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Abstract

Purpose: To explore the behavioural determinants of work-related welfare claimants' training behaviours and to suggest ways to improve claimants' compliance with training referrals.

Design: Qualitative interviews were conducted with 20 Jobcentre Plus staff and training providers, and 60 claimants. Claimants were sampled based on whether or not they had been mandated to training and whether or not they subsequently participated. Along with general findings, differences between these groups are highlighted.

Findings: Claimants' behaviours are affected by their capabilities, opportunities, and motivations in interrelated ways. Training programmes should appreciate this to better ensure claimants' completion of training programmes.

Originality: Whilst past papers have largely examined a limited number of factors that affect claimants' training behaviours, this report offers a synchronised evaluation of all the behavioural factors that affect claimants' training behaviours.

Keywords: Human Capital, Training, Employment, Behavioural Economics

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Behavioural insights into benefits claimants' training.

Skills Conditionality in Great Britain's benefits system aims to reinforce the responsibilities of work-related benefits claimants (Oakley, 2014). This present research explores the barriers and facilitators that affect whether claimants' attend the training programmes to which they are referred. To offer a new perspective on this we use a behavioural framework called COM-B (described further in the 'Theoretical Approach' section). The present research suggests that while mandation may help some claimants complete training, other factors may need to be considered. Indeed, to help more claimants complete training, a complex inter-play of their capabilities, opportunities, and motivations must be holistically understood. To help job advisors do this, nine trigger points that can be used to enhance the effectiveness of training referrals are provided.

Why skills training?

The present research has a practical purpose; the value of referring benefits claimants to training can only be realised if those claimants attend that training. Thus governments should ensure that claimants are likely to attend the training to which they are referred. Human capital theory supports such training (Becker, 1964; Kluve *et al.*, 2006). According to this theory, unemployment may indicate that people's skills do not match those sought by employers. Training that helps people gain desired skills raises their human capital and so makes them more attractive to employers (Fugate *et al.*, 2004). Other more recent research agrees that human capital is positively associated with people's job-search behaviour and re-employment chances (McArdle *et al.*, 2007; Koen *et al.*, 2013). Nevertheless, implementing training programmes for benefit claimants can be challenging, and their success is affected by people's capabilities, opportunities, and motivations to engage (de Koning, 2005). Therefore,

in order to improve training programmes requires a more nuanced understanding of what drives claimants to attend training.

Theoretical approach

This paper expands upon the existing literature on the barriers unemployed people face in re-entering the labour market (cf. McQuaid and Lindsay, 2002, 2005; Lindsay, 2005; McArdle et al, 2007; Koen et al, 2013). The present study's theoretical approach is guided by the COM-B framework (Michie *et al.*, 2011; Tversky *et al.*, 1974; Thaler *et al.*, 2008). The COM-B framework recognises that behaviour is part of an interacting system involving three components: capability, opportunity, and motivation. Capability is defined as individuals' psychological and physical abilities to engage in the target behaviour. Opportunity is defined as the social and physical factors that lie outside the individual that make the target behaviour possible or more probable. Motivation is defined as the brain processes that energise and direct the target behaviour through automatic or reflective mechanisms (Michie *et al.*, 2011). Once benefits claimants' capabilities, opportunities and motivations to attend training are better understood, the government will be in a better position to enhance their attendance. In this paper, however, we do not prescribe any interventions because selecting the appropriate intervention requires one to consider the environment within which an intervention can be successfully implemented. This task lies beyond the scope of the present paper.

The COM-B framework was used as a guiding theoretical approach because it unifies a range of relevant factors posited by past research. For example, Fugate *et al.*'s (2004) concepts of 'adaptability' and 'career identity' can be subsumed, respectively, under COM-B's categories of capability and motivation. As another example, the barriers identified by McQuaid and Lindsay (2002) can be mapped onto the COM-B framework, e.g., 'lack of basic skills' maps onto capability, 'lack of transport' maps onto opportunity, and 'desires to take up

employment' maps onto motivation. Thus, the COM-B framework allows us to simultaneously understand many behavioural factors affecting claimants' training behaviours.

Skills training and mandation in Great Britain.

The research took place in Great Britain where the current systems of benefit conditionality have developed following a series of reforms carried out since the mid-1980s, and recently the Jobseeker's (Back to Work Schemes) Act 2013 (Oakley, 2014). Skills Conditionality was introduced in 2011 and as a result claimants can be mandated to participate in training. Conditionality in the benefits system aims to serve as a means to reinforce the responsibilities of benefit claimants to seek work and to participate in relevant support. The sanctions system can apply financial penalties to claimants who do not meet their obligations.

To receive work-related benefits claimants are required to meet with advisers in public employment services, called Jobcentre Plus. Advisers use this meeting to construct personalised 'Claimant Commitment' forms. The Claimant Commitment explicitly states the actions a claimant must carry out in order to look for work and therefore to receive benefits. The conditions on the form can be enforced via a system of sanctions, whereby benefits can be restricted or withheld if agreed actions are not carried out. As part of this contract, claimants can be mandated to skills training (Department of Work and Pensions, 2011). This training ranges from courses teaching basic numeracy and literacy, employability skills, courses to gain licenses such as forklift driving, to those to achieve Level 2 qualifications (ISCED Level 2). These are the kind of human-capital enhancing activities that are referred to generically as 'training' in the context of this paper.

The present research is concerned with the effectiveness of skills training referrals, both when the referral is voluntary and when it is mandated and forms part of the claimant

commitment. In 2013, mandation to training was becoming increasingly common. In 2013, advisers made 322,740 mandated referrals to skills training, although the number of referrals has since fallen (Department for Work and Pensions, 2014). An analysis of Jobseeker's Allowance sanctions data showed that sanctions for failure to participate in training or employment programmes (including the Work Programme) were 226,000 in the year to June 2013, with around 10 per cent of sanctions related to failure to participate in a training scheme or employment programme other than the Work Programme (Webster, 2014).

Sanctions tend to disproportionality effect vulnerable groups, such as non-native English speakers or people with learning disabilities (Schram *et al.*, 2009; Oakley, 2014), and some research suggests negatively affect claimants' future job entry and earnings (Mead, 2011).

Research examining whether mandation is effective is mixed. Some research suggests that mandation can improve claimants' attendance at training, when it is used as a clarification of expectations (Newton *et al.*, 2012; Oakley *et al.*, 2013). Other research is less optimistic, suggesting that mandation has little effect on claimants' intentions and training behaviours (Griggs and Evans, 2010; Dorsett *et al.*, 2011; Rolfe, 2012; Newton *et al.*, 2012; Oakley *et al.*, 2013). Two studies found that mandation has no effect on training participation rates (Dorsett *et al.*, 2011; Oakley *et al.*, 2013). This could be because mandation crowds out any internal motivations claimants' have to develop skills (O'Grady, 2008; Hasluck and Green, 2007; Malmberg-Heimonen and Vuori, 2005; Van den Broeck *et al.*, 2010). Indeed, the most successful training regimes are bolstered by matching individuals' internal motivations with the training provisions available, not through the use of sanctions (Devin *et al.*, 2011).

The issue of motivation is further highlighted by Johnson *et al.* (2008). They find that financial incentives for young people are often less effective when they have access to financial support from their families. Motivating young people to train often requires non-

financial incentives, such as the opportunity to meet new people or gain a skill that already interests them. Similarly, claimants with independent incomes are also less sensitive to the possibility of sanctions (Newton *et al.*, 2012). In summary, as mandation has proved insufficient to ensure claimants' training, there is a good reason to look for other mechanisms.

Focus of the present research

While the research described above has increased our understanding of many unique factors that affect claimants' training behaviours, a comprehensive understanding of all the factors affecting training behaviour is lacking. The present research fills this gap by offering a holistic overview of all the behavioural determinants affecting claimants' training behaviours. In addition, this work brings to light nine trigger moments that advisers can use to increase claimants' training (Table 1). These nine triggers are surely not the only useful moments, but rather represent a sizable group of tangible moments advisers can readily use to increase claimants' attendance at training.

Table 1-----

Methods and Materials

Interviews about skills training were conducted with 20 Jobcentre Plus staff and training providers, and 60 Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants. Claimants were sampled based on whether or not they had been mandated to training (i.e., mandated vs voluntary) and whether or not they subsequently participated (i.e., trainer vs non-trainer). The data were analysed for differences between these groups, and where differences emerged they are noted. The findings are organised using

the COM-B framework that was briefly described in the introduction of this paper (Michie *et al.*, 2011).

Results

Our findings highlight that capability, opportunity and motivation all influenced claimants' training behaviours. There is no suggestion that one component is more important than another, nor is there any indication that any component is foundational. The findings indicate that the most effective training programmes will simultaneously consider all these factors. Each of these components are discussed in turn.

Capability to train.

Evidence suggests that recognising and enhancing claimants' capability will require tailored responses from advisers. Three significant triggers related to capability are given in Table 1. How claimants' training behaviours are affected by psychological and physical capabilities are reviewed now.

Psychological capability.

Psychological capability factors identified by claimants are discussed below. Specific attention is given to English, IT and job search skills.

Qualifications, skills and experience. Claimants had varied levels of qualifications, skills, and experience. The chance to obtain qualifications was recognised as a trigger for training (Table 1, Trigger 1). The majority of claimants had low or no qualifications and only nine reported having qualifications at Level 3 or above. A few claimants held occupational licences in sectors such as construction, transport, or security. Claimants had gained these qualifications at school, college or university, while making a benefits claim, and through

previous paid or voluntary work experience. An example of a claimant who wanted qualifications is provided below:

I wanted to basically grow with my education because obviously it wasn't that good... I decided it was now or never basically to go and do the course.

(Julie, 25-49, Voluntary trainer)

Claimants who reported having a high level of skills did not necessarily have relevant qualifications. For example, claimants with long work histories felt they had high levels of skills, but were unable to demonstrate or signal them to potential employers because they did not have a related "tangible qualification", but tended to see themselves as ready to take a course to gain relevant qualifications.

Conversely some young claimants felt they had relevant qualifications, but not the required experience to find work. These perceptions were shared by women returning to the workforce after bringing up a family who had long gaps in their employment history. Overall, these claimants tended to be confident in their ability to learn, but less so in how they could apply this capability to find work.

Claimants' capability to conceptualise and discuss their qualifications, skills and experiences varied. While some claimants were quite articulate, others struggled. An example of a claimant who struggled is provided below:

if people say what skills have you got, I never know what to say and I don't know what to say, you know, it's like... but like I can do maths and stuff, but I never know whether to say that as a skill.

(Louise, 19-24, Voluntary non-trainer)

English, maths, IT and job search skills. When claimants lacked an identifiable job skill there was commonly a desire to overcome it (Trigger 2). Generally, claimants felt that their English and maths skills were sufficient for them to effectively job search, work, and learn.

197 Only three claimants perceived that they lacked basic English skills. One recalled having a
198 test of his English and maths skills during a previous period claiming benefits, which
199 highlighted their skills deficits in these areas, but was not offered any training at the time.
200 Another recalled their lack of English skills being a major barrier to their ability to participate
201 in an IT course:

202 I can't read the computers so and I was spending my day sitting on a computer
203 looking for jobs that I couldn't read anyway and there wasn't anybody there to
204 help.

205 (Annie, 25-49, Voluntary non-trainer)

206 Several claimants expressed deficiencies in IT skills. Some older claimants were unable
207 to turn on a computer, use the internet, or send an email. This deficiency severely limited the
208 effectiveness of their job search. Some described overcoming this barrier with the help from
209 friends, family, or the National Careers Service to create a CV or complete an online
210 application.

211
212 Physical capability.

213 Some claimants reported having a health condition or physical/learning disability that
214 limited the kind of work they could do. The most common way that health influenced
215 claimants' training behaviour was as a positive trigger for retraining (Trigger 3). Several
216 claimants had lost their most recent job due to ill-health, including a driver who had a stroke,
217 a manual worker who developed a heart condition, and a hairdresser who developed a
218 musculoskeletal condition. These health issues now meant that doing their previous job was
219 no longer possible, and they were often eager to train for new work. For example:

220 I had to retrain in something that wasn't going to be a physical job... While the
221 last three years I was self-employed I basically did the majority of my accounts

myself anyway. My accountant was hardly charging me anything because she basically said to me you're doing most of the work yourself and because I was doing that I thought I'm going to try and do this as a full time career.

(Dean, 25-49, Voluntary trainer)

Only a small number of claimants thought their health condition would affect their capability to learn and training providers sometimes adjusted provisions to ensure accessibility. For example, one training provider had enabled a claimant to work flexibly towards the qualification, by splitting her learning time between the provider's office and her home.

Opportunity to train.

Opportunity affects claimants' training behaviours. Three significant triggers related to opportunity are given in Table 1. Unquestionably there is a balance to be struck between being able to meet all claimants' training requirements, course availability, and the funding availability. Doing this is no simple matter. How claimants' training behaviours are affected by social and physical opportunities are reviewed below.

Social opportunities.

Two social opportunities that affected training behaviour were identified; the support provided by family and peers and claimants' awareness of training opportunities.

Sources of support. Claimants' training behaviours were largely affected by their family, friends, and the welfare system. Where family and friends were supportive, such could be used by advisors to support claimants' training (Trigger 4). Family and friends often played a positive role in claimants' training decisions by providing emotional support and encouragement.

Claimant views of the welfare system were mixed. On the positive side, one claimant felt the transactional nature of their benefits claim meant that it was perfectly reasonable that they should be expected they work for their benefits. This claimant said that:

It's like if you want wages you have to work... I treated the course the exact same way. It was a necessary part of the system.

(Kevin, 50+, Level 3 and above, Mandated trainer)

Other claimants were less positive. One of these claimants had over 40 years of work experience alongside a Master's degree. He stated that staff focused on offering support to their largest demographic, which he saw as individuals with low-skill sets and/or a lack of work experience who staff were able to offer beneficial training and support to and thereby, "get a good return on" their investment.

Awareness. Understanding of training opportunities varied between claimants because they used different methods to find information. The following text describes staff and training providers' approaches to raising claimants' awareness of training opportunities and then claimants' awareness.

Jobcentre Plus staff reported that their main way of informing claimants about training opportunities was through job adviser interviews. They believed that claimants who had a good relationship with their advisers were more receptive and attentive to this information. This belief is supported by the below claimant's comment:

Well [the training course] kind of came up in conversations you know. Because you take your CV in and they kind of look it over sort of thing and sort of ask you

if you are happy with it and, well, if I can do anything to help and look for courses that way.

(Neil, 19-24, Mandated trainer)

Some training providers undertook regular visits to local Jobcentre Plus offices to talk to claimants and distribute brochures to generate awareness and interest in the courses they offered. In some districts, training providers offered ‘taster’ sessions for particular courses.

Claimants’ awareness of training opportunities had been acquired through formal and informal sources. In agreement with staff and training providers, several claimants discussed becoming aware of training opportunities through discussions with them or at taster sessions. Claimants found these discussions most helpful when staff were engaging and explicitly stated the connection between the training opportunity and their goals (Trigger 5). Claimants found such discussions less effective when staff members were simply checking whether the claimants were fulfilling requirements for benefits. Some claimants stated that the only time their adviser discussed training was to inform them that they were being referred to a particular course. These claimants felt that they were being mandated to training without considering their interests or needs.

The main difference between how voluntary and mandated trainers developed their awareness of training opportunities was that voluntary trainers actively sought out and asked staff for advice. Several of the voluntary trainers commented that they had searched for suitable courses on the internet, or heard about courses from their family and friends. Mandated trainers were more passive, depending on their adviser or information distributed by the training providers to make them aware of training opportunities. One of the mandated non-trainers comments are below:

I didn't know what training there were [...] I wasn't given nothing to say you've got all these training options that you can go for, if you want to learn this or that

skill. It was just what they put to me when I went in. I wasn't given no document to say here look through these, see if any of these skills that you'd be interested in.

(Jared, 25-49, Mandated non-trainer)

Physical opportunities.

Two main types of physical opportunities affected training behaviour: the nature of the learning provision and the supporting infrastructure.

Nature of the learning provision. Jobcentre Plus advisers made clear they are not primarily concerned with matching training opportunities to claimants' long-term career goals. Rather, training referrals are made on the basis of which courses will move the claimant closer to viable employment. One member of staff stated that advisers now concentrate on educating claimants "*about what's actually out there and what opportunities they can take advantage of*".

Staff cited four factors that affect advisers' training referrals. (1) An adviser's knowledge of courses that will address claimants' skill requirements. (2) How soon courses start, as sooner start dates avoid prolonged periods of inactivity. (3) Whether the training provisions already have an agreement with the centre, as such provisions make for an easier referral process. (4) Whether upcoming courses have a sufficient number of attendees, to ensure class sizes are sufficiently large to make the delivery of training cost effective.

Staff thought their centres offered a good variety of courses, typically short in duration and available year-round. Courses were available in the areas of English, maths, and IT. Additionally, vocational training available included courses in healthcare, social care, construction, warehousing, logistics, forklift driving, hospitality and catering. Employability courses provided advice on CV writing, interviewing skills, searching for jobs online, and developing soft-skills, e.g., confidence, team-building and self-organisation.

Jobcentre Plus districts undertook formal gap analyses of learning provision each year. ESOL courses were in high demand, but such courses were limited in number with irregular start dates. This created a backlog of claimants waiting to begin ESOL training. Another gap commonly identified was a lack of intensive, long-term English and maths training. These courses were often seen as being too short in duration.

Some claimants felt that their Jobcentre Plus had a limited range of training provisions. One claimant expressed that this lack of provision could explain why an IT training course was overbooked (25 learners but only 15 computers at the first session). Another claimant expressed being unable to undertake a desired security training because there were no upcoming start dates for such courses.

While some claimants referred to training had a positive view of their course, negative views were more common. Some claimants expressed frustrations with course durations, which was sometimes too long or too short. Other claimants felt that the course level was not appropriate. This is a problem where those who attend training are not building their human capital to become more employable. One claimant's dissatisfaction with the course level is given below:

On Jobseeker's you don't get the opportunity to do things other than what I call basic stuff - maths, English and computers - which for someone like myself it's ok but it's not really very beneficial for anything that I could move onto. It's pointless really actually for me.

(Yvonne, 25-49, Voluntary trainer)

Other physical barriers to training included access. Some claimants had concerns regarding their need to travel on busy public transport and to arrive at the training provider at a specified time, usually early in the morning. Childcare responsibilities added greatly to this pressure, and women whose children were entering school tended to be more willing to take

up training (Trigger 6). Training providers with on-site childcare facilities were helpful in enabling claimants with younger children to participate in training. The location of the training was also important for some claimants who stated that they would not be able to afford any travel costs associated with training.

Supporting infrastructure. Staff were asked to detail the funding arrangements available to support claimants referred to training. Limited Flexible Support Funds exist for Jobcentre Plus to help fund the costs of claimants' training. The Flexible Support Fund claims are assessed and approved on an individual bases by a senior manager. This manager identifies the most cost-effective option and advises claimants of the support they are willing to fund. This typically involves paying for any associated travel expenses and sometimes childcare costs.

Most claimants expressed satisfaction with the funding arrangements in place. However, a few claimants found the reimbursement process difficult. In some cases, claimants had to pay upfront costs and subsequently provide proof of purchase to their adviser before being reimbursed. One claimant had waited two weeks to have the bus fares reimbursed and so feared being unable to afford to continue training.

Motivation to train.

Motivation affects claimants' training behaviours. Three triggers related to motivation are given in Table 1. Generally, claimants were particularly motivated when they self-referred to training; but, training suggested by advisors was more likely to be complied with when it is accompanied with open discussion and flexible policies. How claimants' training behaviours are affected by automatic and reflective motivations are reviewed below.

Automatic motivations.

As automatic mechanisms are largely unconscious, they are difficult for interviewees to report. To help researchers recognise their interviewees' automatic motivations, interviewees' responses can be coded using the constructs in MINDSPACE (Dolan *et al.*, 2010). MINDSPACE is a comprehensive framework that focuses on how automatic motivations can be applied to public policy. MINDSPACE itself is an acronym where in each letter represents a construct related to automatic motivation, the letters stand for: Messenger, Incentives, Norms, Default, Salience, Priming, Affect, Commitment, and Ego.

Messenger. Messenger describes that valued sources of information are more likely to influence behaviours than less-valued sources. Voluntary trainers reported that their family and friends were the most important messengers, in contrast, the majority of mandated trainers found their adviser to be the most important messenger.

Incentives. An incentive is an internal or external gain and loss that motivates action from a reference point. Sanctions are a type of disincentive. Threats of sanctions sometimes put a shadow over training that was viewed as positive. Some claimants reported not asking for training because they were concerned about the sanctions they might incur if they were unable to attend or complete it.

The reference points from which claimants assessed the value of the training seemed to affect their perceptions. Those who knew the training would be quite expensive to them if they were not claiming benefits saw training as a good deal. One claimant commented:

if you were working and you went to do an IT course, you'd be paying £300 to do an Excel course, or something like that. So for me, I just thought, I'll get as much training as I can, you know, because it's beneficial for me and it's free.

(Bridget, 25-49, Mandated non-trainer)

Norms/Defaults. People are strongly influenced by what they perceive others to be doing (i.e. social norms). Claimants generally viewed the threat of sanctions on other

people's training behaviour as negative, because their use instilled a negative attitude towards training, even among people who were principally positively inclined. There was therefore a norm understood that claimants may not want to attend mandated training. The concept of norms is closely related to defaults, selecting a default option often maintains the status quo. Many claimants did just that when they complied with what their advisers' first training referrals (i.e., defaults). They spoke of doing this without question because of the threat of sanctions, even when the course was not relevant to their goals. One mandated trainer recounted that her adviser said she had to go to training or "I wouldn't get the money. So I had to go".

Saliency. Saliency describes that people's attention is drawn to what is novel or seems most relevant. By far the most salient factor that made a course appealing was the relevance of the course to the claimant's goals. The prospect of gaining a qualification or certificate that would demonstrate the skills gained was highly valued. Claimants would not consider a course if they thought it was too basic or non-essential to obtain their goals.

Priming. Priming describe that people's actions are often influenced by sub-conscious cues. Whether priming affected training behaviour is not clear. It is possible that family expectations may have this type of influence. For example, compliance with expectations was shown in general decision making about training in some cases, for instance going to university after A-levels because "that's what you did".

Affect. Affect describes that people's emotional associations can powerfully shape their actions. Looking at the influence of affect, many respondents reported positive experiences of past learning. Closely connected to this was the feeling of achievement. Gaining qualifications improved several claimants' confidence. Conversely, there were several examples from claimants with negative learning experiences that might have caused them to avoid training. A young mother had attempted to go back to school to finish her education but

found it too difficult to attend due to her childcare responsibilities. This experience negatively affected her attitude towards education.

Commitment. Commitment notes that people seek to be consistent with their public promises. The Claimant Commitment form is a type of commitment used to increase claimants' training compliance and may be a good moment to suggest a particular training course (Trigger 7). Claimants who had chosen the training they were referred to expressed greater commitment than those who did not. Having a good training experience also increased claimants' commitment and in some cases claimants tried to increase the hours they trained because they enjoyed it so much.

Ego. Ego describes that people act in ways that make them feel better about themselves. Claimants who had been out of education for a long time expressed some anxiety, because they were uncertain whether they would cope with course content or fit in a particular learning environment. How one claimant initially felt about training is given below:

Nervous. Exactly how I felt when I went to like college and that, because obviously, you don't know what they expect. Obviously, but when I went, I felt relaxed because it was other people in the same situation as me, that have got children and have been out of education for a while and all of that. So it was nice and the tutors made me feel relaxed as well. So that was even nicer.

(Julie, 25-49, Voluntary trainer)

Reflective motivations.

The findings suggest several reflective motivations that affect training behaviour, including claimants' perception of their ability to learn, evaluations of training and experiences with mandation.

Claimant's perception of their ability to learn. Claimants' previous learning experience tended to instil a belief in their capability to learn. For example, one claimant said, "you can never stop learning". Other claimants remained doubtful about their capability to learn, questioning whether they would receive sufficient support and whether their health would be good enough. One claimant said that:

I had difficulty with it... so at the time when I had a problem I just didn't do it; I think I'd gloss over it and move onto something else.

(Kirk, 25-49, Mandated trainer)

Evaluations of training. Claimants' previous experiences in training affected their motivations to continue or receive additional training. Claimants who had more positive experiences said their advisers had engaged them in conversation assessing their employment history, skills gaps, support needs, and goals before suggesting a training course to them. Such claimants were generally more excited about future training opportunities (Trigger 8). Other claimants reported negative experiences. Some had been referred to a course without expressing interest in it or without staff providing an adequate explanation about how the programme was relevant to their goals. These claimants commonly thought advisers were simply concerned more with sanctioning claimants than with whether they found quality work. Another view was that staff only made referrals to training in order to hit internal targets filling training courses.

Mandation. Staff and claimants' reflections on mandation are discussed in turn. Jobcentre Plus staff reported reasons why advisers mandated claimants to training. The main reason was that a clear skills gap had been identified that needed to be resolved. Lastly, staff reported being more likely to mandate claimants to training when claimants did not appear committed, and mandation was particularly likely when claimants had a history of failing to attend training (Trigger 9).

Staff reported that many claimants were compliant and committed to training regardless of mandation while others reacted negatively. Claimants' reactions to mandation were felt to be affected by at least four factors. First, the clarity with which staff explained their expectations of the claimant. Second, whether advisers explained why the course would be valuable to the claimant. Third, whether the claimant recognised that training was valuable. Fourth, individual differences meaning that some claimants were more naturally defensive and dismissive about mandating than others. One member of staff stated that, "some customers don't like the idea of attending training if it is compulsory".

Claimants were generally aware that mandation existed. They expressed no concerns with being mandated so long as the training was relevant to their goals. In fact, some claimants equated training with work and appreciated the money that was spent on them to improve their skills. Other claimants expressed worry, fear, anxiety and stress in connection with mandation. Training to which claimants were mandated became associated with the possibility of losing money. Claimants with no experience of sanctions frequently expressed concern they were doing something wrong. Among claimants who had experienced sanctions as a result of not attending training, some expressed bewilderment because these repercussions had not been made clear to them and they did not understand why their benefits had been affected.

Some claimants perceived that training providers used sanctioning as a threat and where this was the case felt that this undermined a provider's credibility and cast doubts over the quality of their course. One claimant expressed that:

[the trainer] said it every couple of minutes... 'if you mess about here, we'll phone up the Jobcentre and we'll stop your money.' [the trainer] was always claiming to phone the Jobcentre.

(Annie, 25-40, Voluntary non-trainer)

The most frequent concern was the negative impact such threats had on claimants' motivation to learn. For some mandated non-trainers, their non-attendance was due to personal circumstances that prevented that attendance rather than unwillingness. Some claimants' circumstances had changed in a way that meant the training referral was no longer required, e.g., they started work. Others described a change in their personal circumstances which had affected their ability to train, such as a deterioration or onset of a health condition, having a baby, or being required to care for a relative.

Another reason mandated trainers did not train related to the perceived suitability of the training opportunity. For example, one claimant decided that their mandated course was not relevant to their work goals, and so they did not attend. Another claimant had not attended the training because she could not access it easily and had received a negative review of the course from her friends.

Other mandated non-trainers' actions are best explained by a lack of communication or understanding. One claimant commented that their adviser had referred him to a course but had not told him. Another claimant described not being provided with the correct location of the course. A third claimant complained that:

It's like in my eyes, it's like they'll do anything they can to not pay you... by putting you on those courses, but not letting you know you're on them.

(Jason, 25-49, Mandated non-trainer)

Helping job advisors unambiguously communicate the conditions of mandation with claimants is an important and difficult barrier that needs to be overcome.

Discussion

The present paper used the COM-B framework to explore the factors that affect claimants' training behaviours, both in the presence and absence of mandation. Capability,

opportunity, and motivation all influenced claimants' decision making and training behaviour, see Figure 1. It is important to remember that these components are interrelated. For instance, understanding claimants' capability was central to determining an appropriate training opportunity, and having an appropriate training opportunity was critical to increasing motivation.

Figure 1-----

The three components affecting behaviour are multifaceted and different aspects of the same dimension may influence claimant decision-making either positively or negatively. For example, examining the dimension of opportunity, an advisors' training referral may be received positively if the claimant perceived that the training opportunity as a relevant match to their employment goals, and was at an appropriate level. However, the same referral could be negatively received if a claimant is reluctant to travel across the city to attend the training. Further, some elements of a dimension may override others in decision-making. In the example above, the claimant could either decide that the negative of a long journey is outweighed by the potential benefits of the opportunity to further their employment goals, or this negative could undermine the other positive factors and create a barrier, meaning they do not attend the training. Equally, the strength of some dimensions may override any perceived negative aspects of others.

Mandation is a dimension of motivation. Mandation may not positively affect training behaviour where other influences affect training more negatively; for instance, when transportation or childcare services are unavailable. Thus, where mandation is used an adviser should be sure that the training opportunity is a good match to the individual; otherwise mandation to training can create a sense of disillusionment with training. This corroborates previous research that emphasises how mandation in itself is insufficient, if the kind of

training provision available is not of sufficient quality or able to match with the jobseekers' inclinations and long-term goals (e.g. Dorsett *et al.*, 2011; Devin *et al.*, 2011).

The balance between capability, opportunity and motivation is delicate and will depend on each claimant's circumstances. A change in the factors affecting one dimension can influence another, and ultimately change behaviour. For example, increasing a claimant's awareness and understanding of the support available in training courses, could increase confidence in their capability and in turn increase the likelihood they will attend training.

The paper has clarified and illustrated some connections between the COM-B components and human capital theory. Most directly human capital theory is about people's capability to perform a job (Kluver, 2006). An employer often has no desire to hire an employee who will cost them more money to train than that employee can produce (in output). Training can provide unemployed people with the opportunity to gain the skills employers need. When the labour supply is large, employers are less willing to invest in general job training and so people may depend on the state to provide them with the opportunity to train (Becker, 1965). Human capital theory, consistently with the papers' findings highlighted through the COM-B framework, shows that for training to engage its target group of participants, it needs to align very clearly with individual career goals to ensure that the principle of motivation is fulfilled. This can be difficult to achieve in a climate of constrained government spending and in tension with employment policy priorities of the 'work first' to tackling unemployment.

Our findings also expand upon the findings of previous research on drivers and barriers to the employability of unemployed individuals (McQuaid and Lindsey 2002; McArdle *et al.* 2007; Koen *et al.* 2013) by showing the complex interplay between subjective and objective factors in determining claimants' behaviour and hence the effectiveness of activation interventions.

Matching claimants to appropriate training opportunities and generating motivation requires an in-depth understanding of each claimant's skills, experiences and goals, as well as an understanding of the local labour market. This process takes time. Some claimants were able to analyse this by themselves and self-refer to training. Others will lack an understanding of one or more of the dimensions above which may prevent them from training. In these circumstances, claimant decision-making about training will likely require more support from Jobcentre Plus staff. Overall, the findings of this paper suggest that mandation to training cannot by itself increase compliance with training or facilitate the acquisition of human capital on part of claimants, if the complex barriers and factors that shape claimants' training behaviour are also not taken into consideration.

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698 Table 1.

699 *Triggers for training related to each COM-B component.*

COM-B Component	Triggers arising from this research that suggest claimants will be most receptive to training referrals.
	When:
Capability	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. claimants lack a relevant qualification, selecting a course to help them gain that qualification may encourage their training. 2. claimants lack a basic identified skill (e.g., English or IT), selecting a course to help them gain that skill may encourage their training 3. claimants experience a change in their circumstance that no longer allows them to work in their former career, selecting a course to help them gain qualification to assist this transition may encourage their training.
Opportunity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. family and friends are optimistic about the claimant training, pointing out their optimism may encourage claimants' training 5. claimants state their career goals, making claimants aware of training opportunities that are match their goal(s) may encourage their training 6. claimants experienced a change in their personal circumstances that make training easier (e.g., a child entering school), this may be a fruitful time to suggest training.
Motivation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. creating the Claimant Commitment form, engaging claimants in a high quality discussion about what training courses are relevant to their goals and why training is necessary may encourage their training 8. claimants have a positive training experience, they may be eager to experience more training and so this is a fruitful time to present another training opportunity 9. claimants commitment levels are not high or they have previously failed to comply with training referrals, then mandating training may be effective

700

Figure 1: Factors affecting benefit claimants' training behaviour (source: Gloster et al, 2017 adopted from Michie, 2011)

