

This is a repository copy of *Routes onto Incapacity Benefit: Findings from a follow-up survey of recent claimants*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:

<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/73480/>

Monograph:

Kemp, P. A and Davidson, J (2008) *Routes onto Incapacity Benefit: Findings from a follow-up survey of recent claimants*. Research Report. Department for Work and Pensions Research Report, No. 516 . Corporate Document Services , Leeds.

Reuse

Items deposited in White Rose Research Online are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved unless indicated otherwise. They may be downloaded and/or printed for private study, or other acts as permitted by national copyright laws. The publisher or other rights holders may allow further reproduction and re-use of the full text version. This is indicated by the licence information on the White Rose Research Online record for the item.

Takedown

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing eprints@whiterose.ac.uk including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.

Routes onto Incapacity Benefit: Findings from a follow-up survey of recent claimants

By Peter A. Kemp and Jacqueline Davidson

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) commissioned a follow-up survey of people who had recently claimed Incapacity Benefit (IB). The original ('baseline') survey was conducted six months after respondents had made their recent claim for IB.¹ The follow-up survey was undertaken six months later, that is, about a year after people had made their recent claim for IB.

The purpose of the follow-up survey was to provide quantitative information on the position of recent claimants a year after their application for IB and, in so doing, to further our understanding of the processes associated with remaining on, or leaving, IB.

The study was carried out by the University of Oxford and the Social Policy Research Unit at the University of York. The interviews were conducted by Ipsos MORI.

Recent IB claimants

The baseline survey found that recent IB claimants were a diverse group, almost all of whom had health conditions or impairments that affected their everyday activities. They also differed significantly from the general population. Recent claimants of IB were disproportionately male and drawn from older age groups below state pension age. Compared with the general population, recent claimants

¹ Kemp, P.A. and Davidson, J. (2008) *Routes onto Incapacity Benefit: Findings from a survey of recent claimants*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report No. 469, Leeds: Corporate Document Services.

were twice as likely to be lone parents, more likely to rent their accommodation from a social housing landlord and were much less likely to be owner-occupiers. Recent claimants were also relatively disadvantaged. For example, compared with the general population, they were more likely to have been low paid when in work; to have worked in unskilled or low skilled occupations and to have no work-related or academic qualifications. They were also more likely to have literacy and numeracy problems.

The majority (65 per cent) of respondents reported that there had been no significant changes in their household circumstances in the six months since the baseline survey. Relatively small proportions of respondents had experienced any one change. For example, 11 per cent had been on a training course, nine per cent had moved house, five per cent had separated from a partner, and two per cent had newly partnered.

Health and disability

Most respondents said that their overall health had changed since the baseline interview, with only a quarter (24 per cent) reporting that it had not changed. Just under a third (30 per cent) of people said that their health had improved; a quarter (23 per cent) that it had got worse, and the remainder (24 per cent) that their health had been changeable over the previous six months.

The proportion of recent claimants with a health condition or impairment that affected their everyday activities had fallen from 96 per cent

at baseline to 70 per cent at follow-up. People who no longer had a condition that affected their everyday activities, and those whose overall health had improved since the baseline survey, were more likely than other recent claimants to have been in paid work at the follow-up.

The severity of health conditions, as measured by the number of conditions that recent claimants reported, was the most important determinant of whether respondents classified themselves as being permanently off work due to sickness or disability.

A quarter (24 per cent) of recent claimants interviewed in the follow-up survey reported that they were on a waiting list for medical treatment or psychological services. Meanwhile, two-fifths (38 per cent) said they were receiving medical treatment or psychological services. People who were not in paid work were more likely to be waiting for treatment and more likely to be receiving treatment than those who were working.

Benefit status

One year after their recent claim, about two-fifths (43 per cent) of people were receiving IB, 87 per cent of whom were on the same claim as before. Meanwhile, 43 per cent reported that they were no longer claiming IB, 16 per cent had had their claim rejected, and three per cent were waiting for their claim to be processed.

Just under half (46 per cent) of people who had stopped claiming IB said that their health had improved and they had returned to work. Twelve per cent of people who were no longer claiming IB said that their health had not improved, but they had returned to work anyway. Meanwhile, a further 12 per cent said that their health had improved, but they had not returned to work (the majority of whom reported that they were unemployed and looking for work).

Over three-quarters of those who were no longer receiving IB at the follow-up interview were in receipt of at least one other social security benefit or tax credit. Thus, the fact

that people had ceased to be receiving IB did not necessarily mean that they were no longer claiming any benefits or tax credits.

Employment status

A quarter of respondents (26 per cent) were in paid work in the week prior to the follow up interview, double the proportion (13 per cent) at the baseline survey. People who had been in work, or on sick leave from their job, immediately prior to their recent claim for IB were much more likely than other respondents to have been in paid work at the time of the follow-up survey.

When asked what had helped them get back to work, 80 per cent said that improvement in their health had been important. In addition, 92 per cent said that their family and friends had been important in helping them return to work; 73 per cent said their GP had been helpful; and 72 per cent said that getting health care had been important. These findings highlight the important role that key stakeholders can play in enabling recent IB claimants to enter paid work.

Seventy per cent of people who were in paid employment at the follow-up interview had found work with a new employer and 30 per cent had returned to the employer they were with before making their recent claim for IB. The latter finding highlights the importance of job retention in relation to people who are long-term sick: other things being equal, it is likely to be easier to return to work with the previous employer than to find a job with a new one.

Just over half (55 per cent) of people in work were doing a different type of job or role from the one they had done before their recent claim. The majority of people reported that their employer had not made any workplace adjustments to accommodate their health condition or disability. But among those whose employer had made such a change, nine out of ten said that it had helped them to keep doing their job. This highlights the important role that employers can potentially play in enabling

people with health conditions or impairments to return to, or stay in, paid work.

Logistic regression analysis revealed that, controlling for other factors, people who still had a health condition, who had mental ill-health, were aged over 55, or who lived in social housing, had **lower** odds of being in paid work at the follow-up interview. Meanwhile, people with a full driving licence or who had claimed IB on a previous occasion had **higher** odds of being in paid work. However, being in paid work at the follow-up interview was not related to the respondents' ethnicity, whether or not they were a lone parent, or whether or not they lived in a local authority area with high unemployment.

From a policy perspective, the people who were neither working nor permanently off sick at the follow-up survey are an especially important group because they are potentially people who could, perhaps with appropriate support, enter paid employment or self-employment. In fact, about one in ten (11 per cent) of them had done some paid work in the six months since the baseline survey; and, in most cases, their most recent job had ended because it was only temporary or because of their health condition.

Moreover, the majority of people in this group had undertaken work-focused activities, such as job search, in the previous six months. For example, 72 per cent of them had looked at job adverts in a newspaper and 45 per cent had enquired locally about job vacancies. Moreover, half (55 per cent) of this group of people thought they would be economically active in six months time, that is, either in paid work or looking for a job.

The majority of this group of people who were neither working nor permanently off work reported that having a job was very important to them, though almost half felt they should not have to take a job that paid less, or was less interesting, than their previous one. However, 65 per cent still had a health condition or disability that affected their everyday activities and indeed half of them (52 per cent) reported having two or more health conditions.

The great majority of people who were neither working nor permanently off sick believed they faced significant barriers to work. Indeed, the people who answered the barriers question in both surveys had become markedly more pessimistic about their chances of getting a job in the six months or so between the baseline and the follow-up interview. Significantly higher proportions of them felt they faced particular barriers at follow-up than did so at baseline. Moreover, the number of barriers that people believed they faced increased between the surveys.

The fact that perceived barriers to work had increased in the six months since the baseline survey highlights the importance of early interventions to help people return to work. Whether this increased pessimism about their employability and employment prospects reflected a more accurate assessment of their true position in the labour market than the one they had at baseline, or simply a loss of confidence, is unclear. Either way, it is apparent that considerable support – such as advice, counselling, training, workplace adjustments, accommodating employers, medical treatment – and hence time, will almost certainly be necessary to help significant numbers of them to tackle these barriers and enter paid employment.

Methods

The follow-up interviews were conducted with people who had taken part in an earlier ('baseline') face-to-face survey of recent claimants of IB and who had agreed to be contacted again. The follow-up interviews were conducted by telephone with 801 recent IB claimants, an adjusted response rate of 74 per cent of the people who had agreed at baseline that they could be contacted again. The fieldwork was carried out in the summer of 2007, six months after the baseline survey. The results were weighted to ensure that they were representative of recent IB claimants in Great Britain.

The full report of these research findings is published by the Department for Work and Pensions (ISBN 978 1 84712 405 0. Research Report 516. July 2008). It is available from Paul Noakes at the address below.

You can also download this report free from:
www.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrs-index.asp

Other report summaries in the research series are also available from the website above and from:

Paul Noakes,
Central Social Research Services,
2nd Floor, The Adelphi,
1-11 John Adam Street, London WC2N 6HT.
E-mail: Paul.Noakes@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

If you would like to subscribe to our email list to receive future summaries and alerts as reports are published please contact Paul Noakes at the address above.