental capability in both identifying and sustaining employment. Large scale, national initiatives such as the Work Programme have found it consistently difficult to help those who are furthest away from the labour market (particularly ESA claimants).
Small scale, targeted, innovative programmes like Backr are required as an alternative to these large scale, national initiatives to support people to build capabilities like confidence if progress is to be made in helping them secure sustainable employment opportunities.

Backr has worked and positively impacted in this respect. The challenge / opportunity is to assess how / if this approach can be adopted and implemented in other areas where the challenges are similar.

Recommendation Two:

Confidence is important for securing job outcomes and progressing in work. The Backr programme has the potential to be equally effective in supporting both of these outcomes because of the capabilities it helps participants to develop.

Looking ahead to the opportunities that this could create, Participle should consider how they focus on developing their programme to meet both outcomes as primary objectives whilst not neglecting the importance of more holistic objectives such as ensuring people are able to make informed, life fulfilling choices about the work and opportunities that they pursue.

3. Delivering positive employment outcomes: supporting people into work and work-readiness

Overall, this evaluation can readily identify, through the three approaches of the participant surveys, Labour Force Survey, and the DWP Job Centre outcomes that Backr has delivered an improvement to tangible employment outcomes for its participants.

One challenge that existed for Participle from the inception of Backr is how to evidence that a programme which is focused on relational welfare and improving individual capabilities leads to hard employment outcomes. This is essential in the current employability market, with additional funding increasingly predicated on a payment by results basis in return for delivering against hard employment outcomes.

Within our primary research, we acknowledge the inherent difficulty in fully attributing employment outcomes to the Backr service. However, to some extent this will always be the case with similar interventions due to the number of variables (e.g., levels of educational attainment, previous experience, area in which the intervention operates, facilities etc.).

The clearest evidence base to understand employment outcomes for Backr participants is detailed within the 0.3 comparative group, consisting of 27 individuals surveyed in both October 2014, and June 2015. This allows for a true comparison over time; however, it is noted that this group reflects too small a sample size for meaningful statistical comparison against a control group i.e. Labour Force Survey data (based upon 10,599 respondents within the Greater London area).

On this basis, a caveated comparison is offered to highlight the impact of Backr’s intervention within the context of wider macroeconomic trends i.e. growing economy, and declining unemployment.
Key messages:

- As part of this evaluation we have analysed the employment outcomes for those individuals identified through the Job Centre by Participle in August 2014 and June 2015. Of these, we have identified 56 individuals with a pre and post outcome to challenge the hypothesis that Backr has positively assisted its participant’s to achieve hard employment outcomes.

- Within the most recent cohort (0.4), 33% of respondents stated they were currently involved in employment (over 16 hours per week). This compares favourably to the 14% in work when they started the Backr programme. Additionally, 87% of respondents felt they were making some or strong progress with their ‘career progress’ following the use of the Backr service.

- Within the 0.3 comparative exercise, ILO unemployment as a percentage of the respondents has fallen from 44% to 33% (i.e. a 25% decline in relative terms), and participants have shown positive trends accordingly with employment and self-employment rising from 26% to 30% of respondents.

- When analysed against the Labour Force Survey findings in London between October 2014 and June 2015, which highlight a drop in ILO unemployment from 3.26% to 3.15% (i.e. a 3.5% decline in relative terms), the Backr outcomes compare favourably to a base case scenario in which these individuals did not undertake the Backr intervention.

As noted previously, Participle recorded the employment status - as identified by the Job Centre for those referred to Backr at any given time throughout the evaluation period. We have analysed this data, and following validation and verification, there are 54 identifiable outcomes between August 2014 and June 2015.

- The number of those in receipt of work-related benefits has fallen from 54% to 43% over this period. Additionally, the number of those no longer on benefits and currently with a job has increased significantly from 33% to 54%.

- This adds to the substance of our conclusions and builds a richer narrative about the nature of the job market and the impact of Backr. The Backr intervention may not necessarily deliver employment outcomes immediately, but participants are able to go away with improved capabilities and a stronger understanding of how to build and utilise new and pre-existing relationships. This has the potential to create the conditions necessary to help them find, progress in and sustain employment.

Recommendation Three:

- The challenge of measuring outcomes is something which Participle need to fully address in the next stage or further evolution in terms of how the Backr intervention is implemented.

- Participle are recognised as social innovators, they have the opportunity to define and challenge how conventional employment outcomes are measured but must be able to put together a compelling case for mainstream funders such as JCP who traditionally look for hard outcomes and operate on a payment by results basis.

- Given the often long-termist nature of the impact these interventions, Participle should consider how and in what ways it can better track, monitor and remain engaged with
participants – particularly long after the intervention has finished. Effective tracking, potentially through a more effective online tool, is key to both identifying and attributing to hard employment outcomes – which is vital in terms of communicating that the programme does, and has worked.

4. Which groups have benefitted most from the Backr intervention?

Our evidence indicates that the impact of the Backr programme most positively affects those with a pre-existing level of educational attainment – particularly those with a higher education qualification.

Subsequent to identifying the impact of the Backr service in terms of capabilities and hard outcomes, it is important to recognise which groups benefit more from this form of intervention. As previously noted, some claimant groups are closer to the labour market than others – therefore understanding which groups currently benefit the most from the Backr programme is a key consideration for this evaluation.

One approach is to assess outcomes for those with an assigned benefits category e.g. JSA or ESA, of which the ESA group has traditionally been harder to help. However, within our survey approach, the segmentation of individuals with outcomes into these categories provided sample sizes which were too small to provide any statistically meaningful conclusions. On this basis, we have assessed the background of those with tangible employment outcomes to identify the traits which may impact upon an individual’s capacity to secure employment through the support of a service such as Backr. Additionally, we have segmented survey respondents into key drivers for employability such as previous length of unemployment and educational attainment to identify individual’s views as to how the programme has supported them on their own employability journey, with reference to both the tangible employment outcomes, and wider developmental outcomes with regard to capabilities.

Key messages:

- When analysing the known demographics of those who have entered employment following Backr (0.3), participants with tangible employment outcomes have been more than twice as likely to have higher education or above (70%) as their highest qualification than those with two A-Level grades or equivalent and below. This is reflective of the wider labour market trajectory, with those with higher education qualifications having stronger prospects of finding a positive employability outcome.

- A programme like Backr can help them to reflect on their capabilities, identify and build upon areas for development, before applying these in the labour market. This is an important finding – it cannot be assumed that those with higher educational attainment will always be ready for the labour market and the consequent employment search they will undertake. Further to this, it cannot be assumed that this better educated cohort will always benefit from traditional JCP or Work Programme interventions such as CV development or hard skill programmes (e.g. an ICT course).

- Our evidence clearly indicates that the Backr programme has led to tangible outcomes for this comparatively better educated cohort.

- However, it is equally important to note that Backr has contributed towards some outcomes for those with lower educational attainment. For example, for those within the Backr 0.3
comparative group who were unemployed prior to, but employed following Backr, half of these individuals were unemployed for more than twelve months. However, our sample sizes that underpin this are too small to be statistically meaningful but do provide an early indication of the full potential of the Backr programme.

- Overall, this suggests that Backr’s intervention has the potential to be beneficial to the majority of participants – irrespective of demographic profile or “distance” from the labour market. This reflects the strength of Participle’s holistic approach and personal support.

Recommendation Four:

- The Backr programme reflects an opportunity to help those who are traditionally more difficult to help along the employability journey. This may not necessarily include hard employment outcomes, but participants report improvements in their capabilities and soft skills, which are inherently linked with bringing people closer to the labour market.

- This includes those with lower educational achievements and the long-term unemployed (including people who have left the Work Programme without a positive outcome).

- Any future developments with the Backr intervention should focus explicitly on these customer groups (although that is not to say others should be excluded from the opportunity to participate), and should seek to explore ways to develop the hard and soft skills of these groups as part of the employability approach.

- This builds on Participle’s USP and provides the platform to position the Backr programme in a crowded marketplace.
“We work on an outcomes basis... Participle have to be able to show that Backr has made an impact on getting people into work."

External Stakeholder
Appendix A: Analysis of Backr 0.1

Profile of Backr 0.1 (n=129) and Control Group (n=377)

The following three figures provide the background to respondents within Backr 0.1 as an effective 'baseline'.

**Figure A1: Age distribution of survey respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Backr</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 - 24</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 34</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 - 49</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - 64</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: PwC (n=129)*

**Figure A2: Gender distribution of survey respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Backr</th>
<th>Control Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: PwC (n=129)*
**Figure A3: Ethnicity distribution of survey respondents**

![Bar chart showing the distribution of ethnicities among survey respondents.](image)

- **White**: 68%
- **Black / African / Caribbean**: 24%
- **Asian / Asian British**: 9%
- **Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups**: 5%
- **Other**: 10%

Source: PwC (n=129)
Appendix B: Demographic Analysis

As noted previously, the Backr 0.1 – 0.4 cohorts consist of 314 respondents. As such, we can undertake a demographic analysis to understand the profile of those using the Backr service, as identified through our surveys as a collective group.

Figure B1: Backr 0.1 – 0.4: Age Summary

Figure B2: Ethnicity of Backr 0.1 – 0.4 Respondents

Source: PwC (n=291)

Source: PwC (n=309)
**Skills & Educational Attainment**

*Figure B3: Highest Qualifications of Backr 0.1 – 0.4 Respondents*

- 45% Degree or equivalent
- 17% Higher Education
- 14% GCE, A-Level or equivalent
- 14% GCSE or equivalent (5 A* - C)
- 8% Other Qualifications
- 2% No Qualifications

*Source: PwC (n=180)*

*Higher Education includes Foundation Degrees and HNDs. Other Qualifications includes NVQ and BTEC qualifications.*
Appendix C: Backr 0.2 findings (interim report)

Backr 0.2 survey respondents were asked to state the ‘main source of support’ they had received to help them find work. Nineteen percent (n=14) cited Backr as their main source of support, eighteen percent (n=13) cited the Job Centre, nineteen percent cited ‘Other Support’ and twenty-seven percent cited their own personal efforts (n=20).

Figure C1: What has been the main source of support you received to help you find work?

Source: PwC (n=74, multiple response)

Eighty-nine percent of Backr 0.2 survey respondents (n=74) had participated in Backr sessions / activities in the six months prior to the survey.
Current employment status

Fifty-two percent of Backr 0.2 respondents at the time of the survey (administered between 28th August and 8th September 2014) were in employment while the other forty-eight percent were unemployed. Further analysis demonstrates that, of those in employment, fifty-five percent began in their role within the previous 6 months. Therefore, up to eighty percent of the respondent sample in total may have been unemployed at the time they engaged with Backr. Of those that had gained employment in the previous six months, fifty-nine percent (n=19) were in a full-time role and forty-one percent (n=13) were in a part-time role at the time of the survey.

Of those reporting to be unemployed at the time of the Backr 0.2 survey, forty percent (n=10) of respondents had been out of work for more than two years, and sixteen percent (n=4) had been out of work for less than three months.

Survey respondents currently in employment were asked to state which source of support was primarily responsible for securing their employment.

Six percent of those reporting to be in work (two respondents) directly attributed their current employment status to Backr. A further seventy-nine percent of respondents attributed their current employment to their own personal job search or to a friend or former colleague.

These two routes to employment could be considered “networking” methods, a core focus of Backr.

Internal Stakeholder Opinion:

Internal stakeholder consultation supported the assertion that the proportion of respondents securing employment through friends, former colleagues or their own personal job search efforts was encouraging. Internal stakeholders added that by providing the confidence and employability skills necessary for the effective use of personal networks Backr is providing sustainable employability outcomes and helping to build personal resilience.
Participant expectations

Respondents were asked to describe their expectations for Backr before they got involved. Responses regarding expectations are summarised at Figure 5.10 below.

Figure C3: Prior expectations of Backr

When asked whether Backr met with their initial expectations, eighty percent of Backr respondents (n=49) said that it either met with (thirty-three percent, n=20) or exceeded their expectations (forty-eight percent, n=29). Most respondents also provided a rationale for their response to this question as summarised at Figure 5.11 overleaf.

Internal Stakeholder Opinion:

Internal stakeholders indicated that the large proportion of respondents with no or unsure expectations was not surprising given the limited information provided by the Job Centre Plus referral process.

When asked whether Backr met with their initial expectations, eighty percent of Backr respondents (n=49) said that it either met with (thirty-three percent, n=20) or exceeded their expectations (forty-eight percent, n=29). Most respondents also provided a rationale for their response to this question as summarised at Figure 5.11 overleaf.
Of the remaining respondents (n=23), fifteen did not provide a response. The other eight responses were negative and highlighted that Backr services either made no change for them (nine percent, n=4), had a limited networking capacity (seven percent, n=3), or that there were no paid opportunities through Backr (two percent, n=1).
**Outputs compared to other sources of support**

Survey respondents were asked what the support they had received to help them get into work had achieved. Figures 5.12 and 5.13 (overleaf) illustrate perceptions with regard to how support received through Backr compared to those from alternate sources of support.

*Figure C5: Have you been involved in any of the following activities as a result of the employment support you have received over the past 12 months?*

Backr resulted in more volunteering opportunities, workshops and/or employment-related training sessions and events/opportunities to meet new people than other sources of support across the whole sample surveyed. For participants aged 18-24, Backr provided more part-time work compared to other sources.

However, for the 25+ cohort, Backr was less successful in involving participants in paid or unpaid work placements and part-time work in comparison to other sources of support. This finding must be considered in the context that a condition of Job Centre Plus is that claimants can be mandated to undertake a work placement, irrespective of its suitability for their employability overall. This is not the case with regard to Backr.

Relevant literature is supportive of the impact of Backr’s soft outcome approach to employability and hence employment in the long term. For example, Brown, D. J et al. (2006) found that a proactive personality significantly influenced the success of an individual’s job search.
In general, Backr performed better than other sources of support on all of these outcomes across all ages which is a positive reflection of the nature and perceptions of how the intervention was managed and delivered. The 18-24 cohort in particular reported favourable results for Backr compared to other support sources – often viewed as those as of greatest priority from a skills and employment perspective.

Thirty-seven percent more respondents aged 25+ believe that Backr has helped them use contacts or connections to make progress compared to other sources of support and thirty-five percent more believe it has helped them to contribute to someone else’s progress.

When survey respondents were asked whether or not the support they had received from Backr in the past six months had helped them make progress towards work eighty-nine percent said that it had, either ‘somewhat’ or ‘a lot’ – which again is a positive finding.

**External Stakeholder Perspective**

External stakeholders recognise that Backr enhances an individual’s employability skills – recognising that no knowledge of how to network can exclude job seekers from a number of potential opportunities.

**Figure C6: Has the support you received to get into work achieved any of the following...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Backr</th>
<th>Other Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Been aligned with career goals?</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped you think differently about what you might be able to do for work?</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped you to actively seek work?</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided new opportunities for work?</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped you undertake a variety of work related opportunities?</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped you use contacts or connections to make progress?</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped you to contribute to someone else’s progress?</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: PwC (n=58)
A sizeable sample (n=1196) of those that have been engaged by Backr since the fourth quarter of 2013 was taken by accessing data on participant work status via the Job Centre in August 2014. Participants were identified as either being in receipt of benefits; no longer in receipt of benefits (and in work); or no longer in receipt of benefits (with no job status).

From this sample, 234 of those that had engaged in some way with Backr had a work status record. Of these, forty-seven percent were no longer on benefits (n=111) and fifty-three percent remained ‘on benefits’ (n=123) as of 1st August 2014. At the time of this analysis, Backr participants may have been in contact with the programme for a maximum of 10 months (i.e. since October 2013). It is, however, likely that the majority of these participants were involved with Backr for less than ten months. Nationally the majority of new JSA claimants (55 per cent) claim for less than six months.

Comparatively this analysis of Backr work status therefore paints a favourable picture given that forty seven per cent of participants had moved off benefits within a relatively short timeframe. This is all the more positive given that Backr, at this point in time, was a relatively new service.

In addition, while caution must be exercised due to differences in national versus Backr sample sizes, our analysis also suggests that among this group of Backr participants there was a greater likelihood that Backr was involved with long-term unemployed compared to the national average i.e. forty five per cent of Backr participants were unemployed for more than twelve months, compared to twenty-nine per cent nationally.
One hundred and ninety seven of those for whom work status data was obtained had attended at least one Backr event. Twenty-six percent (n=52) of those that had participated in at least one Backr event were no longer in receipt of benefits, and were currently in work. A further eighteen percent (n=36) were also no longer in receipt of benefits, but without a known job status. Fifty-five percent of the 18-24 cohort were off benefits and into a job, compared to just eleven percent of the 25+ group. Similarly only twenty-seven percent of 18-24 year old Backr participants were on benefits compared to sixty percent of the 25+ cohort.

Figure C9: Work status of Backr participants that have attended at least one session

Source: Participle / Job Centre Data (*25+, n=62, **18-24, n=11)
Survey respondents were asked whether, based on their experience, they would recommend Backr to a friend or someone in a similar situation. The vast majority of respondents from the Backr 0.2 cohort (more than ninety percent) said that they would, and those not in employment were marginally more likely to recommend Backr to a friend than those in employment.

Figure C10: Recommend Backr to a friend by employment status

Source: Participle / Job Centre Data (n=60)
Outputs compared to other sources of support (Backr 0.2: Age)

**Figure C11: Have you been involved in any of the following activities as a result of the employment support you have received over the past 12 months? (18-24)**

- Events/opportunities to meet new people: 17% Backr, 25% Other Support (42% total)
- Workshops and or employment related training sessions: 25% Backr, 25% Other Support (33% total)
- Part time work: 8% Backr, 8% Other Support (16% total)
- Work Placements: 8% Backr, 8% Other Support (16% total)
- Volunteering Opportunities: 8% Backr, 25% Other Support (33% total)

Source: PwC (n=12)

**Figure C12: Have you been involved in any of the following activities as a result of the employment support you have received over the past 12 months? (25+)**

- Events/opportunities to meet new people: 23% Backr, 23% Other Support (49% total)
- Workshops and or employment related training sessions: 32% Backr, 23% Other Support (55% total)
- Part time work: 6% Backr, 15% Other Support (21% total)
- Work Placements: 6% Backr, 17% Other Support (23% total)
- Volunteering Opportunities: 23% Backr, 23% Other Support (46% total)

Source: PwC (n=47)
**Figure C13: Has the support you received to get into work achieved any of the following... (18-24)**

- Helped you to contribute to someone else’s progress? 17% Other Support, 50% Backr
- Helped you use contacts or connections to make progress? 25% Other Support, 75% Backr
- Helped you undertake a variety of work related opportunities? 17% Other Support, 50% Backr
- Provided new opportunities for work? 25% Other Support, 75% Backr
- Helped you to actively seek work? 42% Other Support, 67% Backr
- Helped you think differently about what you might be able to do for work? 33% Other Support, 67% Backr
- Been aligned with career goals? 33% Other Support, 67% Backr

*Source: PwC (n=12)*

**Figure C14: Has the support you received to get into work achieved any of the following... (25+)**

- Helped you to contribute to someone else’s progress? 17% Other Support, 54% Backr
- Helped you use contacts or connections to make progress? 30% Other Support, 65% Backr
- Helped you undertake a variety of work related opportunities? 24% Other Support, 39% Backr
- Provided new opportunities for work? 33% Other Support, 54% Backr
- Helped you to actively seek work? 33% Other Support, 52% Backr
- Helped you think differently about what you might be able to do for work? 33% Other Support, 72% Backr
- Been aligned with career goals? 41% Other Support, 72% Backr

*Source: PwC (n=46)*
## Appendix D: Other findings from 0.3 & 0.4

*Figure D1: Improvements in 'Personal Rating' (1-5 scale) before and after Backr involvement (0.4)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Before Backr</th>
<th>After Backr</th>
<th>Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My sense of control over my work life.</td>
<td></td>
<td>+0.46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My belief that my skills and experience could be valuable to someone else.</td>
<td></td>
<td>+0.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My belief in myself to find work.</td>
<td></td>
<td>+0.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My motivation to find work.</td>
<td></td>
<td>+0.59</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My ability to connect with people I know who may be able to help me make...</td>
<td></td>
<td>+0.69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My confidence generally.</td>
<td></td>
<td>+0.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My confidence in talking about myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td>+0.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My ability to be pro-active regarding my employment.</td>
<td></td>
<td>+0.44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: PwC (n=56)*
Appendix E: Margin of Error & Confidence Intervals

Within the Backr 0.2, 0.3 and 0.4 cohorts combined, we had a population size consisting of 599 people. However, our sample size consisted of 187 people across Backr 0.2, 0.3 and 0.4, who completed the telephone survey. In this regard, there will always be a tolerable margin of error, and a certain confidence level when extrapolating the findings of the survey against the entirety of the population size.

We have determined our confidence level to be 95%, i.e. we expect that for every twenty yes/no questions answered, one of these answers will be more than the margin of error away from the ‘true answer’. The true answer may only be obtained by interviewing every person within the population size.

Based upon our sample size of 187, the margin of error within our survey data we can accept is approximately 6%. If we had a larger sample size, our margin of error would be proportionately lower. To achieve a margin of error of 5% (commonly accepted), we would have required a higher response rate to provide a sample size of 235 (i.e. 48 more people).

This means that if 50% of our respondents felt Backr were performing well in a particular area; we could anticipate that, with repeated sampling, 44% to 56% of respondents would agree with this statement in approximately 95% of the time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Margin of Error</th>
<th>5.95%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confidence Level</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Size</td>
<td>599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response Distribution</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Size</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography


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