

Department for Work and Pensions

Working Paper No 35

‘Work Works’ final evaluation report

Department for Work and Pensions

A report of research carried out by FPWD on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

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Summary

The Government has set an ambitious objective of raising the proportion of lone parents in work to 70 per cent by 2010. The Government has come a long way since 1997 but still has a long way to go in order to meet the target. The Government also has a target to halve child poverty by 2010 and totally eradicate it by 2020. A large proportion of children in poverty are in lone parent households.

In September 2003, Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Andrew Smith, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions at the time, asked the National Employment Panel (NEP) to convene a Steering Group of business leaders to examine what more might be done, particularly by employers, to increase the numbers of lone parents who get, stay and progress in work.

The NEP made a range of proposals and this report highlights the evidence from analysis of administrative data, management information and feedback from the key initiatives.

Key findings

The recommendations covered several broad areas, underpinned by specific, detailed activities to be undertaken by stakeholders, including lone parents themselves. The areas of activity were:

- the need to significantly increase the **number of lone parents who perceive work as a viable option** and the pivotal role that Jobcentre Plus **Personal Advisers** (PAs) play in helping them to move from benefit into employment;
- providing affordable, quality, accessible childcare;
- employers adopting family friendly, flexible working practices;
- developing a lone parent communication strategy.

NEP and employers' coalitions were invited to work with Jobcentre Plus to implement the activities. Work Works was set up in the six metropolitan areas where the largest numbers of lone parents live (London, Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds/Bradford).

The final evaluation focused on the following Work Works initiatives:

- Discovery Weeks – found to be very popular with lone parents, but costly in terms of getting lone parents into work.
- Childcare tasters – these have had a mixed response and take up has been poor. National figures for childcare tasters remain unconvincing. However, Childcare Chats proved popular, and appeared to be successful in addressing parents' knowledge and confidence about childcare. Chats could be followed by accompanied visits to providers.
- In Work Emergency Fund (IWEF) PAs felt that the IWEF has too many restrictions placed on it. Acting on this feedback, the guidance for the usage of the fund was later relaxed and take up of the scheme had increased significantly. Early evaluation¹ of the initiative stated: *'When it had been accessed, the IWEF had played a crucial role in sustaining lone parents in work.'* In most cases it had been used to cover transport or childcare emergencies.
- NVQ Level 3 – there was evidence of employer and lone parent demand for Level 3 training, although there was limited provision and low numbers of participants.
- The lone parent marketing video – this was popular and has since been renamed 'Is Work for Me' and reissued in both video and DVD format.

Work Works has highlighted the importance of joint working between key stakeholders (Jobcentre Plus, employers and local authorities) in helping lone parents enter or move towards work. The lessons learned about the various initiatives, and how they have been marketed have been taken forward as key parts of the NDLP Plus pilots which will continue to move the lone parent agenda forward.

The Work Works initiatives have proved very valuable in many ways. Specifically they have enhanced the way Jobcentre Plus works with employers to achieve outcomes for lone parents, and have created a greater diversity of support for, and engagement with, lone parents as customers. Overall, Work Works principles are considered easily transferable to some other customer groups, specifically Incapacity Benefit (IB) customers, younger people and older people.

¹ Work Focused Interviews and lone parent initiatives: further analysis of policies and pilots, February 2006, Research Report No. 319.

1 Introduction

1.1 Policy context

The Government has set an ambitious objective of raising the proportion of lone parents in work to 70 per cent by 2010. The figure was 45.3 per cent in 1997. In spring 2005 it was 56.6 per cent – a very significant achievement. While the planned additional investment should go some way towards ensuring that the target is met, the goal remains a serious challenge. The Government also has a target to halve child poverty by 2010 and totally eradicate it by 2020. A large proportion of children in poverty are in lone parent households.

In September 2003, Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Andrew Smith, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions at the time, asked the NEP to convene a Steering Group of business leaders to examine what more might be done, particularly by employers, to increase the numbers of lone parents who get, stay and progress in work.

The Steering Group, Chaired by Ben Verwaayen, Chief Executive of BT, developed a range of proposals which represented an action agenda for Government and employers, **focusing on the six metropolitan areas where the largest numbers of lone parents live** (London, Glasgow, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds/Bradford).

During the course of the Steering Group's deliberations, four factors emerged which they believed were essential to meeting the 70 per cent target: The first was the need to significantly increase the **number of lone parents who perceive work as a viable option** and the pivotal role that Jobcentre Plus **PAs** play in helping them to move from benefit into employment. The second was the need for **affordable, accessible childcare** as a prerequisite for employment for most lone parents. The third was the need to engage employers, particularly in increasing the number of businesses which adopt **flexible workplace practices**, allowing many more lone parents the opportunity to work. The fourth was the critical importance of a **communications strategy** in reaching lone parents, employers and staff throughout the delivery system.

Therefore, the **first of the proposals were designed to increase the numbers who choose to work or join the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP)**. They included:

- increasing the **frequency and quality of the interaction** between PAs and lone parents;
- **introducing 'Discovery Weeks'**, an intensive period to build self-confidence and explore alternative lifestyles, interests and career paths (See Appendix A for the objectives of Discovery Weeks);
- establishing a **mentoring service** as part of Discovery Week to offer practical and personal support on the journey to work;
- **reviewing the in-work benefits** offered to lone parents to ensure that work pays.

NDLP is designed to encourage and prepare lone parents for work. NDLP is successful for those lone parents who take part. However, the Steering Group felt NDLP needed to develop the offer for two important groups: the significant proportion of lone parents who lack basic or vocational skills and those who aspire to better jobs. The aim of the next recommendation was to **improve NDLP** by:

- introducing **diagnostic assessments** to measure lone parents' occupational interests, aptitudes and skills;
- making **education and training an integral part of NDLP** to increase job readiness and to give lone parents access to a greater diversity of jobs, particularly in skill shortage areas;
- ensuring that Jobcentre Plus purchases training provision that meets both **lone parents' needs** and **employers' job readiness standards**;
- providing **subsidised employment opportunities** for disadvantaged lone parents.

The Steering Group believed that the 'pulling power' of the job market could be increased by giving lone parents greater choice in the hours, pay and occupational range of the work on offer. To **expand the diversity and accessibility of jobs** requires action by both Jobcentre Plus and employers. Suggestions included:

- **targeting marketing** efforts on local employers which are likely to be able to meet lone parents' needs for flexible hours and better pay;
- increasing the frequency of **contact between employers and PAs** to enhance knowledge of labour market opportunities and improve companies' understanding of lone parents as a valuable recruitment source;
- developing **customised training, work experience and job preparation packages** for lone parents;

- **expanding employers' recruitment sources** by listing vacancies with Jobcentre Plus, local community groups and organisations serving lone parents and their children;
- **removing unnecessary barriers to work by employers** including rigid qualification criteria and working time requirements as well as advertising flexible work practices in recruitment materials;
- using the Jobcentre Plus **vacancy-taking process to promote work-life balance**.

1.2 An implementation approach

The Steering Committee recognised that there were constraints on funding and the capacity of Jobcentre Plus to implement the recommendations. The six metropolitan areas were selected for testing the ideas: London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds/Bradford and Glasgow.

Jobcentre Plus was responsible for the delivery of most of the proposals, building the active support of local employers. The NEP's Employer Coalitions worked with Jobcentre Plus in implementing the activities recommended in the report.

Employer participation in each site could include such activities as:

- establishing **Discovery Week** and recruiting employee mentors for lone parents;
- increasing **access to jobs, customised training and subsidised employment opportunities**;
- participating in the **design of sector training** and work experience programmes for lone parents;
- contributing to **PA workshops** and work shadowing;
- supporting activities designed to **increase local childcare** provision;
- **reviewing workplace practices** to ensure they meet best practice standards and promotion to other local employers.

Annual goals were set for each city for increasing the number of lone parents entering and staying in work over and above Jobcentre Plus' existing target.

1.3 Aims and objectives of the evaluation

The aim of the evaluation was to provide evidence on the effectiveness of the Work Works initiatives.

This report provides evidence on the effectiveness of Work Works initiatives. The report draws together the current evidence on a number of key elements of Work Works and acts as a basis for discussion of policy recommendations emerging from Work Works.

The report includes evidence from analysis of administrative data and management information (MI), feedback from key Work Works stakeholders, and evaluation evidence on Discovery Weeks, the IWEF, NVQ Level 3 and the Extended Schools Childcare Pilots. It reports on:

- Discovery Weeks and Mentoring linked to Discovery Weeks – analysis of MI and administrative data, evaluation and cost-effectiveness;
- IWEF – MI and evaluation;
- NVQ Level 3 training – MI and evaluation;
- Extended Schools childcare and Childcare Taster Pilots – MI and evaluation;
- feedback from key Work Works stakeholders;
- comparison of administrative data for Work Works areas and national.

1.4 Methodology

Research was conducted in all six Work Works areas during autumn 2004 and autumn 2005.

The methodology mainly comprised face-to-face interviews with lone parents and the key Work Works stakeholders such as Discovery Week providers and Jobcentre Plus staff. There was a questionnaire survey of the National Development Co-ordinators Group and also analysis of administrative data and MI.

1.5 Report structure

- Part 2 looks at Discovery Weeks.
- Part 3 looks at the IWEF.
- Part 4 looks at the NVQ Level 3.
- Part 5 looks at Extended Schools Childcare Pilots and the Childcare Taster Pilot.
- Part 6 provides feedback from key Work Works stakeholders.
- Part 7 looks at the lone parent employment rate.
- Part 8 provides policy recommendations.
- Part 9 presents some final conclusions.

2 Discovery Weeks and Mentoring linked to Discovery Weeks

Discovery Weeks are a week long course designed to offer lone parents an intensive, developmental period during which they have the opportunity to explore alternative lifestyles, aptitudes, interests and career paths. There is substantial input from local employers. See Appendix A for further details.

Outcomes from Discovery Weeks and mentoring were monitored. There was also some qualitative evaluation carried out. A recurring issue for monitoring of Discovery Weeks has been the frequent delays in the transfer of data from providers to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the resulting under-reporting of outcomes. However, by ensuring that the data used has been externally quality assured, it has been possible to match participants to the DWP databases to improve the accuracy of outcome measurement. The number of outcomes has been improved by matching in administrative data collected from the systems used in Jobcentre Plus offices for the NDLP evaluation. For example, if a spell on NDLP had been recorded for the customer within 13 weeks of their Discovery Week, this has been taken as an outcome, even when one had not been recorded clerically by the provider.

Table 2.1 shows the discrepancy between the outcomes recorded on the clerical forms and the outcomes from our administrative databases. A hierarchy of outcomes was developed, with job entry as the highest and training as the lowest. The number of training outcomes has, therefore, been reduced as they have been redistributed amongst NDLP and job entry outcomes.

Table 2.1 Outcomes – recording comparison

	Administrative data or recorded clerically	Clerically recorded only
Discovery Weeks		
Into work	53	13
NDLP	311	191
Training	42	57
Total	406	261
Mentoring		
Into Work	27	13
NDLP	85	34
Training	28	31
Total	140	78

Appendix B shows the outcomes by month and cumulatively for Discovery Weeks and Mentoring linked to Discovery Weeks. The outcome rates for those customers starting prior to April 2005 are 44 and 53 per cent for Discovery Weeks and Mentoring respectively. Taking a start date prior to April allows for at least a full 13 weeks follow-on period in which to capture outcomes. These outcome figures are used in the cost-effectiveness analysis.

Table 2.2 Summary statistics for Discovery Weeks (overall numbers – data complete to the end of July 2005)

Provision	Referrals	Starts	Leavers	Completers	Outcomes achieved	Outcome rate
Discovery Week	1,253	1,075	–	910	406	37%
Mentoring Linked Discovery Week	742	714	244	–	140	57%
Total	1,995	1,789			546	

Note: Around 36 per cent of outcomes have been gained from using the administrative data.

The outcome rate is derived from those starting Discovery Weeks and those leaving Mentoring. A monthly breakdown of outcome rates in month and cumulative is provided in Appendix B.

Table 2.3 Methods of engagement

Method of engagement	Discovery Week	Mentoring Linked Discovery Week	Total	%
Jobcentre Plus	110	428	538	27
Provider	960	291	1,251	63
Unknown ¹	183	23	206	10
Total	1,253	742	1,995	100

¹ The method of engagement has not been recorded on the form.

Table 2.4 Number of participants by provider contract codes

Provider contract code	Discovery Week	Mentoring Linked Discovery Week	Total	%
Education and youth services	154	102	256	14
Leeds City Council	162	305	467	26
One Plus	166	36	202	11
Pertemps Employment Alliance	240	43	283	16
Salford Foundation	231	160	391	22
Working Links	98	7	105	6
Missing	24	61	85	5
Total	1,075	714	1,789	100

Table 2.5 Outcomes

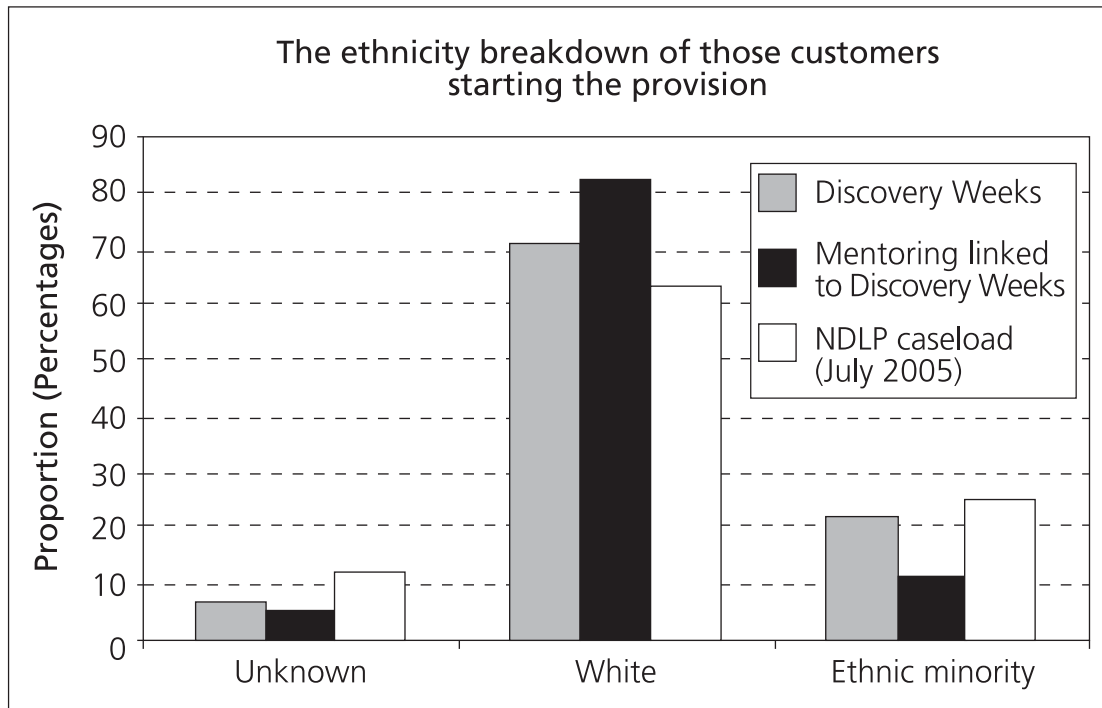
	Discovery Week	Outcome rates from starters %	Mentoring Linked Discovery Week	Outcome rates from leavers %
Into work	55	5	27	11
NDLP/EZ	309	29	85	36
Training	42	4	28	12
Total	406	38	140	58

Table 2.6 Customer characteristics. The proportions participating in the provisions compared to the current NDLP caseload – gender

	NDLP caseload (July 2005) %	Discovery Weeks %	Mentoring Linked Discovery Weeks %
Female	94	99	96
Male	6	1	4

The gender proportions are very similar for mentoring and the NDLP caseload, with almost all attendees of the Discovery Week being female.

Figure 2.1 Customer characteristics. The proportions participating in the provisions compared to the current NDLP caseload – ethnicity



The majority of customers starting the provisions are white. Discovery Weeks have a similar proportion to those on the NDLP caseload, with more white people taking up mentoring.

2.1 Cost effectiveness

To estimate the cost effectiveness of Discovery Weeks, the information used as a basis for analysis was information detailing Discovery Week outcomes. At the end of March 2005, 32 per cent of Discovery Week participants had moved onto NDLP, six per cent had moved into work and an additional five per cent had gone on to further training. These represent a total of 44 per cent of Discovery Week participants experiencing a successful outcome. The current cost of a five-day Discovery Week is £15,000. To estimate the cost effectiveness of the Discovery Weeks we have made a number of assumptions about NDLP costs, the job outcomes that are achieved by those that go on to NDLP, and the additionality for those outcomes².

The concept of additionality is an important one. Not all job entries can be considered to be a direct result of our activities. Some of these job entries would have occurred in the absence of programmes such as NDLP and Discovery Weeks. The preferred impact estimate, or additionality estimate of NDLP is 14.24 per cent.

² These assumptions are the same as those used in previous cost effectiveness analysis presented to the project board.

Table 2.7 provides details of the cost effectiveness for Discovery Weeks based on the outcomes information up to July 2005.

Table 2.7 Cost effectiveness of five-day Discovery Weeks

NDLP outcomes	Immediate job outcomes	Discovery Weeks unit cost	Discovery Weeks cost per NDLP outcome	Total cost per job	Cost per additional job
32%	6%	£665	£2,000	£5,100	£9,300

In order for the full five-day Discovery Week to be cost effective, the proportion of immediate job outcomes would need to be three times the current rate. Given this is not the intended outcome for Discovery Weeks (although a very positive one), it is unlikely that this could realistically be achieved.

This analysis shows that under the current outcome rates there is a large net cost of Discovery Weeks, despite what should be regarded as positive outcome rates onto NDLP and into work.

At the January 2005 Work Works project board, a hypothetical cost effectiveness analysis was shown of a 'Mini Discovery Week'. This is a shorter two-day version of the full Discovery Week and is associated with much lower costs. Using the latest outcome rates it is possible to show that mini-Discovery Weeks could provide a positive economic benefit to society. Table 2.8 shows that under current outcome rates, Mini Discovery Weeks have a positive net benefit, although this assumes that the same outcome rates could be achieved.

Table 2.8 Hypothetical cost effectiveness of Mini Discovery Weeks

NDLP outcomes	Immediate job outcomes	Discovery Weeks unit cost	Discovery Weeks cost per NDLP outcome	Total cost per job	Cost per additional job
32%	6%	£266	£805	£3,100	£5,600

The unit costs of Mini Discovery Weeks are based on the assumption that the cost per event is £6,000, and that 20 lone parents complete the two days. The unit costs are shown as varying with the outcome rate, because the total payment is dependent, to some extent, on the number moving on to NDLP.

Previous cost benefit work places the economic benefit of a job entry at £5,970³. Comparing this to the cost per additional job shows that mini Discovery Weeks provide a positive (albeit small) economic benefit.

There have been two rounds of qualitative Discovery Week fieldwork and the results have been to the October 2004 and January 2005 project boards. The qualitative research has highlighted the other (non-financial) benefits that Discovery Weeks provide in terms of increased confidence and motivation and changed attitudes towards work. They provide a forum for lone parents to think about work and personal goals away from the jobcentre environment in this way, Discovery Weeks provide the less easily quantified impacts that can signify the start of a process of moving a lone parent towards work.

³ DWP Research Report, 'New Deal for Lone Parents: second synthesis report of the national evaluation', June 2003.

3 In Work Emergency Fund

The IWEF was introduced to help lone parents meet the cost of emergencies during the first 60 days in employment and overcome barriers that might otherwise make it difficult to remain in work. The purpose is to help lone parents remain in work rather than returning to a life on benefits.

This section provides a summary of IWEF evidence, based on administrative data from Jobcentre Plus Finance up to August 2005 and evaluation evidence. The evaluation was undertaken by an independent research organisation (Insite) and explored both the IWEF and NVQ Level 3 training. The fieldwork took place during June and July 2005 in two Work Works areas. It involved interviews with PAs and included the reporting on individual cases (anonymised) of lone parents having used the new measures.

A key issue to emerge from the research and feedback from the field is the fact that the IWEF cannot address the most common crisis of unpaid tax credits and there is some confusion about when it could be used. Early evaluation⁴ of the initiative stated: *'When it had been accessed, the IWEF fund had played a crucial role in sustaining lone parents in work. However, a lack of clarity remained around when and how the fund could be promoted and used.'* Acting on this feedback the guidance for the usage of the fund was later relaxed and take up of the scheme increased significantly.

When a lone parent has received money through the IWEF, PAs felt that it had been crucial in keeping the lone parent in work. In most cases it had been used to cover transport or childcare emergencies. The payments were quick and efficient and the £300 limit was usually sufficient. Although usage has been lower than anticipated, the evaluation illustrates that the IWEF appears to be meeting its objective of keeping lone parents in work.

⁴ Work Focused Interviews and lone parent initiatives: further analysis of policies and pilots, February 2006. Research Report No. 319.

A total of 150 payments had been made to customers from the IWEF of which 49 were made directly to a business. The total spend to the end of August 2005 has been around £27,000, with the average payments for childcare and other being £197 and £143 respectively.

The total spend to the end of November 2005 was £34,351. This increased significantly, with the change of guidance to £83,000 by March 2006.⁵

⁵ The total spend to November 2005 was £37, 641 for 242 payments. The total spend increased significantly following the enhanced guidance in November 2005.

4 NVQ Level 3

The aim of this measure was to provide lone parents with access to NVQ Level 3 training in childcare and one other sector where there was an identified skills shortage, but which might not have traditionally been accessed by lone parents. The districts were given the freedom to choose the second occupational area.

Insite's evaluation⁶ of NVQ Level 3 found that there was evidence of employer and lone parent demand for Level 3 training, although there was limited provision and low numbers of participants. Personal Advisers felt that it was a well chosen measure of extra provision, reflecting evidence from other evaluations that lone parents have career aspirations that are supported by training beyond NVQ Level 2. The main limiting factor appeared to be the availability of suitable provision. For example, some providers expected lone parents to have Level 2 qualifications or had waiting lists for designated courses. The limited provision had led to low participant numbers at the time of the fieldwork in June and July 2005.

For the lone parents who had participated, Insite found evidence of positive outcomes. Lone parents were committed to and completed their training and there is emerging evidence that they secured employment as a result of the training. The teaching assistant course had proved especially popular and successful and provides evidence of good practice. The course takes place during term time only and can be completed in one year. There is childcare on site, the hours are suitable for lone parents (9.30-2.30) and there is a good support structure.

However, there was a mixed response from PAs as to the popularity of NVQ Level 3 in childcare as it includes working during the school holidays and outside school hours.

⁶ Work Focused Interviews and lone parent initiatives: further analysis of policies and pilots, February 2006. Research Report No. 319

The latest clerical information shows that there are seven lone parents on the childcare training option in Liverpool, with six in Leeds, two in London and Manchester, one in Glasgow and none in Birmingham. Jobcentre Plus are reporting anecdotal evidence that lone parents do not want to enter childcare employment because of the unsuitable hours and because the rates of pay are too low to attract them, even at NVQ Level 3 level.

Some of the other skills areas appear to be more attractive. Liverpool has had 21 lone parents start on the teaching assistant course, 20 obtained the qualification and four have already moved into employment. In London, ten lone parents started on the painting and decorating course in September 2005, while in Leeds ten were due to start on the IT and management skills course in October 2005. Manchester also anticipated having ten starters on its logistics course in November 2005. In Glasgow they were negotiating with partners and expected to have 20 starters before March 2006 on the carpentry and joinery course. Birmingham could not attract any participants for their health-related training course and are currently trying to find a more suitable alternative.

5 Extended Schools Childcare Pilot and Childcare Taster Pilot

This chapter reports on the interim findings from the evaluation of the childcare pilots and is based on interviews with stakeholders⁷ in spring/summer 2005. The objective of the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot was to remove the childcare barrier for lone parents by providing sufficient childcare places to meet demand. However, on the basis of vacancies in local childcare providers and in-depth research with lone parents, local authorities perceived early in pilot implementation that, often, lone parents were not 'job ready' (due to non-childcare barriers to work), and therefore, did not yet have the need to access childcare.

As a response, the local authorities have been focusing on two main activities:

- Setting up new childcare places, often linked to primary schools – more progress was expected from September 2005, including work in secondary schools.
- One-to-one intensive outreach work with a 'case load' of lone parents (and a small number of parents on New Deal for Partners (NDP)) is overcoming non-childcare barriers to work and stimulating demand for childcare – this includes signposting parents to, and working in partnership with, Jobcentre Plus/NDLP. The outreach work was not part of the original design for the pilots.

Childcare Chats are popular, and appear to be successful in addressing parents' knowledge and confidence about childcare. Chats may be followed by accompanied visits to providers. However, local authorities are sceptical about the value of Childcare Taster sessions with childcare providers, which have not been that popular with parents. Local authorities report that Chats and visits are sufficient to address parents' concerns or that parents are not sufficiently job-ready for Tasters.

⁷ Local authorities, the Children's Information Service, Jobcentre Plus, childcare providers and schools in the pilot areas. Parents who have participated in the Pilots were interviewed in early 2006.

5.1 Lessons learned

- According to local authorities and other stakeholders, lone parents need much time and support to be ready for work and childcare. This suggests that the provision of affordable, quality, accessible childcare needs to be matched by activities to overcome lone parents' other barriers and build confidence about both childcare and work. The pilots have allowed the opportunity for prolonged one-to-one support to lone parents, building on the services available from Jobcentre Plus and Children's Information Services.
- Joint working between local authorities, Jobcentre Plus, the Children's Information Service, schools, childcare providers and local services is a key success of both pilots, but takes much time and resource. Successful engagement with schools to set up childcare, requires highlighting the benefits for pupils, head teacher commitment, and suitable school facilities.
- The design of the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot aimed to test whether providing sufficient childcare, with the Childcare Tax Credit, would remove the childcare barrier. However, stakeholders reported childcare affordability barriers which could not be addressed by the pilot, for example the Tax Credits being insufficient, and deposits for childcare providers needed before parents had started work.

Local authority data show that up to July 2005 approximately 1,100 childcare places had been created by the pilot. As far as the local authorities are able to ascertain, approximately 150 children of lone parents or partners of benefit recipients have taken up a childcare place as a result of the pilot. Local authority data show that up to July 2005, there had been 692 Chats and 507 Tasters as a result of the pilot. There are no formal figures detailing the number of participants that have taken up employment following involvement with the pilot. There was further work with lone parents that explored the pilots from their perspective. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) were managing this research and published their findings in September 2006.

6 Feedback from key Work Works stakeholders

The final telephone survey was carried out amongst Employment Coalition Members and District Managers in September/October 2005. In total, 14 interviews were achieved. The survey was in addition to the questionnaire survey of Work Works coordinators carried out for the August evaluation paper, and the questionnaire sent in September 2004 to all members of the National Development Coordinators' Group. This later telephone survey explores the same issues, including stakeholders' views of Work Works to date, examples of best practice and areas for improvement.

6.1 Examples of best practice

Employer input was considered to be highly effective, particularly in terms of the use of employed lone parents as role models. Lone parents at the Discovery Weeks were impressed when employers selected employees who were lone parents themselves to present at Discovery Weeks.

Respondents were generally very positive about the nature of joint working between employers, providers and Jobcentre Plus. There were many innovative ways of working with providers, using local marketing initiatives such as coffee mornings, meetings in local football clubs, at the London Zoo and so on, which engaged the whole family. Unbranded events were very successful.

6.2 Flexible working

It was considered that many employers were already committed to flexible working and aware of the diversity and work-life balance issues. However, some local employers felt that their national policies and procedures prevented employers fully exploiting flexible working locally.

Employer Diversity Forums have been successful in allowing employers to explore how the diversity agenda will impact practically upon their business.

A recruitment and retention event held for employers at one employer coalition, helped employers to look at attendance (interview and first weeks in post) and absenteeism, managing flexible workers, maximising potential, recruiting a diverse workforce and creating a skilled workforce.

BT created a 'flexible work pays' brochure which was distributed to large companies such as Royal Mail. Royal Mail is now considering changing its shift patterns as a direct result of this, as it was previously having problems in filling its existing shifts.

There has been excellent publicity including press articles in local newspapers. A further medium has been a DVD produced by ITV, filmed by trainees from another project, to spread the word about flexible working.

6.3 Engaging with lone parents

Mentoring is highly regarded by employers and district managers alike. Mentoring was most useful for those who were some way away from the labour market. It was acknowledged that mentoring is not a quick win solution to getting more lone parents into the labour market, but is extremely effective over the longer term.

Employer networks are using innovative methods to engage lone parents: for example, one of the companies took lone parents to their store and got them making fresh pizzas in their bakery. This was work experience for some and gave the lone parents a real taste of what it would be like to work in that environment.

One area held a Tall Ships event for lone parents at the harbour. Seventy lone parents attended and a crèche was provided for the children. Lone parents were able to hear inspiring talks from a life coach, a lone parent role model and several employers. They were then able to browse stands provided by the NHS, culture and leisure services, local colleges, local development companies and Jobcentre Plus.

6.4 Lessons learned

Discovery Weeks are very popular with lone parents, but are expensive, with real outcomes of getting lone parents into work being quite low. Where the provider also holds the Employment Zone contract, few lone parents have been referred to Discovery Weeks. It is naïve to make referrals to a programme where you have control over a positive outcome.

In Work Emergency Fund is poorly utilised. Lone parent advisers are driven by job entries and referring people to the IWEF does not help Lone Parent PAs to acquire points. The IWEF cannot be used for emergencies like Tax Credits not being paid on time and Housing Benefit payments. Personal Advisers feel that the IWEF has too many restrictions placed on it. Some lone parents who have got a job have actually had to leave work because their Tax Credits have not been paid, and they could not afford to continue to work. Acting on this feedback, the guidance for the usage of the fund was later relaxed and take up of the scheme increased significantly.

Childcare Tasters have had a mixed response. National figures for Childcare Tasters remain unconvincing. However, Childcare Chats which may be followed by accompanied visits to providers proved popular.

The lone parent marketing video was popular and this has since been renamed 'Is work for me' and reissued in both video and DVD format.

Overall Work Works principles are considered easily transferable to some other customer groups, specifically IB customers, younger people and older people.

7 The lone parent employment rate

Lone parent employment rates are published twice a year (spring and autumn). The Spring rate is the headline rate that is used most widely and used to report against targets. The spring data cover the period March to May. Table 7.1 shows the spring lone parent employment rates from Labour Force Survey data since 1997.

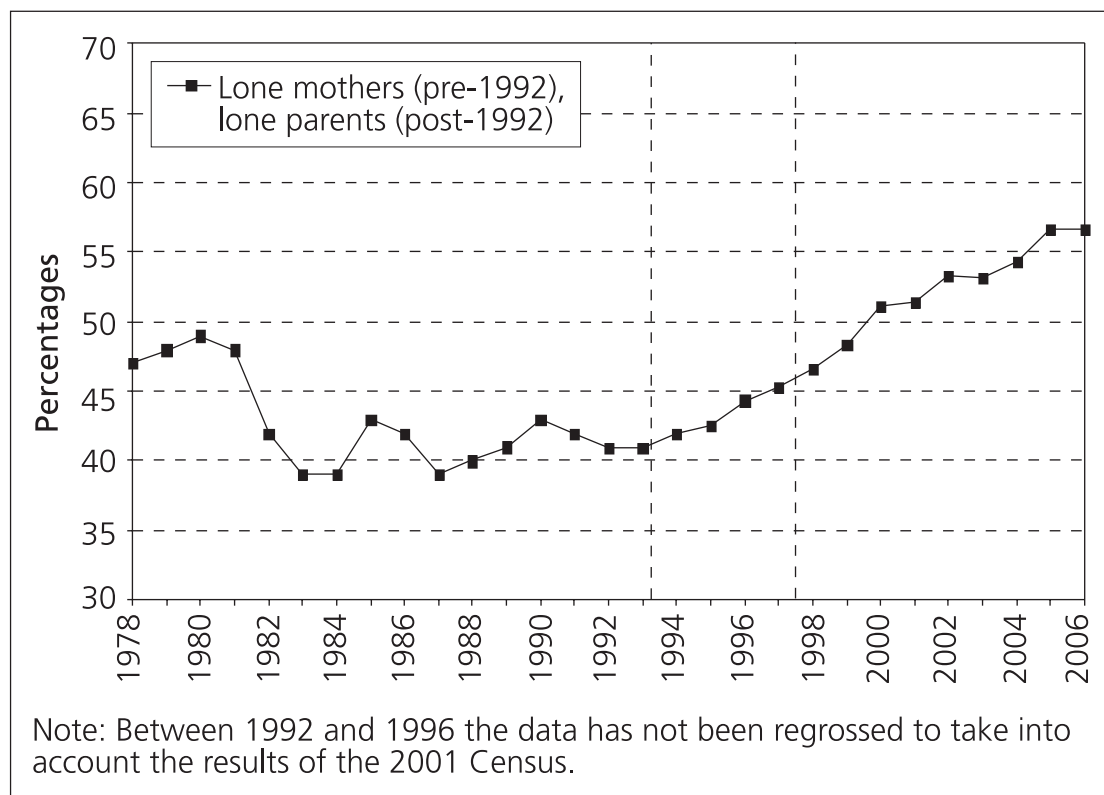
Table 7.1 Spring lone parent employment rates from Labour Force Survey data

1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
45.3%	46.6%	48.4%	51.2%	51.5%	53.3%	53.1%	54.3%	56.6%	56.6%

The increase is partly due to an improving demographic profile and a climate of stable and sustainable economic growth. However, analysis both by DWP and academics⁸ suggests that policy reforms between 1999 and 2002, which include the Working Families' Tax Credit and the NDLP accounted for almost half of that increase. Figure 7.1 illustrates the longer run increase in employment rates.

⁸ Gregg, Harkness and Macmillan (2006), *Welfare to Work Policies and Child Poverty: A review of issues relating to the labour market and economy.*

Figure 7.1 Lone parent employment rate 1978-2006



7.1 Comparison of Work Works areas against national non-Work Works areas

The lone parent Income Support (IS) caseload has been decreasing since October 2003, which is reflected in all of the Work Works areas with the exception of North London⁹. The Work Works areas have a small variation in the **number flowing on to and off IS** and the overall numbers for the Work Works areas follow a very similar trend to that of the non-Work Works areas.

While there is a large variation between the Work Works areas in the **number joining the NDLP caseload**, the overall numbers for the Work Works areas follow a very similar trend to that of the non-Work Works areas. An examination of these patterns suggests that there is no clear evidence of Work Works areas performing differently to the non-Work Works areas. Please note that the charts used for this can be found in Appendices C and D.

⁹ The baselining work for NDLP Plus suggests that North London has had an issue with the accuracy of its IS caseload.

8 Evaluation conclusions and policy recommendations

Work Works has highlighted the importance of joint working between key stakeholders (Jobcentre Plus, employers and local authorities) in helping lone parents enter or move towards work. The lessons learned about the various initiatives, and how they have been marketed have been taken forward as key parts of the NDLP Plus Pilots which will continue to move forward the lone parent agenda.

Discovery Weeks have proved popular with lone parents and have achieved good outcomes. While there are issues around the cost effectiveness of the full five-day Discovery Weeks, we are experimenting, in the NDLP Plus Pilots with shorter versions and taking some elements, such as employer engagement, and using them within group sessions.

NVQ Level 3 training that is accessible and well designed has proved to be effective at helping lone parents find employment. We could do more to support this level of training within NDLP more widely.

The IWEF appears to be meeting its policy objective of helping lone parents stay in work and has been included as one of the components of the NDLP Plus pilot in-work support package. We have already undertaken work to make the guidance clearer for PAs about when the use of IWEF is appropriate and this has already made the fund more effective.

The lessons learned from the Extended Schools Childcare Pilot and Childcare Taster Pilots have shown that although the provision of affordable, quality, accessible childcare is very important to help lone parents enter work, it must be matched by other activities to overcome the other barriers which prevent lone parents moving into work.

9 Final conclusion

The Work Works initiatives have proved very valuable in many ways. Specifically, they have enhanced the way Jobcentre Plus works with employers to achieve outcomes for lone parents, and have created a greater diversity of support for and engagement with lone parents as customers. Some of the Work Works initiatives are now being taken forward as part of the NDLP Plus Pilots.

While there is no clear evidence from the comparative data that outcomes in terms of movements on and off IS, and numbers joining the NDLP caseload, are different in Work Works to non-Work Works areas, nevertheless, the lessons learned in relation to effective joint working, and delivery of the various initiatives are important in the continued development of our agenda for lone parents.

Finally, feedback from key stakeholders has underlined that the principles of Work Works are considered to be easily transferable to other Jobcentre Plus customer groups, indicating new and enhanced ways forward for many of our customers.

Appendix A

Discovery Weeks

The objective of Discovery Weeks is to increase the numbers of lone parents who choose to work or to enter the NDLP programme. It should be designed as an intensive, developmental period during which lone parents have an opportunity to explore alternative lifestyles, aptitudes, interests and career paths. It should be stimulating, stretching and fun.

Recruitment and referral to Discovery Week should be managed through a variety of sources, including Jobcentre Plus PAs, lone parent organisations, education, health and childcare professionals.

Held at a venue other than Jobcentre Plus, its key features would include:

- a five-day event, with sessions lasting five hours per day to fit around school hours, for a maximum of 20 participants;
- substantial participation from local employers to discuss potential careers options and skill requirements; host site visits and work shadowing; and provide coaching in workplace practices;
- childcare provided, either through funding or through childcare ‘tasters’ to encourage lone parents to use registered or formal childcare once in employment.
- mentoring available to support individuals in making the decision to start work and through the transition into work;
- participation from local service providers and peer networks to connect lone parents with support in health, housing, childcare, finance, training and education and substance abuse assistance.

Discovery Week modules might include:

- diagnostic assessments (Myers Briggs, for example) of aptitudes and interests;
- ‘Realise your potential’ – a session introducing possible job options and local opportunities for careers advice and training;

- soft skills work (motivation, confidence building, life skills) and exercises in group/team working;
- grooming and 'dress for success' assistance;
- practical sessions on time and money management, and debt counselling;
- presentations from working lone parents about their path to work;
- fun elements intended to 'pamper' lone parents and stretch their horizons (manicures, aromatherapy, recreational trips);
- a 'graduation' dinner to celebrate success and strengthen networks between lone parents, PAs, mentors, employers and Discovery Week participants.

Discovery Week should be co-sponsored by Jobcentre Plus and an employer or group of employers, and a voluntary sector partner as appropriate. Sponsoring employers will be expected to contribute resource and expertise to the planning, design and delivery of Discovery Week. This might include project management, facilities and equipment, marketing, creative design, participation in work-related sessions and mentors.

Appendix B

Outcome rates by month started the provision

Table B.1 Discovery Weeks

Month started provision	Number started	Number completed	Outcome achieved	Outcome rates		
				of starters %	of completers %	Cumulative (starters) %
July 2004	19	16	8	42	50	42
August 2004	20	15	10	50	67	46
September 2004	93	87	50	54	57	52
October 2004	131	117	63	48	54	50
November 2004	66	61	31	47	51	49
December 2004	51	40	17	33	43	47
January 2005	136	121	57	42	47	46
February 2005	167	152	76	46	50	46
March 2005	74	50	18	24	36	44
April 2005	80	65	24	30	37	42
May 2005	105	75	22	21	29	40
June 2005	116	96	19	16	20	37
July 2005	17	15	6	35	40	37
Total	1,075	910	401	35	40	37

Table B.2 Mentoring linked to Discovery Weeks

Month started provision	Number started	Number completed	Outcome achieved	Outcome rates		
				of starters %	of completers %	Cumulative (starters) %
June 2004	22	12	2	9	17	17
July 2004	50	33	21	42	64	51
August 2004	30	15	11	37	73	57
September 2004	22	14	9	41	64	58
October 2004	37	26	8	22	31	51
November 2004	76	36	13	17	36	47
December 2004	38	17	9	24	53	48
January 2005	46	17	13	28	76	51
February 2005	52	19	15	29	79	53
March 2005	61	22	11	18	50	53
April 2005	62	11	11	18	100	55
May 2005	54	2	2	4	100	56
June 2005	69	7	7	10	100	57
July 2005	95	13	8	8	62	57
Total	714	244	140	8	62	57

Appendix C

Income Support for Lone Parents on-flows, off-flows and stock at month end

Figure C.1 ISLP on-flows, off-flows and stock at month end – national non-Works Works area

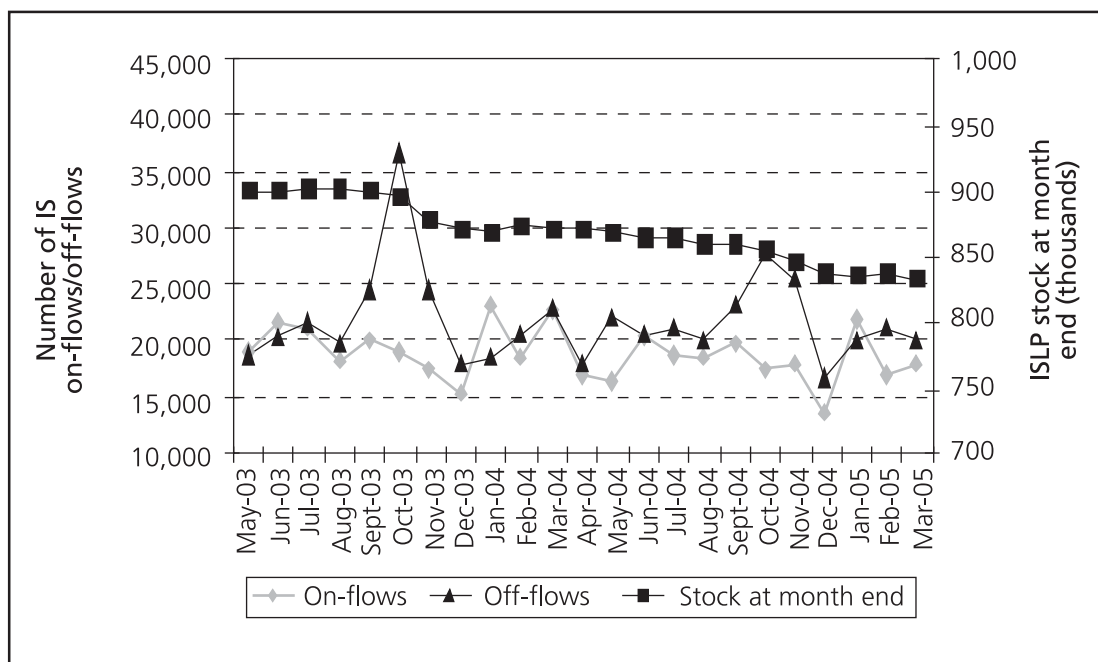


Figure C.2 ISLP on-flows, off-flows and stock at month end – Works Works area

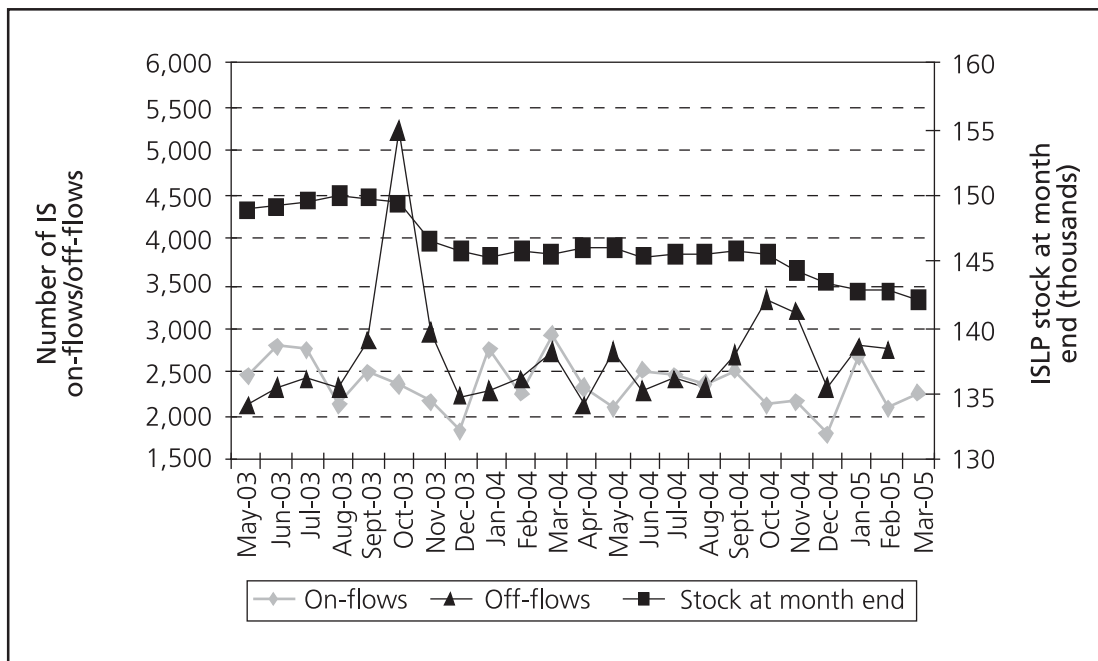


Figure C.3 ISLP on-flows, off-flows and stock at month end – South East London

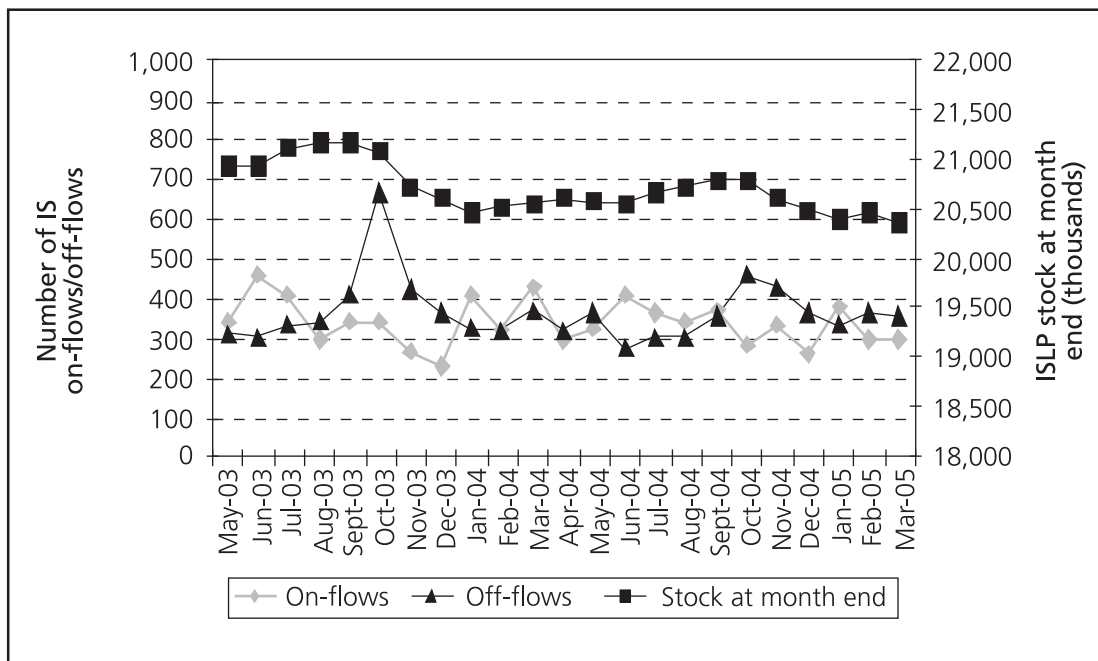


Figure C.4 ISLP on-flows, off-flows and stock at month end – North London

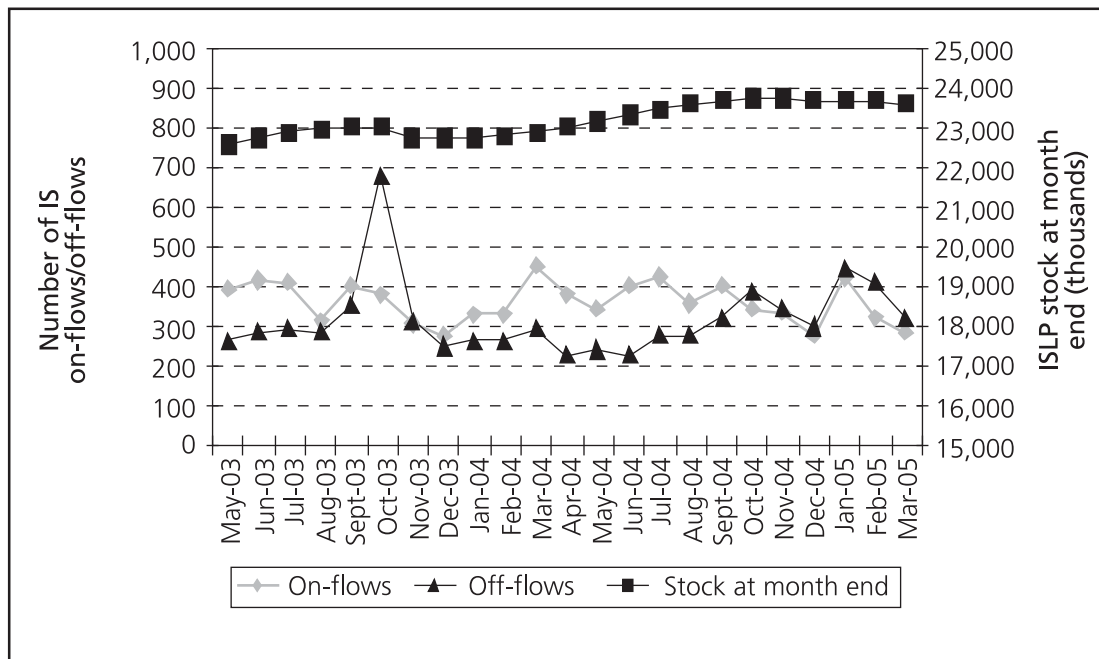


Figure C.5 ISLP on-flows, off-flows and stock at month end – Liverpool

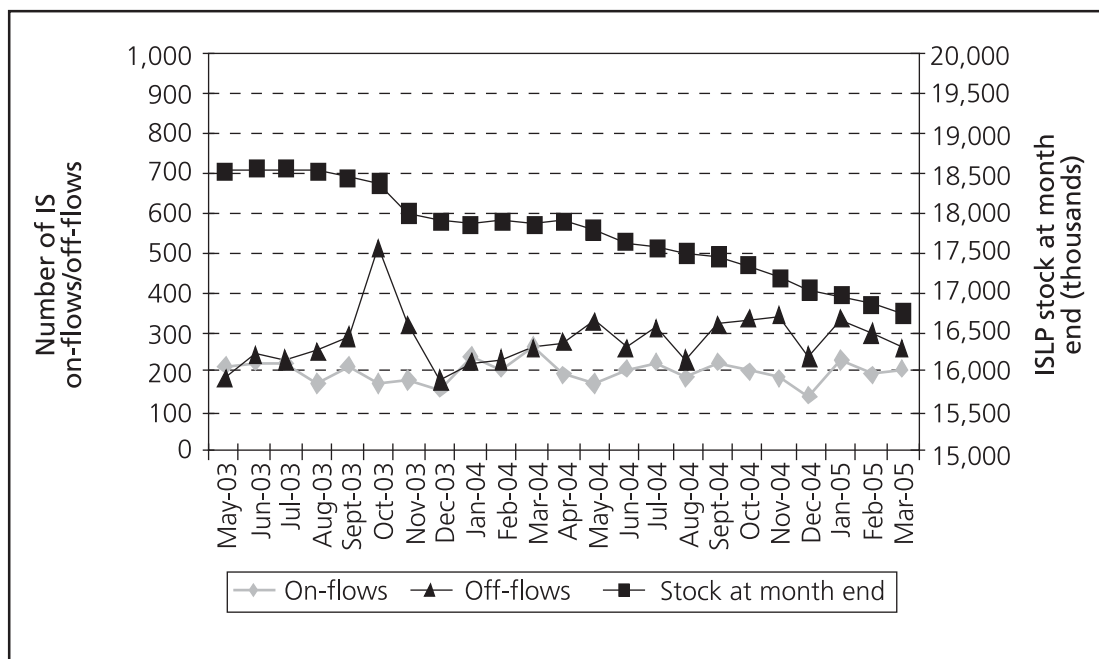


Figure C.6 ISLP on-flows, off-flows and stock at month end – Manchester

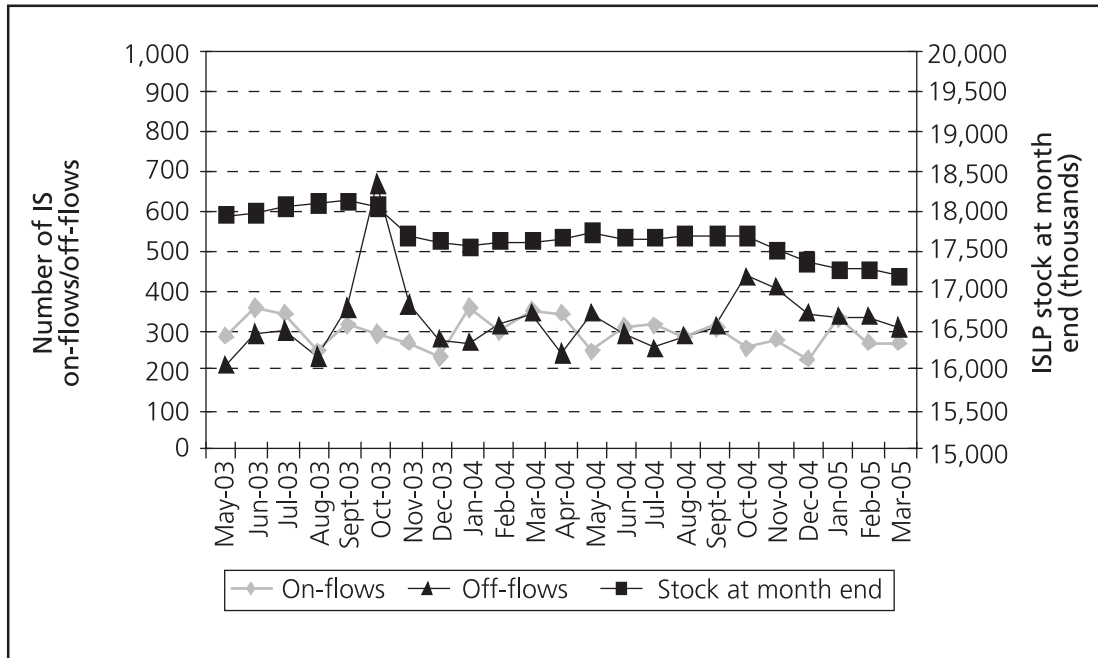


Figure C.7 ISLP on-flows, off-flows and stock at month end – Birmingham

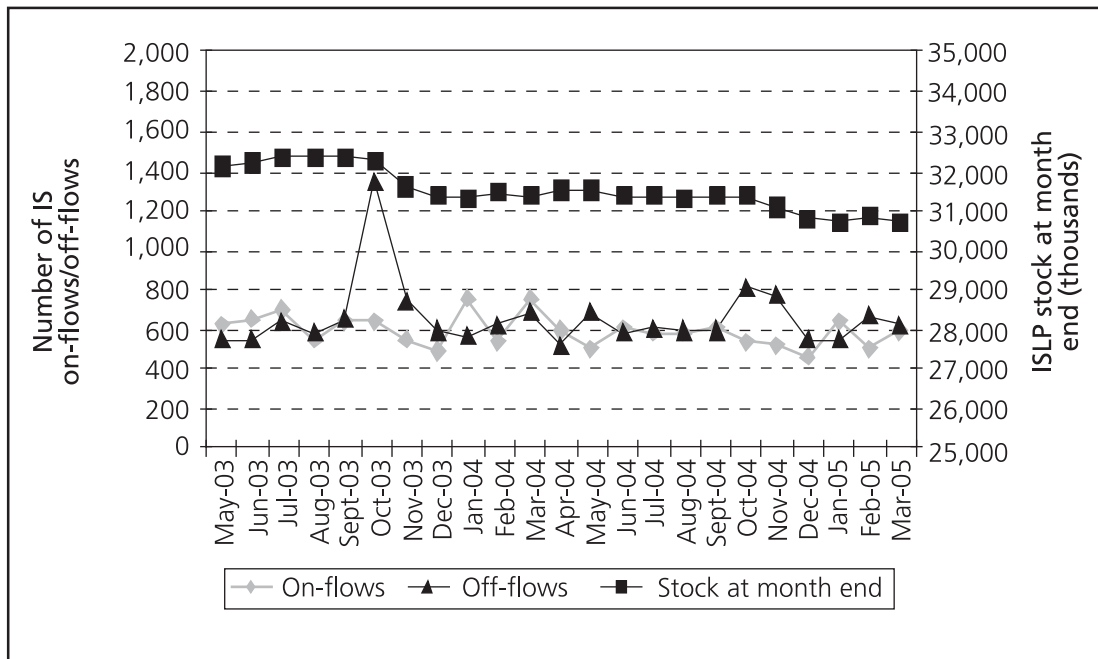


Figure C.8 ISLP on-flows, off-flows and stock at month end – Leeds

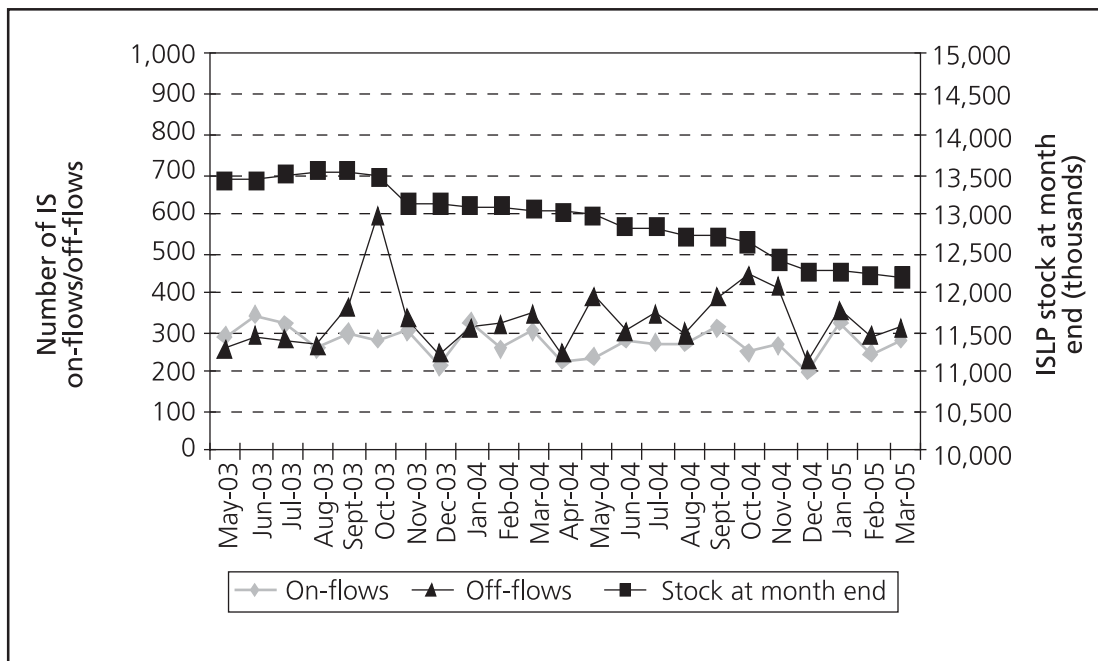
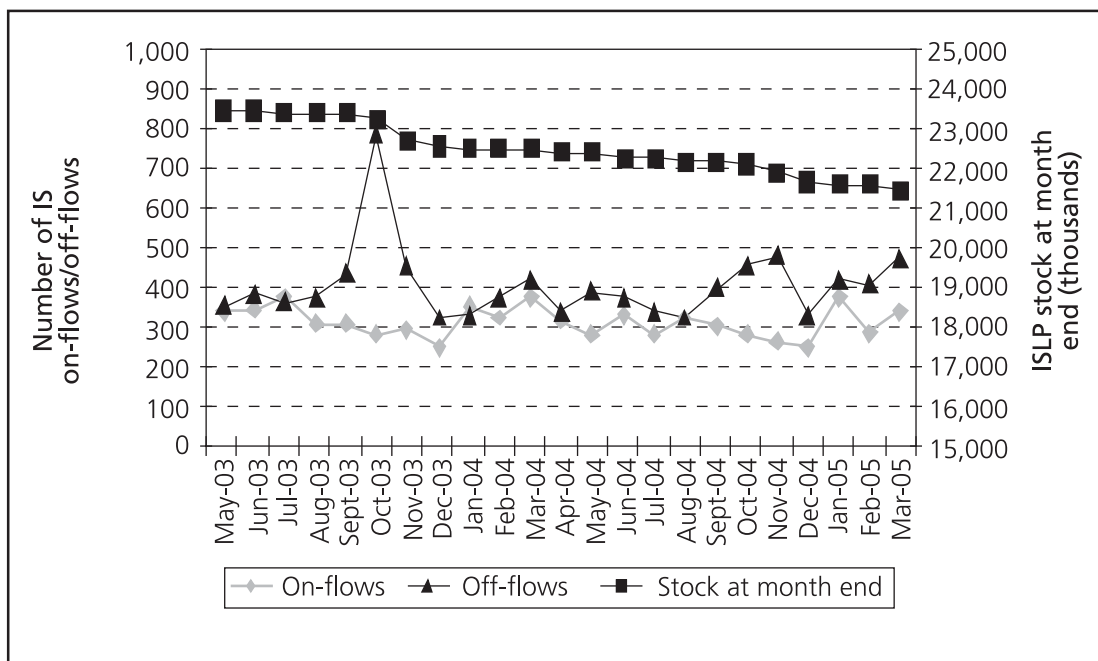


Figure C.9 ISLP on-flows, off-flows and stock at month end – Glasgow



Appendix D

Number of New Deal for Lone Parents caseload starts and New Deal for Lone Parents job entries in month

Figure D.1 Number of NDLP caseload starts and NDLP job entries in month – national non-Works Works area

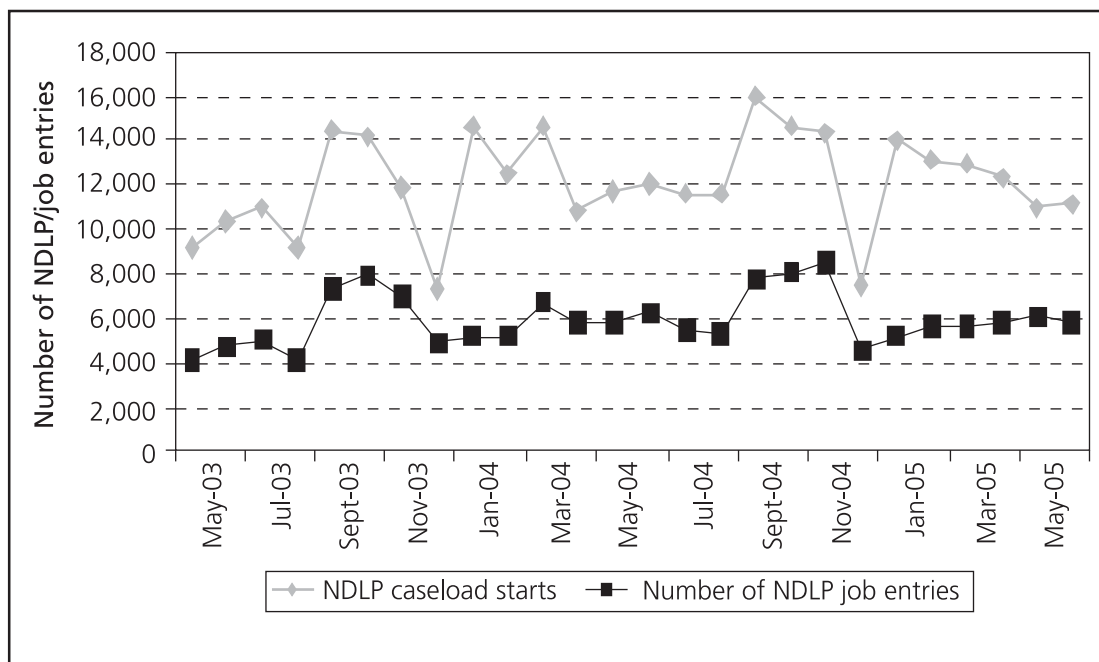


Figure D.2 Number of NDLP caseload starts and NDLP job entries in month – Works Work area

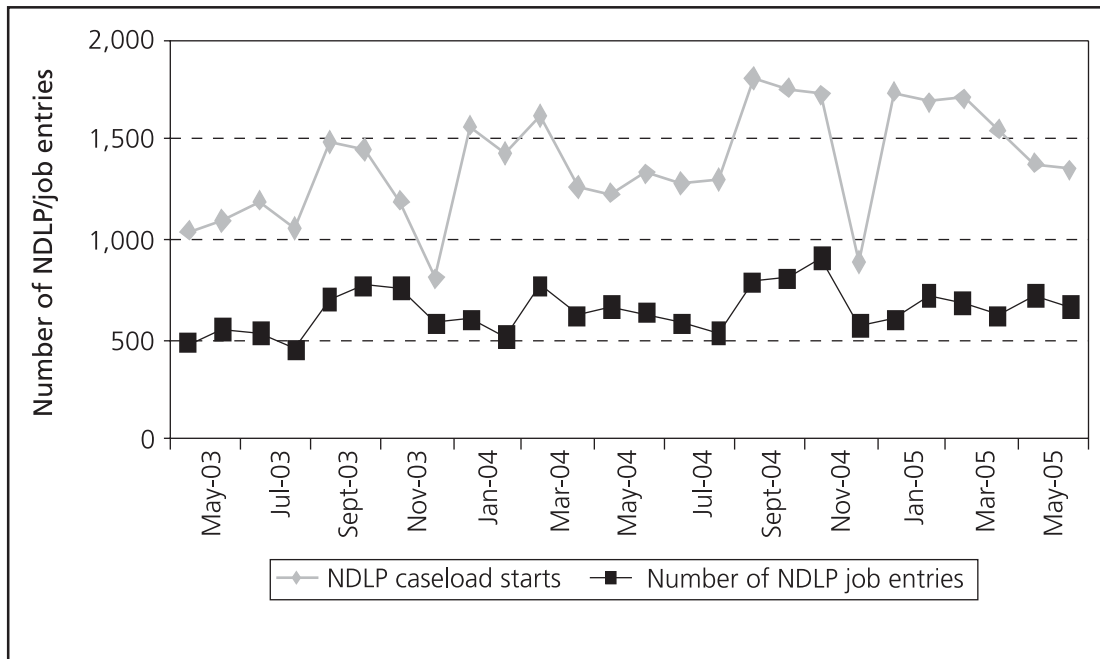


Figure D.3 Number of NDLP caseload starts and NDLP job entries in month – South East London

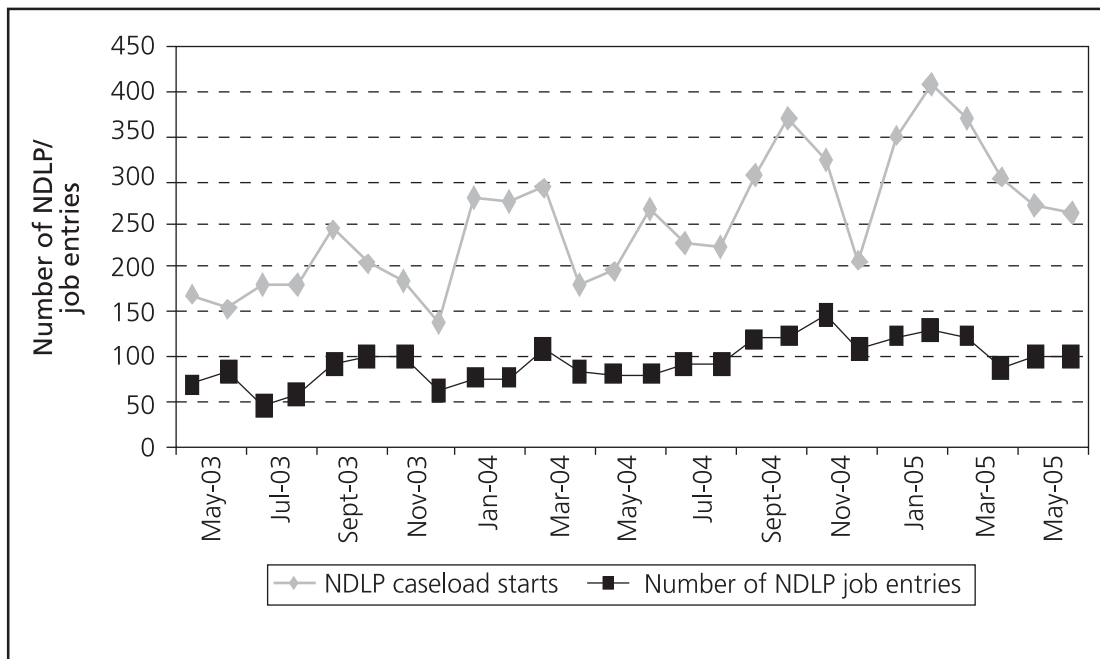


Figure D.4 Number of NDLP caseload starts and NDLP job entries in month – North London

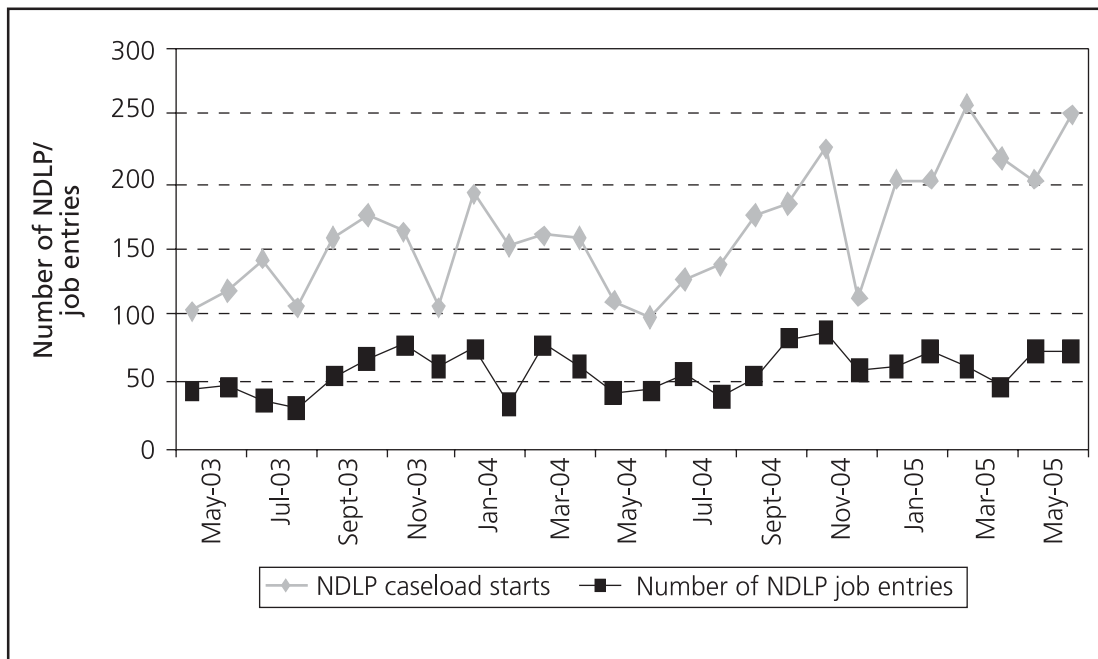


Figure D.5 Number of NDLP caseload starts and NDLP job entries in month – Liverpool

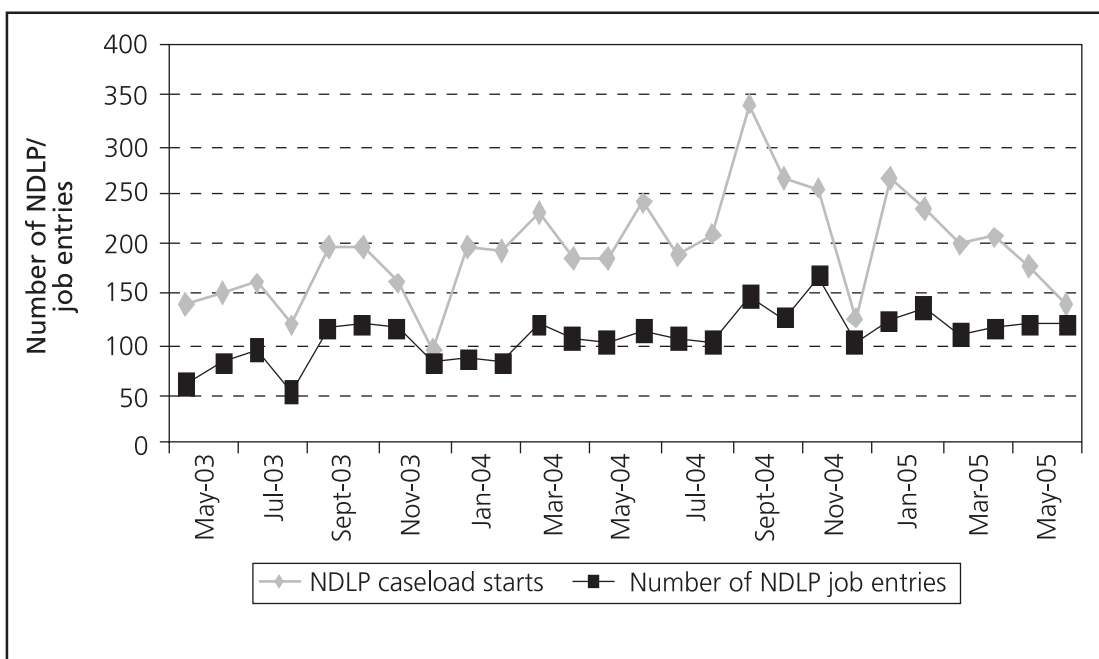


Figure D.6 Number of NDLP caseload starts and NDLP job entries in month – Manchester

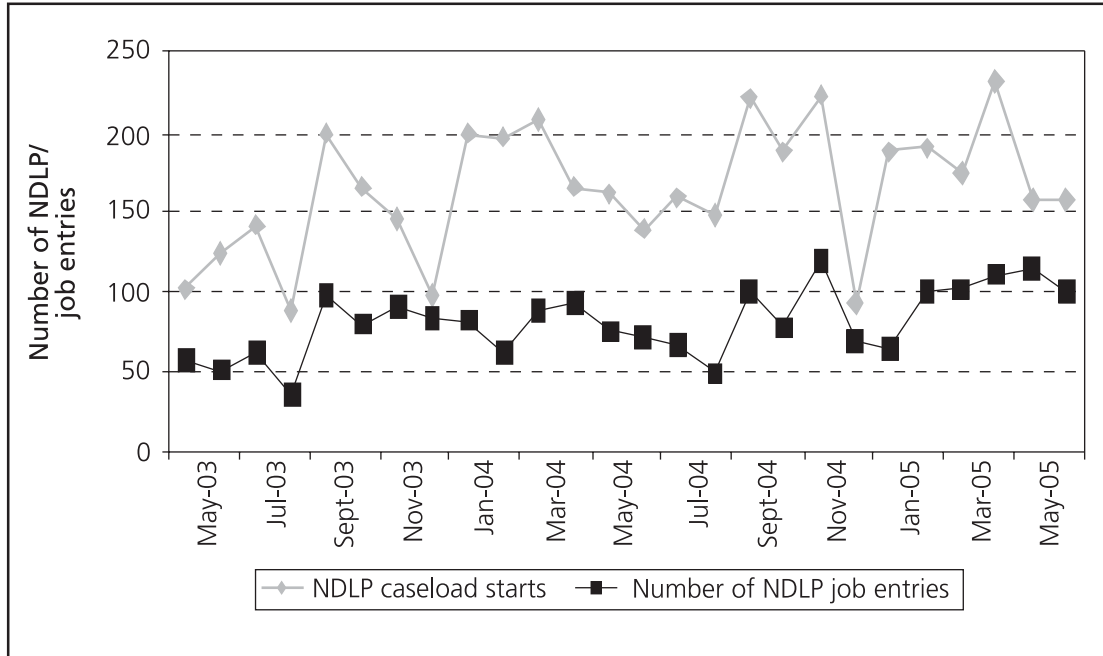


Figure D.7 Number of NDLP caseload starts and NDLP job entries in month – Birmingham

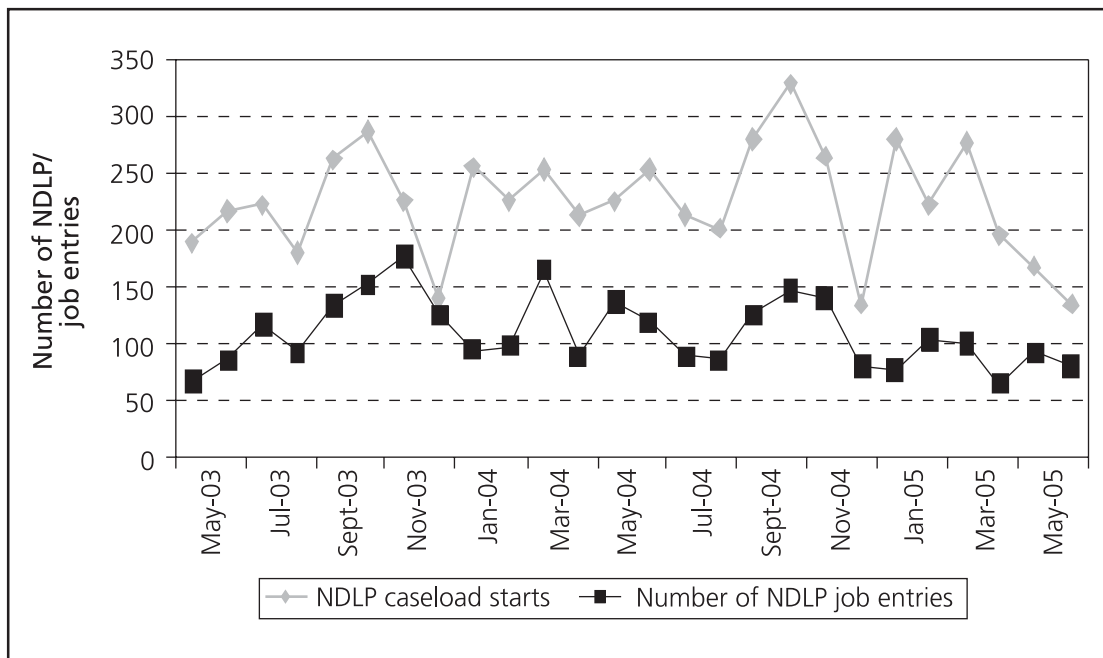


Figure D.8 Number of NDLP caseload starts and NDLP job entries in month – Leeds

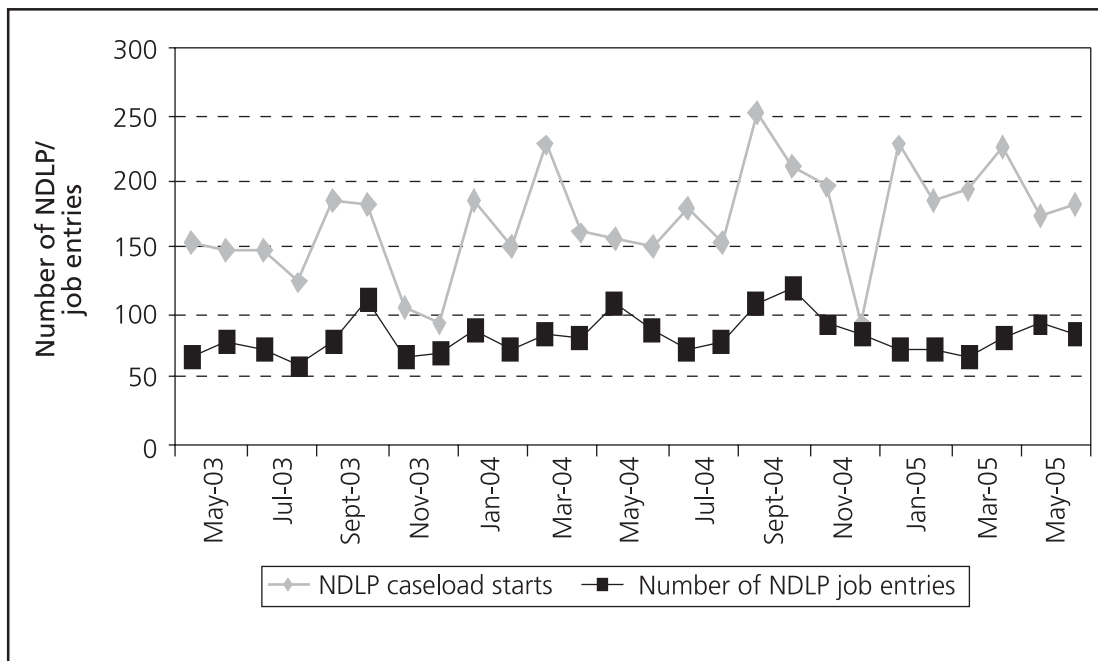


Figure D.9 Number of NDLP caseload starts and NDLP job entries in month – Glasgow

