Next Steps Age 25 Survey

Technical Report

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1 Introduction

1.1 History of the study before Next Steps 8

Next Steps, known at the time as the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England (LSYPE), started life in 2004 as a cohort study of young people aged 13 to 14. It was funded by the Department for Education (DfE) to understand the factors important to educational attainment and successful progression from compulsory education.

The population consisted of young people in Year 9 in England in state and independent schools and in pupil referral units in February 2004. Sample members were born between 1st September 1989 and 31st August 1990.

In the first survey in 2004, information was collected for 15,770 young people. Those who participated were approached in each subsequent year until they were aged 19 or 20. Data was collected via face-to-face interviewing for the first four waves of the survey and included interviews with cohort members' parents. At Wave 5, a mixed mode approach was introduced and cohort members could complete the interview online, over the telephone or face-to-face. In Wave 7, the final wave funded by DfE, 8,682 interviews were achieved with cohort members.

1.2 Context for Next Steps 8

At Wave 7, there was no intention to continue research with the cohort, given DfE's remit around compulsory education. However, this cohort represented a major opportunity to address a gap in the series of birth cohort studies in Britain since 1946. Cohort studies were started for those born in 1970 and 2000 – the Next Steps cohort represented the missing 'Millennials' of 1989-1990.

In 2013, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), management of Next Steps was transferred to the Centre for Longitudinal Studies (CLS) at the UCL Institute of Education. The scientific and policy focus for Wave 8 widened to include a range of outcomes and focused on the transition from education, into work, relationships and family life in the context of the deepest recession since the 1930s.

In 2014, CLS commissioned NatCen to conduct the fieldwork for Next Steps Wave 8, to take place in 2015/2016 when the cohort was aged 25/26. The sample design was to be more inclusive than in previous sweeps, to include those who had not participated since Wave 1. A sequential mixed mode approach to data collection was to be used, with an online option first, followed by telephone interviewing and finally face-to-face.

2 Sample

2.1 Sample design

2.1.1 Original sample design

The LSYPE population consisted of young people in Year 9 in England in state and independent schools and pupil referral units in February 2004. Sample members were born between 1st September 1989 and 31st August 1990, so were aged 13 or 14 at the first point of data collection.

The sample design made schools the primary sampling unit, with deprived schools being over-sampled by 50%. Of 892 selected schools, 647 schools participated. Within selected schools, pupils from minority ethnic groups (Indian; Pakistani; Bangladeshi; Black African; Black Caribbean; and Mixed) were over-sampled to provide sufficient base sizes for analysis. The school and pupil selection approach ensured that, within a deprivation band and ethnic group, pupils had an equal probability of selection. In addition to the young person, a 'main' and a second parent were identified for interview in each wave up to and including Wave 4.

The issued sample for Wave 1 was approximately 21,000 young people. A total of 15,770 households were interviewed in that initial wave (74%), with both young people and their parents in scope to be interviewed. At Wave 4, 352 ethnic boost interviews were added, taking the total number of cohort members who had taken part in the study up to 16,122.

Following the initial wave of fieldwork and up until Wave 7 in 2010, only those who participated in the previous wave were included in the current wave. Despite high response rates at each individual wave (between 86% and 92%), over time this led to a reduction in the overall sample to 8,682 at Wave 7. In the transfer of the study from DfE to CLS, DfE approached all the cohort members (16,122 cases), except a small number who had previously withdrawn from the study, to ask them for updated information and to provide an opportunity to opt out of the process. A small number opted out at this point. In total, 15, 629 cases were transferred to CLS from DfE.

2.1.2 Sample design for Wave 8

The proposal put forward to ESRC by CLS for Wave 8 was for fieldwork to maximise sample quality by including all those who had participated at Wave 1 (except those who had given a clear refusal to be part the study or had been identified as ineligible).

This meant that a significant proportion of the sample had not participated in the study for a number of years – even those who had participated at the most recent wave had not been interviewed or contacted since 2010 (except for the DfE opt-out process in 2013). As Table 2:1 shows, 53% of cohort members had last participated in fieldwork in 2010, six years earlier than Wave 8, and 14% had not participated since 2004 (and had only done so on that one occasion).

Table 2:1	Last wave of participation before Wave 8		
Wave	Year of fieldwork	n	%
Wave 1	2004	2121	14%
Wave 2	2005	1050	7%
Wave 3	2006	946	6%
Wave 4	2007	940	6%
Wave 5	2008	956	6%
Wave 6	2009	1237	8%
Wave 7	2010	8280	53%
Total		15531	100%

Following exclusions for known ineligibility (those confirmed to be outside the UK) and adamant refusals to the study, a total of 15,531 cases were issued for fieldwork at Wave 8.

2.1.3 Eligibility

Cohort members were not issued for fieldwork where they were known to be:

- In prison
- Deceased
- Outside the UK
- Identified by CLS as in the armed forces or as out of the survey for another reason.

Those outside the UK were technically ineligible during fieldwork, but would have been able to complete an interview online (for instance where they received an email invite). During telephone interviewing, numbers outside the UK were not called. Given the nature of the face-to-face fieldwork operation, cohort members were not generally pursued outside England, although they remained eligible to the study.

2.2 Pre-fieldwork tracing

As discussed above, the LSYPE was originally commissioned by the Department for Education and they remained the data controller after the study was brought to an end there at Wave 7. In 2013, before the study could be transferred to CLS, the DfE were required to conduct an opt-out mailing to all cohort members to provide an opportunity to decline having their contact information passed on to CLS.

In preparation for this, the previous fieldwork contractor (TNS-BMRB) worked alongside DfE to update cohort members' contact details using:

- The National Pupil Database (NPD) - containing records for all state school pupils in England, including their home address.

- The Individualised Learner Record (ILR) - containing records of students in vocational education and training post-16.

Following this sample update, DfE contacted cohort members by post to inform them of the change in management of the study from DfE to CLS. In addition to a letter and

leaflet explaining the process and informing them how they could opt-out, the mailing included a 'change of address' card.

Following receipt of the sample, CLS's cohort maintenance team sought to update the sample using a variety of means:

- The NHS Central Register; a database of GP registrations held by the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC, now NHS Digital). This database also provides information on individuals who have died or have moved out of the country. No medical information was received during this process.

- The electoral roll, phone records and postal directories, which are publicly available and accessible electronically. The specialist software 'Tracemaster' was also used.

- Individual records were continually updated following contact with cohort members, through the website, social media, e-mails, telephone calls or the return of change of address cards.

- A 'participant pack' mailing that sought to reintroduce the study and encourage cohort members to contact CLS with updated contact information.

Figure 2:1 below summarises the office tracing activities undertaken by DfE prior to handing over the sample to CLS, as well as tracing activities undertaken since the transfer by CLS, prior to Wave 8 fieldwork.

Figure 2:1   Summary of pre-fieldwork tracing prior to Wave 8
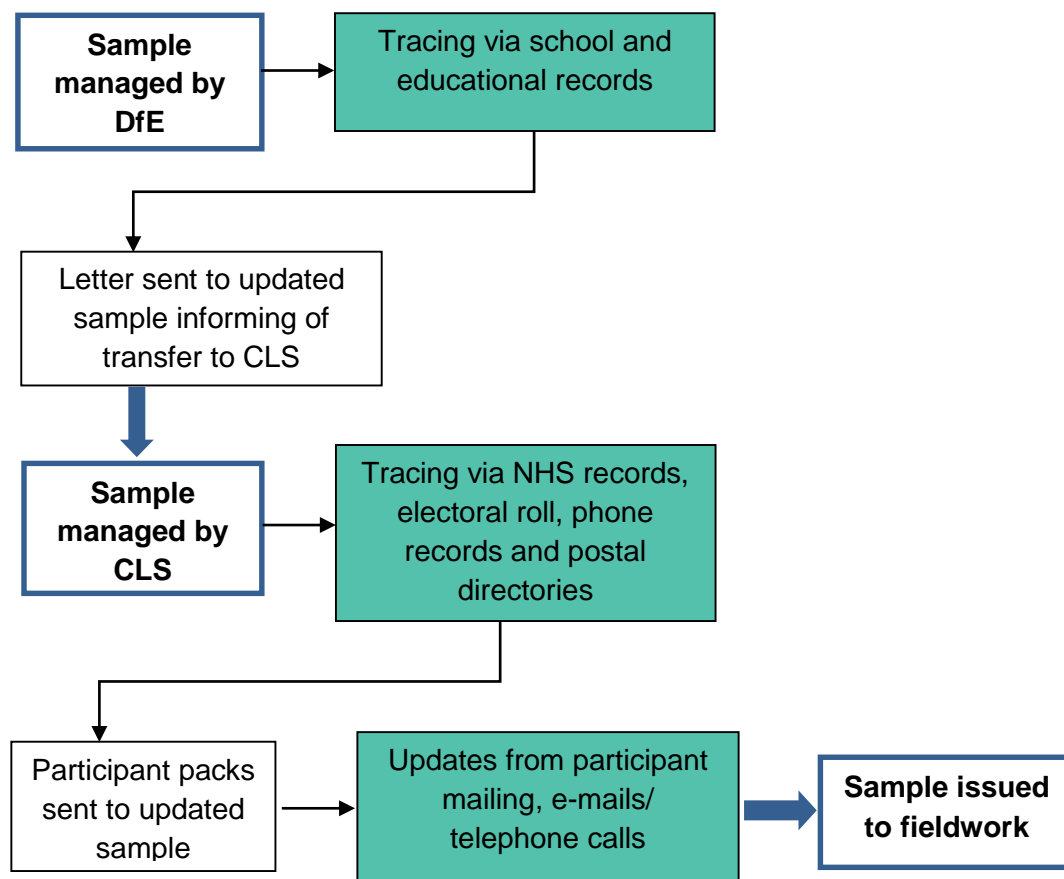
2.3 Sample files from CLS and updates during fieldwork

Complete sample files were created and delivered to NatCen by the Cohort Maintenance team at CLS. These included the most up-to-date contact information for the cohort member based on the tracing conducted to date, as well as details of the parental address, the address at last interview and the name, address and telephone number of a stable contact where available. In addition, files contained feed forward information on key characteristics and process information from previous waves.

The contact information supplied initially to NatCen was updated just before fieldwork commenced based on the response to the 'participant pack' mailing sent by CLS to all cohort members to announce the study and encourage notification of address changes (see Chapter 5).

New contact information and case status updates were fed through from CLS and into sample files at NatCen throughout fieldwork. Details of untraced movers from the field operation were sent through to CLS for office-based tracing, with updates sent back to NatCen for issue to the field where possible (see Chapter 6).

The majority of sample information updates occurred in the field as a result of tracing by interviewers and in the questionnaire itself where contact information was checked with the cohort member. In addition, sample updates were obtained via NatCen's Telephone Unit, whose Freephone number was included on advance letters and emails to cohort members.

In all cases, NatCen's sample management system ensured the latest contact information was available to all its systems and to interviewers.

2.4 Return of sample post-fieldwork

The most recent available address for both productive and unproductive cases was delivered back to CLS at the end of fieldwork. See Chapter 8.

2.5 Allocation to batches and experimental groups

Cases were divided into four batches to be released to the field in sequence to make fieldwork, particularly face-to-face fieldwork, more manageable in terms of resource required and progress monitoring.

Batch 1 was designated to be a 'soft launch' sample that would enable testing of response rates at the three modes and provide as assessment of the operation of processes (see Chapter 5). It was a smaller batch at 2,215 cases (compared with Batch 2 at 4,453 cases, Batch 3 at 4,504 cases and Batch 4 at 4,359 cases), but large enough to provide robust evidence of likely response at each mode.

To ensure an efficient face-to-face fieldwork operation, cases were first clustered into points based on the best available address information. These points were then stratified by region, population density and deprivation before random allocation to batches. Checks were then carried out to ensure the resulting profile of the batches was balanced in key individual-level characteristics.

At this batching stage, cases were also allocated to experimental groups. For the soft launch there were two experimental groups (relating to an incentive experiment and a web survey progress bar experiment – see Chapters 4 and 5). Cases were randomly allocated and checks carried out to ensure they were balanced on key characteristics. For the subsequent batches only the progress bar experiment continued, and individuals were stratified by whether they participated at Wave 7, the mode of last interview and gender before being randomly allocated.

3 Questionnaire design and implementation

3.1 Background

The content of the age 25 Next Steps questionnaire was broadened from its original focus on education. As such, an extensive review and consultation, led by CLS, was conducted in 2013 to establish topics and questions for inclusion. The consultation process was set in place to ensure a wide range of academics, data users and other stakeholders had an opportunity to highlight areas on which the study should focus and the specifics of the measures that should be carried in the questionnaire to address these. Following an initial written consultation, a consultative conference was held in December 2013 to provide an overview of the LSYPE to date, synthesise submissions from the initial written consultation, and provide delegates with an opportunity to further shape the questionnaire content. Feedback from the consultation was reviewed at CLS and a questionnaire developed for piloting.

3.2 Questionnaire coverage

The final questionnaire consisted of 11 modules covering the following topics. It was designed to last a median of 41 minutes across. The actual median interview length was 41 minutes via web, 51 minutes over the telephone and 52 minutes face-to-face (see Chapter 7).

Figure 3:1	Questionnaire coverage at Wave 8	
Module Number	Title	Content/Sub modules
1	Household relationships	• Introduction and check of contact details • Current relationship • Previous relationships • Children • Childcare • Non-resident children • Non-resident parents • Other household members
2	Housing	• Current housing • Previous housing
3	Employment	• Current Activity • Current Employment • Second job • Prospective employment (for unemployed) • Activity history • Employment Details for first job after September 2006 (aged 16)

		• Employment support • Work attitudes • Partner employment
4	Finance	• Current pay/salary main job • Pay from second job • Income from other jobs • Partner income • Benefits • Income from other sources • Household income • Pensions • Debt
5	Education and Job Training	• Job training • Education since previous interview/September 2006 • Current education • Fees • Partner education
6	Health and Wellbeing	• General health • Height and weight • Exercise • Sleep • Diet • Accidents and Injury
7	Identity and Participation	• Ethnic Group • Religion • Social Networks • Trust • Risk • Patience • Meritocratic beliefs • Adult identity • Leisure • Politics • Social Media
8	Self-completion	• Self-completion instructions • Gender identity • Locus of control • Overall life satisfaction • GHQ-12 • Self-harm • Crime and harassment • Drinking behaviour

		- Smoking behaviour - Drugs - Bullying - Sexual behaviour - Pregnancy history
9	Data Linkage	Confirmation of consent to link with records held by the following organisations: - National Health Service (NHS) - Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) - Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) - NI number - Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) - Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) - Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) - Department for Education (DfE) - Student Loans Company (SLC) - Ministry of Justice (MOJ)
10	Future Contact Details	- Partner contact details - Stable contact details - Future address details if due to move
11	Administration	- Choice of voucher - Thank-you and close

3.3 Questionnaire amendments for multimode context

The Next Steps CAI (Computed Assisted Interviewing) instrument was programmed using IBM Data Collection software.[1] It was programmed to refer to information contained within a sample file, including sample and questionnaire data from previous waves and variables specific to this wave (for example experimental group allocations).

All three modes were programmed using the same software in order to facilitate the smooth movement of sample information, updates, and questionnaire data between web, telephone, and face-to-face interviews.

Considerable design effort was expended in the development of the specification to ensure that questions carried would not be overly affected by mode effects (a 'uni-mode' design approach). Following the consultation process, CLS provided NatCen with an initial questionnaire specification. This was reviewed by the NatCen research team, including researchers specialising in questionnaire design. As part of this review,

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[1] Now known as 'Unicom Intelligence'.

focus was given to adapting questions to be mode-appropriate, but also to minimise variance across modes (as opposed to being 'optimised' for each mode), and as much as possible reflect the 'original' question wording.

For this reason, variations between questions for each mode were relatively modest, being mostly limited to variations in interviewer instructions to show a card or read out, and variations in question wording to assist web self-completion.

Once these suggestions had been made, the questionnaire specifications were returned to CLS for review and comments. This process was repeated until the questionnaire specification was signed off by CLS.

3.4   Web survey visual design

Branding

The visual design of the web survey was set up to follow the Next Steps brand guidelines as far as possible, including the use of brand logos, font, and colour scheme. This enhanced the visual appeal and provided an integrated appearance across the participant-facing elements of the study and also served to re-assure cohort members that they were answering questions as part of the official study. Branding as part of efforts to maximise response is discussed further in section 5.3.1.

Page layout

These brand guidelines were then applied to the questionnaire using NatCen's web questionnaire style guide, and reviewed and amended in conjunction with CLS. The basic layout of web pages consisted of a white background with coloured banners at the top and bottom of the screen which contained study logos and help links. The question text and response options are displayed on the white background, aligned to the left, with a large 'Next' button and smaller 'Back' button below. Instructions for how to complete a question (e.g. 'Please select all that apply' for a multi-code question) were displayed beneath the question text. To assist with accessibility, a button was included on the screen to allow participants to alter the size of text on the screen. For cohort members shown a progress bar as part of the progress bar experiment, this was displayed to the right of the screen (see Section 3.5.4).

Figure 3:2   Web survey visual design, including progress bar

Question types

The Next Steps questionnaire displayed questions in a number of ways depending on the question format:

- Single-code answer options were listed vertically with radio buttons to the left.
- Multi-code answer options were also listed vertically with tick boxes to the left.
- Grid questions listed a series of questions vertically to the left of the screen. Radio buttons were then presented to the right of them along a row, with answer options shown above as column headings. Each grid row was shaded to allow easy reading across the page.
- Where an 'other (specify)' category was included in a set of options (be it a single-code, multi-code, or grid question), a text box was displayed to the right of the answer option to allow the cohort member to expand upon their answers.
- Open-code questions (be they text or numeric) were displayed as a text box below the question text. For text answers the initial size of the box reflected the anticipated length of the answer, although these could be expanded if required. Where applicable, text boxes for numeric answers would have units displayed either side (for example a '£' symbol). Where multiple units were required, these were split over two answer boxes (e.g. 'Feet' and 'Inches' separately when recording height).
- Answer scales were either purely text-based, where cohort members entered a numeric answer into a number box, or employed a visual scale with numbered points and labelled endpoints, where cohort members selected an answer using radio buttons.
- Date variables were asked as three separate questions on the same page, asking day (number box), month (drop-down menu) and year (number box). For some questions which involved recalling a set of historical dates, this

information was then presented on an Event History Calendar (see Section 3.5.2).

'Don't know' and 'Prefer not to say' options

In some instances (for example where questions were identified as sensitive), the 'Don't know' or 'Refusal' answer options were presented up-front. However, for most questions, these options were not shown up-front and only appeared if the cohort member clicked 'Next' without providing an answer. They appear in blue text, and an error message would appear stating "Please provide an answer or select 'Don't know' or 'Prefer not to say'".

Soft and hard checks

Soft and hard checks occurred when an unexpected answer (as defined by researchers) was given by a participant (for example an answer that was unexpectedly large or small, or which did not make sense in the context of previous answers). When triggered, an appropriate error message appeared in blue at the top of the screen. For hard checks, participants needed to amend their answer to proceed, whereas soft checks asked participants to confirm that their answer was correct.

Help links and screens

For certain questions, help links were included in blue underlined text, below the question text, to allow cohort members to find out more information to help them answer a question. If clicked on, these would open a pop-up with more information relevant to the question.

3.5   Special elements

The Next Steps CAI instrument also included a number of specific features aimed at improving the data collection process:

- A keyword look-up for coding occupation.
- An Event History Calendar (EHC).
- Sensitive questions module.
- A progress bar for web.
- Embedded videos in web and face-to-face.

Their implementation is described in more detail in the remaining sections of this chapter.

3.5.1 Occupation coding during the interview

For the Next Steps questionnaire, an in-interview method of capturing and coding participants' occupation to the detailed four-digit SOC (Standard Occupation Code SOC2010) was developed. A text-based search and coding system using the whole SOC codeframe as a look-up file was added to the questionnaire, allowing participants (in web) or interviewers (in face-to-face or telephone) to enter key words to search for the SOC code that was most appropriate to them. Figure 3:3 provides a screenshot of the approach: the interviewer has typed in the terms 'secondary school teacher' and obtained a short list of related codes from which to select (taking away a search term word would result in a longer list).

The rationale for this new approach was that by coding 'in field', interviewers could probe for (or participants would be prompted to provide) more information to produce a correct code should it not be provided initially (which cannot be done with office coding of open-text answers). This was seen to be particularly pertinent given the mixed-mode design of Next Steps, where, in the absence of an interviewer to probe for further details in web mode, the open text descriptions could otherwise be insufficient to enable (fully accurate) office coding.

Figure 3:3   Occupational coding example screenshot (CAPI version)

3.5.2 Event history calendar

Another specific feature developed for the CAI instrument was the Event History Calendar (EHC), a tool that created a visual timeline of the participant's life as life events (marriages, cohabitations, changes in employment status, address changes) were entered into the questionnaire. The intended purpose of the EHC was to give the participant visual points of reference for different aspects of their life and enable them to better remember the dates of events being asked about in the questionnaire. These reached back to September 2006). As the participant answered a particular question (for example when they started living at a particular address), the calendar would automatically update to display the event in relation to their age, the date, and other events they had already coded. Once the event was in the calendar, they could move, extend, or shorten the events by clicking and dragging the ends of the bars.

To assist participants, an instructional video was developed to help participants to use the EHC (see section 3.5.5), and a summary page created once all events had been recorded that asked participants to review the event dates and make any amendments directly into the calendar if necessary.

Figure 3:4   Event history calendar screenshot (web)

3.5.3 Sensitive questions module

Module 8 of the questionnaire contained more sensitive questions best suited for self-completion, with a further subset of particularly sensitive questions.

For those completing online, these questions were completed as a self-completion (as with the rest of the interview). In interviewer-administered modes, however, the method of administration changed.

For those taking part in a face-to-face interview, the sensitive questions module was offered for participants to complete by themselves on the laptop, in Computer-Assisted Self-Interviewing (CASI) mode. If a participant had visual/technical issues with using the CASI or preferred not to do it themselves, the interviewer was able to administer this module in the ordinary CAPI mode. For this section, the visual layout of the questionnaire made use of the web layout template (as opposed to the keyboard data entry template used by interviewers). At the end of the CASI section, the instructions on the screen asked the respondent to return the laptop to the interviewer, who needed to enter their interviewer ID number to lock the CASI answers and continue with the rest of the questionnaire.

In the telephone mode, all participants were asked the sensitive questions over the phone following testing during the pilot (see section 4.3.3). In order to avoid others in the household overhearing responses, the approach here was to have interviewers read options out in full and have participants say 'yes' or 'no' at each option rather than ask them to say the answer out loud.

For all modes, for the 'very sensitive' questions (which included drug use, self-harm, contact with the criminal justice system, bullying, sexual behaviour and pregnancies), 'Don't know' and 'Prefer not to say' options were presented up-front to participants to ensure it was clear that they did not have to answer these questions.[2] Those

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[2] In the rest of the questionnaire, these answer options are only shown if the question was left blank – see section 3.4.

interviewed by telephone received a short introduction that listed the questions coming up.

3.5.4 Progress bar experiment

It is common practice for web surveys to include an indicator of progress, with the aim of reducing rates of break-off during the interview. There is some suggestion that surveys that indicate how much of a questionnaire has been completed (e.g. "question 10 of 30" or "33% complete") may lower response rates, but evidence on progress bars that give a more general sense of progress, by listing questionnaire sections and which have been completed, is more mixed. Due to this, and the fact that the Next Steps questionnaire is heavily routed (making any per cent completion figure potentially misleading), the Next Steps questionnaire was designed to include a progress bar to the right of the screen that listed the modules included, and the module currently being completed.

The initial inclusion of the progress bar in the pilot survey and user testing did not provide sufficient evidence on the impact of the progress bar on completion rates. It was therefore decided to run a split sample experiment during the mainstage questionnaire in order to have sufficient sample size to pick up differences to test the impact of the progress bar. Half of the issued sample was shown the progress bar, and half the sample was not. The aim was to review the early data from the soft launch, and if the data suggested the progress bar was having a significant effect one way or another to adjust the approach accordingly for the remaining waves of fieldwork (or if not, continue the experiment). An error in the sample allocation early in fieldwork meant that all cases were initially assigned to the group that did not see the progress bar. Adjusting for this, the early soft launch data did not show a significant or sizeable impact of showing or not showing the progress bar, so the experiment was continued for the remaining batches.

3.5.5 Embedded videos

A number of videos were developed to be embedded in the questionnaire.

EHC instruction video

One of the recommendations based on the feedback from the pilot and user testing was that a video should be developed to instruct participants how to use the EHC. This video was developed by NatCen to demonstrate the functionality of the EHC to participants to help them to use it and was embedded at the start of the questionnaire, and to explain why it is being used. It was also used as a tool for briefing interviewers on the EHC.

The video was kept as short as possible, with key information included up front. It consisted of a screen capture video of someone using different aspects of the calendar with voice-over instructions explaining the different features. A copy of the video can be accessed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7VSGJIje0U.

Figure 3:5   Embedded video screenshot
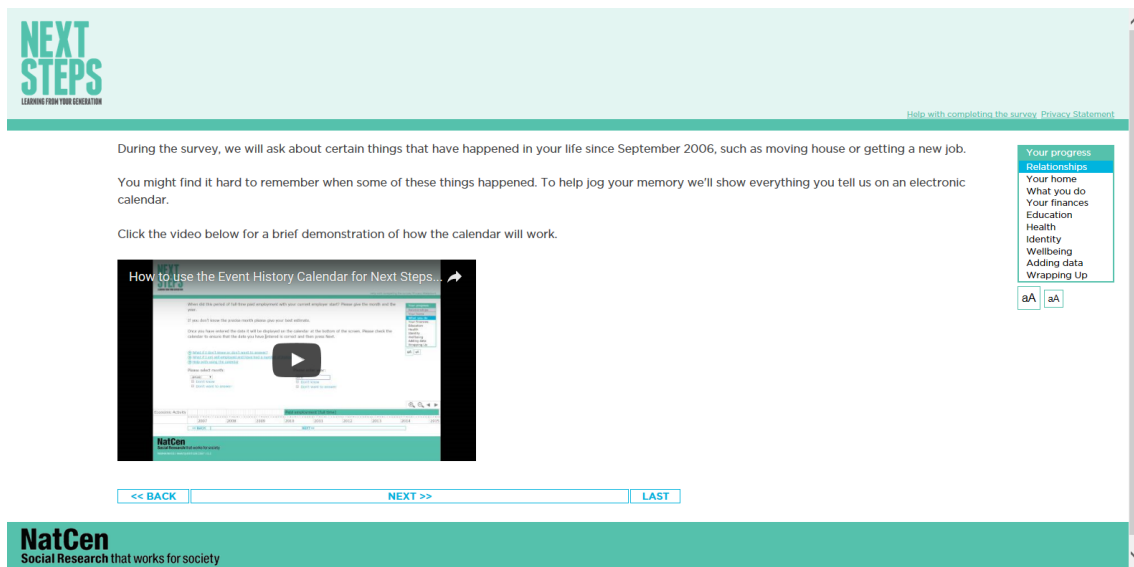
Data linkage video

A data linkage video was also developed to inform Next Steps cohort members about the data linkage process, and to encourage them to consent to data linkage. As well as being referenced in advance materials and hosted on the Next Steps participant website (see section 5.3), the video was embedded in the questionnaire itself at the start of the data linkage module. This allowed a further prompting for participants completing in web mode to view the video, and also allowed face-to-face interviewers and extra resource to encourage participants to provide informed consent to data linkage. It was also be used as a tool for briefing interviewers on the data linkage process.

A copy of the video can be accessed at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6ZuK3lYW6Y

3.6 Data linkage

In Module 9 of the Next Steps CAI, participants were asked for consent to link their survey answers to nine different administrative data sources, held by a number of different government departments and non-governmental bodies, extending and adding to the linkage already consented to in previous waves (such as to the National Pupil Database (NPD)):

- Student Loans Company (SLC) covering amount of taken out in loans and institution attended.
- The records kept by the Department for Education (DfE) about school participation and attainment and pupil characteristics.
- The records kept by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) include information about participation in further education and attainment.
- Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) covering university participation and attainment.
- Universities and College Admissions Service (UCAS) covering higher education applications and offers.

- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) holding information on benefit and employment programs.
- Her Majesty's customs and Revenue (HMRC) covering employment, earnings, tax credits, occupational pensions and National Insurance Contributions.
- Health records held by the NHS including Primary Care data covering visits to family doctor and other health professionals and Hospital Episode Statistics (HES) covering admissions and attendance at hospital.
- Records held by the Ministry of Justice in the Police National Computer (PNC) records covering arrests, cautions and sentences.

Respondents who consented to either DWP or HMRC linkage were also asked for their National Insurance number (NINO).

A three stage process (pre, during and post interview) was followed to elicit informed consent as described in section 4.2.3. During the interview, following an introduction page, consents were recorded directly into the CAI instrument, recorded in the following ways for each mode:

- Web mode: participants recorded their consent at questions within the self-completion CAI instrument.
- Telephone mode: consent was provided verbally by participants over the telephone and recorded in the CAI instrument by the interviewer.
- Face-to-face mode: consent was provided verbally by participants in the face-to-face interview and recorded in the CAI instrument by the interviewer.

4 Development work

This chapter sets out the work carried out prior to the main stage of fieldwork to establish the most effective design and implementation for some of the innovative and more challenging elements of the study. It also details the testing undertaken to ensure the fielded instrument worked as anticipated.

4.1 User testing

User testing was undertaken by CLS and NatCen specifically to review web-self completion. A total of 11 cognitive interviews took place with participants aged 23 to 27 years recruited by a specialist agency. The aims of this testing were to:

- Explore participants' reaction to the overall presentation and functionality of the Next Steps web instrument.

- Establish whether participants look at and use an Event History Calendar (EHC) when inputting historical data about themselves.

- Explore the use of the new SIC/SOC look-up questions, for instance whether participants are able to find a suitable code when entering a key word and scrolling through a long list.

- Explore the ease of completing a range of different question types.

The interviews were conducted by NatCen researchers at the Interaction lab at City University, London. Participants were asked to complete a shortened version of the Next Steps web questionnaire whilst eye-tracking equipment recorded what they looked at. Participants were then shown a video of the screen elements they looked at, and used retrospective 'think-aloud' to elucidate why they looked (or did not look) at certain things and how the design of web questionnaire could be improved. A semi-structured protocol (with suggested probes) was used to guide the interview and to ensure the research objectives were addressed.

NatCen provided a full report to CLS on the user testing (unpublished) and findings were then fed into the design of the mainstage instrument and processes. Some of the findings and recommendations included:

- Participants were generally positive about the overall presentation and functionality of the Next Steps web instrument. Some suggested changes included making the login codes more prominent in the advance letter, making permanent links in the questionnaire larger, and providing a clear option for changing font size.

- The EHC was problematic and not used by any of the participants. Suggested improvements included changes to the EHC navigation icons, which participants confused for questionnaire navigation icons, and the inclusion of an instruction video (as opposed to just text) to help with the completion of the EHC.

- Participants generally found answering the historic date questions difficult and burdensome, be this due to sensitivity (in the case of relationships), a large number of changes and difficulty recalling specific dates (in the case of places

lived), or having multiple, overlapping activities (in the case of the main economic activity).

- The SOC/SIC self-coding approach was viable from a user-experience point of view. It was recommended that more could be done to encourage participants to refine their search with multiple words and open responses should be collected from those who cannot find a suitable code.

- Most other question types were found to work as intended. Recommendations included enlarging the 'clickable area' around radio buttons on grid questions, and present DK/REF options outside of drop-down menus.

4.2 Data linkage consent process

As described in section 3.6, in Module 9 of the Next Steps CAI, participants were asked for consent to link their survey answers to nine different administrative data sources, held by a number of different government departments and non-governmental bodies. There was a particular focus on ensuring *informed* consent, maximising consent rates, and ensuring the procedures worked across web, telephone and face-to-face modes. This was a challenge given the large number of consents being asked for with no defined date for when consent will cease, and the fact that they were both retrospective and prospective. Given the potential value of the data to the study this led to a substantial development process being undertaken. In addition, CLS carried out extensive liaison with the data holders regarding the consent materials and processes, and all participant materials and operational procedures were approved by an ethical committee (see section 5.1).

4.2.1 Qualitative process development work

In September 2014, NatCen conducted 20 qualitative interviews with individuals aged 23-27 to explore issues concerning data linkage. The study set out to answer the following five research questions:

1. Do the data linkage consent materials promote understanding of data linkage?

2. Is the proposed protocol *acceptable* to participants (i.e. consent 'at the click of a button', consent to a wide range of linkages, and email versus written confirmation of consent letter) and is this *feasible* (i.e. do the participants understand what is expected of them and can they complete the tasks)?

3. Taken together, do the current materials and protocol elicit informed consent – especially for web mode where there is no interviewer support?

4. How can the participant (and interviewer) experience of the data linkage protocol be best supported?

5. Do factors such as question placement and framing impact on consent propensity amongst this group and how can consent rates be maximised and response bias be minimised?

NatCen provided a report to CLS, unpublished, which was considered alongside the pilot findings in the development of the mainstage instrument and processes. The research found that the proposed protocol of receiving an advance mailing including information about data linkage, recording consent depending on mode of interview, and receiving consent confirmation post-interview was generally acceptable, although some concerns were raised around:

- Recording consent at the 'click of a button'
- Whether participants were aware of the 'prospective' nature of consent
- The lack of support when completing in web mode

The level of comprehension of the questions was generally high, and tended to increase as more questions were asked, although it varied between participants. However, whether this increased or decreased the likelihood of consent varied between participants. Participants reported preferring positively worded introduction to the question - emphasising the benefits of data linkage - rather than a negatively worded introduction which emphasised loss when consent is not given. Although not impacting on consent, the placement of consent questions later in the questionnaire was preferred as it was felt that then participants would know what they were linking to.

Participants generally felt that the data linkage leaflet, to be sent with the advance mailing, was well-designed and easy to understand. In particular, sections which were participant-centred, or used examples. However, some sections were felt to be vague or inconsistent in their wording and needed to be addressed.

4.2.2 Pilot testing

Alongside initial qualitative testing, the process for collecting consents to data linkage was examined across modes at the pilot stage (see section 0 for a description of the pilot approach and timing). A three-step process was adopted for the pilot. Firstly, prior to the interview, a leaflet was sent with an advance letter, providing details of the purpose and process of data linking. Secondly, individual consents were obtained during the interview. Thirdly, after the interview, participants were sent the details of the consents provided by letter or email (see Figure 4:1). Although this three-step process worked well, a number of potential improvements were identified, including:

- The introduction page and text for each consent question were felt to be too long and repetitive. As well as being burdensome for participants, interviewers noted that participants actually seemed to disengage, meaning they may end up less informed.
- There were issues where participants had not received (and therefore read) the advance mailing leaflet, which was required to progress through to later questions, disrupting the interview.
- Some consents were not given as the participant did not think they applied to them (e.g. MOJ or SLC records)

4.2.3 Materials development

A number of materials were developed to help ensure participants were able to give informed consent and to encourage high response rates. The text for these was developed by CLS in conjunction with NatCen and Data Holders, with final design being implemented by NatCen in line with the Next Steps branding (or by an external agency in the case of the video). The materials were updated following feedback from the qualitative testing and pilot.

'Adding information about you' leaflet
The adding data leaflet is a 16 side A5 leaflet which was included in the advance mailing sent at the start of each batch of fieldwork, with a digital version available on the Next Steps participant website. This leaflet gave information on the purpose, types, value and process of data linkage and encouraged study members to contact the study team, free of charge, with any questions they might have.

It aimed to provide study members with the information they needed to:

- Make an informed decision about whether to consent to data linkage,
- Understand that participation in the study is not dependent on providing consent to data linkage,
- Understand that providing consent to data linkage is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time,
- Understand the purpose and value of data linkage and,
- Understand that the linked data will not include the personal details such as name, address, sex and date of birth (that are needed to establish the link).

Pages of the leaflet were also referenced within the CAI to allow participants (or interviewers) to look up information to answer particular questions.

Interviewer information sheet
NatCen interviewers were provided with a 2-sided, laminated A4 sheet covering a range of 'FAQs', such as 'Why is adding data important?', or 'How will the information be used?'. The Interviewer information sheet was intended to provide face-to-face and telephone interviewers and the NatCen Freephone team with information needed to address questions and concerns that arose during fieldwork from participants, without necessarily going into the detail of the information included in the 'adding information about you' leaflet.

Data linkage video
A data linkage video was also developed to inform Next Steps cohort members about the data linkage process, and to encourage them to consent to data linkage.

The online version was hosted on YouTube, embedded in the Next Steps participant website and signposted in the 'adding data' leaflet. As well as being available online, interviewers were able to show it to face-to-face participants on their devices.
The video used 2D animation and was designed to be used across UCL studies, rather than being specific to Next Steps.

The video included the following elements of content:

- What is adding data?
- Why this is helpful.
- How the process works.

The engagement and data linkage videos were developed by NatCen and CLS in collaboration with external agencies.

Thank you letter/email
On a weekly basis, all participants who fully completed the Next Steps questionnaire were sent a thank you letter and email. As well as saying thank you, providing their chosen voucher, and including a 'change of details card', this mailing contained information on whether and which of the nine data holding departments' and agencies' data they had agreed to add to their survey data, and whether they provided their NI number. It also reminded participants that consent was valid until they withdraw it and how to do so if they wanted to. It provided CLS contact details for questions relating to data linkage or other aspects of Next Steps.

4.2.4 Final approach

Following the pilot and qualitative testing, a number of amendments were made to the process of asking for consent to data linkage, in particular to the content of the CAI:

- A video was developed as an alternative method to inform participants about the data linkage process (section 4.2.3).
- A single combined education consent question was adopted covering three education sources.
- The question asking participants to confirm that they had read the information booklet ahead of being asked to give consent was removed and replaced with a question *after* the consents were given asking participants to confirm that they had been provided with all the information required, and they understood the consents would remain valid unless they were withdrawn.
- Help screens were added to each of the pages of consent questions to allow participants/interviewers to access more detailed information (e.g. 'Which records would you like to add?', 'What do these records include?', 'Why is it helpful to add this information?').
- A review page was added following the consent questions to allow participants to review and amend any of the consents they had provided.

Figure 4:1 provides an overview of the consent process.

Figure 4:1   Summary of consent process during fieldwork

Start of fieldwork
- Leaflet in advance mailing containing purpose of data linking and linking process

During interview
- Web mode: Participants record their consent within the questionnaire
- Telephone and face-to-face modes: Participants provide consent verbally to the interviewer who codes in the CAI

Post interview
- Participants sent confirmation of their consents by post or email and option of changing these provided

4.3 Piloting

4.3.1 Piloting approach

The purpose of the pilot was primarily to test the questionnaire, with key issues examined including questionnaire length, functioning of the survey instrument across different modes, functioning of questions (in terms of comprehension and ease of answering), and the protocols for seeking consents for data linkage. In addition, in the absence of a separate dress rehearsal, the pilot also presents the only live fieldwork opportunity for gaining feedback on participant engagement strategies, other survey protocols and fieldwork materials. For this reason, the pilot fieldwork design and materials were developed to be as close to those for the mainstage survey as possible.

A limitation to this was the necessary dissimilarity between the pilot and mainstage samples and the core fieldwork design. The pilot sample was freshly recruited by NatCen interviewers to avoid using valuable cohort members; it therefore did not have the longitudinal characteristics of the main sample. In addition, the pilot used a concurrent mixed mode design: web, telephone and face-to-face fieldwork took part at the same time.

Pilot timings

The pilot fieldwork was originally scheduled to launch in August 2014. However, owing to the problems experienced by NatCen in using IBM Data Collection software for interviewing in the telephone and face-to-face modes in particular, there were significant delays with the development of the CAI instrument resulting in a two-month delay to fieldwork launch meaning that it took place in October/November 2014. The delays were chiefly related to the development of the Event History Calendar, the facility for keyboard data entry for NatCen telephone and face-to-face interviewers, and issues with the speed of progressing through the questionnaire with face-to-face interviewer devices.

Table 4:1 Pilot fieldwork dates			
			Next Steps Age 25 Pilot
Mode	Fieldwork start	Fieldwork end	Duration (days)
Web	21/10/14	23/11/14	34
Telephone	25/10/14	23/11/14	30
Face-to-face	30/10/14	19/11/14	21

Maximising pilot response

Each recruited person was initially offered to take part in just one of the three modes. Towards the end of fieldwork, to boost response, some mode transfers were offered by email to sample members in particular circumstances: those who had specifically requested to take part in one of the other modes (mostly web), out-of-area movers in the face-to-face sample, and in the last week of fieldwork to all other non-contacts in face-to-face and telephone modes.

In addition, towards the latter half of the web fieldwork, when response was lower than hoped, NatCen telephone interviewers conducted a 'telephone chasing' of calls to web partials and non-respondents to encourage full participation in the web mode.

It was agreed to offer pilot participants a choice of four age-appropriate vouchers: Amazon e-voucher or Argos, iTunes or Pizza Hut voucher. The incentive level was initially set at £20, but increased to £30 to mitigate against the potential negative effect of the delayed fieldwork launch on response rates.

The main contact points for each participant for the pilot can be summarised as:

1. **Pre-fieldwork**: Advance mailing – sent in a brown, branded envelope, with a letter and two information leaflets, informing of their mode and the next steps. An 'advance text message' was sent the day after to draw attention to the mailing and the increased incentive (particularly of benefit to those who have moved and may not have received the mailing).

2. **During fieldwork**: For telephone and face-to-face modes, interviewers made contact; for web mode, an advance email and further reminder letters and emails were sent to those not yet productive at specific points during fieldwork.

3. **Post-fieldwork**: Productive participants were sent their voucher and confirmations of consents by either email (Amazon vouchers) or by post within two weeks of their interview.

Participants were also provided with a project email address (monitored by the NatCen research team), Freephone number (monitored from within the NatCen Telephone Unit) and a postal address for getting in touch at any point with their questions.

Pilot response rates

Response rates were not expected to provide a strong estimate of that for the main stage due to the differences in sample and data collection design. However, the pilot would provide an indication of the relative performance of each mode and the difficulties of making contact and encouraging participation. The numbers achieved at each mode and the response rates are provided in Table 4:2. These suggest that the face-to-face mode would be the most effective in maximising response, but that web response would be relatively strong.

Table 4:2 Pilot response by mode of data collection				
Base: all issued pilot sample		**Mode**		
		Web	**Tel**	**F2F**
Fully productive	Count	35	33	28
	%	39%	42%	65%
Partially productive	Count	5	3	0
	%	6%	4%	0%
Unproductive	Count	50	43	15
	%	56%	54%	35%
Total	*Count*	*90*	*79*	*43*

4.3.2 Pilot questionnaire timings

The pilot questionnaire was planned to take an average of 55 minutes, with the target of 45 minutes for the mainstage, with the actual timings a key area for the pilot to assess.

The average fully-productive questionnaire (modules 1–10 only) lasted slightly over 61 minutes. However, the interview length varied somewhat by mode. Participants filling in the survey with a face-to-face interviewer completed the survey quickest on average, followed by those completing it online, and those completing the survey over the telephone taking the longest amount of time. Although the mean length was around 61 minutes, the standard deviation was approximately 23 minutes. Different modes, interviewers, and combinations of circumstances could make the interview much longer or shorter. For web, the average was 62 minutes, for telephone it was 66 minutes and for face-to-face it was 57 minutes.

Of the 96 participants that completed the questionnaire, in answering the overall feedback questions on questionnaire length at the end of the CAI interview, the majority assessed that the questionnaire was about the right length (77%), with some feeling it was too long (19%), and a minority (4%) thought that it was not long enough.

Interviewers felt that where participants were frustrated by the questionnaire length it was sometimes because it had gone over the predicted length, and they could not accurately estimate how long was left.

Overall, participants found questions easy to answer, with 95 per cent finding it very easy or fairly easy to answer questions. No face-to-face participants indicated that they found it difficult to answer the questions, as compared with nine per cent of telephone participants, and six per cent of web participants.

Some key themes that came out of question feedback:

- Some of the key date questions were very challenging to answer – participants could not necessarily easily or accurately recall past events.
- Participants also found it difficult to answer some of the financial questions.
- Questions about other people were problematic. Participants were sensitive about giving details about people who had not themselves agreed to take part in the questionnaire, and did not see how these were relevant.
- Participants found it especially frustrating when questions became repetitive – either where they went through loops of the same questions (e.g. historical dates), where questions were similar with small differences (e.g. help from parents/friends and family or unfolding brackets), or where questions used repetitive answer categories (e.g. GHQ-12).
- Where there were questions that were worded similarly, but with small differences, these were recommended to be made more explicit, or combined (e.g. on/off the job training; help from parents/friends).
- Interviewer feedback was that the 'sensitive' questions were not generally problematic, although some participants fed-back that the questionnaire (overall) was quite intrusive.

Considerable cuts were made to the questionnaire to bring it down to the required level for main stage fieldwork, with guidance provided by the pilot feedback and timings.

4.3.3 Key findings on special elements

The pilot provided valuable information about the process of each of the modes, including the web invitation and login procedures and CAPI and CATI briefings. Detailed recommendations regarding the questionnaire were provided and specific recommendations fed into the main stage design. These included the type of incentive vouchers to adopt, that text messages be adopted in the reminder approach and that interviewers should be enabled to use text messages and email in the contact

attempts. Findings related to the data linking consent process are discussed in section 4.2.

In addition, some specific features of the instrument were tested.

SOC and SIC coding

An initial experiment was run during the pilot to test for general feasibility and potential impact on data quality of in-interview coding of Standard Occupation Coding (SOC) and Standard Industry Classification (SIC) by asking participants/interviewers to complete both a new 'look-up' version of the question and the established open-text approach (to be coded in the office).

Feedback from interviewers and the user testing (section 4.1) suggested that the process was practically feasible for occupations coding. Data from the pilot suggested that the look-up option had the potential to generate better quality data over in-office coding and was generally found relatively user-friendly, with some exceptions for particular occupations.

However, SIC coding proved to be far more complex to code, and it was felt more development work would be required for this to be feasible.

Following a few amendments based on user feedback, the look-up approach was therefore implemented for the collection of SOC data, with an option given to say 'job not in list' and therefore provide an open-text answer to be office coded if necessary. However, for SIC, only the open-text question was asked.

EHC development

The Event History Calendar (EHC) was initially tested as part of the user testing (section 4.1), and questions about how it was used were asked of web participants and interviewers in the pilot. Interviewers and participants were not particularly positive about the EHC as a feature of the CAI instrument. It tended not to be used in the interview, although interviewers reported that they could imagine that situations may arise where it would be useful.

Following feedback from the pilot, a number of tweaks were made to the EHC, and the questions it related to, to make them more user-friendly. This included the icons used and the way dates displayed at different zoom levels, as well as a simplification of the level of information collected. As well as this, an instructional video was developed to help participants to use the EHC (see section 3.5.5), and a summary page created that allowed participants to review event dates.

Sensitive questions section

Module 8 of the questionnaire contained more sensitive questions best suited for self-completion. The approach tested in the pilot for web (self-completion as elsewhere in the questionnaire) and face-to-face modes (self-completion on the laptop or interviewer-administered in instances of visual or literacy problems) proved successful and was implemented unchanged in the main stage (see section 3.5.3).

In the telephone mode in the pilot, all participants were asked the first set of sensitive questions over the phone. Two approaches were then trialled for the administration of some 'very sensitive' questions (for instance including self-harm, see section 3.5.3 for a list of these questions). Participants were informed about the areas that the next

section questions would cover, with a part of the sample asked whether they would be happy to complete these questions over the phone (it was noted that they did not have to answer anything they preferred not to) – the approach adopted in previous waves of Next Steps also for these very sensitive questions. Others, in the first instance, were offered the option to answer these questions privately by completing a separate web questionnaire, with an email invitation to the web survey sent to those willing to do so.

There was a strong preference for telephone completion, rather than web completion – all those asked over the phone completed the module and there was no feedback that these were felt to be too sensitive. For those offered to complete over the web, 15 out of 25 spontaneously requested to complete on the phone instead (and did so), and only two of 10 participants that agreed to take part online actually completed the web questionnaire. Due to a technical issue, these participants were initially unable to access the web questionnaire which will likely have lowered the rates of completion.

For the mainstage, the protocols for administering the sensitive questions in web and face-to-face modes were not altered. For telephone, due to the feedback that the questions were not found to be sensitive over the phone, and the lower response rate/technical vulnerabilities associated with multi-mode administration, only telephone completion was offered to those completing the rest of the interview on the phone.

4.4 Instrument testing

In this section we detail the testing approach for the instrument. In particular, the web instrument required specific and extensive testing to ensure it worked as anticipated across a range of devices and platforms.

4.4.1 Web-based testing against questionnaire specification

The first (and principal) area of testing consisted of checking that the CAI instrument matched the mainstage questionnaire specification. The testing included checking:

- Wording: e.g. of questions, answer categories, help screens, soft/hard checks.
- Routing: e.g. textfills, questions, soft/hard checks and loops.
- Layout: e.g. grids, hidden vs visible Don't know/Refusal codes, bespoke question layouts, colour scheme, logos, etc.
- Features: e.g. permanent links (FAQs, Privacy statement, etc.), progress bar, next & back buttons.

The CAI instrument was initially programed on a modular basis to facilitate efficient testing, and once signed off, integrated to allow testing of routing dependent on answers in earlier modules. The test questionnaire version was hosted on the IBM DC staging (non-live) server, accessible via a web link and used a dummy sample file, with a facility to amend the values of the input sample variables prior to the commencement of testing, to enable testing of questions with dependent interviewing or routing related to sample variables.

Testing of each module was initially carried out by NatCen researchers, with any errors addressed then re-tested. Once a module was signed off internally by NatCen researchers, it was passed on to CLS for review and final sign-off. Any errors or further specification changes identified by CLS during testing were passed back to NatCen for implementation, internal re-testing, and re-delivery to CLS.

4.4.2 Accessibility testing

The visual appearance of a web questionnaire can be impacted by the device on which it is being accessed on. In case of the Next Steps, a number of complex features (for example the Event History Calendar or embedded videos) meant that it was particularly susceptible to variations by device. Once a first version of a module had been signed off internally by NatCen, the web questionnaire was reviewed in-office by NatCen researchers to test how it displayed in different environments using BrowserStack to simulate these environments. Screenshots of any potential issues were sent to CLS for review and once a decision about any actions required was agreed, the changes to be made were passed on to NatCen programmers to be implemented and re-tested as above.

The questionnaire was tested in multiple different environments:

- Android, Apple, and Windows tablets and laptops.
- The 7 most-used screen resolutions.
- 19 most-used combinations of browser and operating systems, encompassing:
    - Internet Explorer (8-11); Google Chrome (v39-42); Safari v8; Firefox (v34-37); Opera
    - Windows XP, Vista, 7, 8, 8.1; Yosemite; Android; Apple OS.

Smartphone devices were not tested as they were not eligible to be used. However, testing was conducted to ensure the correct error messages appeared if accessing the questionnaire was attempted via a smartphone.

4.4.3 Interface testing for telephone and face-to-face mode

NatCen telephone and face-to-face interviewers accessed the questionnaire differently to cohort member self-completing online (within the IBM DC telephone interviewing environment, and through their interviewing tablet device respectively), with distinct features (for example a 'keyboard entry' facility). For this purpose, a separate questionnaire layout, programmed and run using HTML5 code, was used in the face-to-face and telephone modes instead of the web layout. Additional testing was therefore conducted to check that the questionnaire ran smoothly in the HTML5 layout, in both modes.

4.4.4 Early data checks

Once mainstage fieldwork had begun, checks were run on the early survey data to ensure the questionnaire was working correctly, and identify any potential faults not identified during office testing which may need to be resolved:

- Routing checks were conducted on the survey data to confirm that the specified routing is being reflected in the data[3].
- Break-offs were reviewed to identify any patterns of break-off at particular questions/in particular browsers which may identify technical problems.
- Participant/interviewer feedback of issues recorded through the in-office support teams.

Checking revealed some very slight divergences from the spec (see Chapter 8). However, there were no updates to the questionnaire instrument during mainstage fieldwork.

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[3] Full routing checks were also conducted post fieldwork. Details of the findings of this testing are outlined in Chapter 8.

5 Fieldwork

5.1 Ethics

Ethical approval for the study was secured by CLS from the NHS Research Ethics Committee (NRES) – REC Reference 14/LO/0096. This process involved scrutiny of every aspect of the study's approach, including the multimode design, all respondent-facing materials, questionnaire content, fieldwork procedures, informed consent procedures, consideration of potential burden and harm to participants and scrutiny of the data security approach of all parties involved in the operation.

The study's design raised a number of specific issues that required a consideration of how best to ensure an ethical approach. In particular:

- **The transfer of cohort member details from the DfE to CLS.** The original LSYPE under the DfE had finished at a point where cohort members were aged 19 or 20 (i.e. in 2010). The study's move to be managed by CLS in 2013 clearly required all contact information and all individuals' survey data to be transferred, but consent for this had not specifically been obtained at the last contact given that a likely continuation of the study was not known at that point.

  The process adopted to overcome this problem was to send a letter to cohort members informing them of the planned movement of data and to provide them with an opportunity to opt out. This process was carried out in 2013, so at a point when a proportion of cohort members would have moved address. In a proportion of cases it would need to be accepted that some cohort members would not have been informed of the transfer and so could not have opted out.

  A key consideration in all of the ethical questions raised was the scientific value of the study, particularly in the context of this cohort offering the opportunity of filling a gap in the British cohort studies between the 1970 birth cohort and the Millennium cohort. This was weighed against the potential upset for cohort members of an opt-out approach that could not guarantee that they would have agreed to the transfer. An approval for this approach was sought from the NRES with the likely impact of non-response on the sample quality at this point being the justification that an opt-out rather than an opt-in approach needed to be adopted.

- **Pre-fieldwork tracing activities.** Given the length of time between the last wave of participation and Wave 8 (over 10 years in some cases) the potential for success of the study was likely to be greatly enhanced by updating address information prior to fieldwork commencing. Some of this updating could be carried out by using publicly accessible databases and phone directories, but it was feared that by themselves these would not prove to be sufficient to ensure a good quality sample.

  As a result, it was proposed that NHS records be used to identify potential new addresses. Clearly, medical records are particularly sensitive for the general public and there has been considerable public debate about their privacy.

  Agreement to this approach needed to be secured from NHS Confidentiality Advisory Group and the Health and Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC). HSCIC, now NHS Digital. At no stage was it required that medical records

needed to be accessed or transferred during the process of obtaining cohort members' addresses from the NHS Central Register.

- **Inclusion of cohort members who had not participated since the first wave of the study**. During the LSYPE fieldwork to Wave 7, only those who had participated at the previous wave were included in fieldwork for the current wave. The result of this was that there had been steady attrition in the sample. At Wave 8 it was hoped that the sample quality could be improved by giving all cohort members who had participated at Wave 1 the opportunity to be involved again.

  This required including some cohort members who had explicitly refused to take part in fieldwork at earlier waves. It is normal practice for longitudinal studies to go back to these cases on the basis that the refusal was to the fieldwork operation at that time – it is quite often the case that people choose to participate having refused at an earlier point.

  The approach adopted by CLS was to remove those who had adamantly refused to the study, but to otherwise include cohort members. A participant pack was sent in advance of fieldwork, and letters and emails were sent at its start to inform cohort members of the study and of how they could opt-out if they wished. Clearly, informed consent was still subsequently required where interviewers were telephoning or visiting at the point of contact.

- **Differential incentives experiment.** Incentive strategies are an effective means of encouraging participation to achieve acceptable levels of response and their use is widespread in survey operations. For Wave 8, an experiment was proposed that would provide evidence on whether an additional payment would encourage online completion of the survey, thereby saving the cost of using an interviewer at a later point (see section 5.3.2).

  This would result in some cohort members receiving a higher level of incentive than others, despite similar amounts of their time being taken up. There are a number of points here; first among them being that incentives are not payments for time as such and are often rather presented as a 'thank you' for participation (indeed incentives are often provided with no requirement to actually participate in the interview). However, differential incentive amounts raise an issue of fairness that needs to be considered. A justification for this, and one that was communicated to cohort members in letters and emails for Wave 8, was that the reduced cost of an online interview saved the study money, and that this could then be shared with participants. There is also a more fundamental justification that relates to differential incentives being used to improve sample quality in specific areas and thereby improve the scientific value of the study.

  In practice, the fieldwork operation did not encounter objections from cohort members to the principle of different incentive levels (although there were some objections to the rules around the cut-off date for web interviews where it was felt there had been technical reasons for not participating at an earlier point).

- **Handling sensitive questions.** A series of 'sensitive' questions was intended to be included within the interview that posed a risk of upsetting respondents or causing embarrassment in an interview situation (see Chapter 3 for details).

  The solution to this for the face-to-face interview was a self-completion approach during the interview where cohort members used the interviewer's laptop to complete the section. This included a warning to cohort members that

these were coming up, an opportunity to skip the section and a restatement of the point that individual questions could be refused (see section 3.5.3) for more detail).

In the telephone mode, self-completion is not easily administered (an attempt was made during piloting to enable online-completion at this point in the interview, but this was not taken up). However, the distance created by the telephone is likely to reduce the sensitivity of the exchange. See section 4.3.3 for a description of the approach tested in the pilot for the telephone.

- **Consent to data linkage.** At Wave 8 it was intended to ask for open-ended consent to data linkage to a range of administrative sources. Whilst these consent procedures are well-established for face-to-face settings, there is a particular issue with ensuring informed consent with an online approach. In particular, it is not easy to obtain signed consent in this process, nor is it easy to ensure that participants properly understand what they are agreeing to.

    Full details of the approach adopted and agreed by the MREC are provided in section 3.6). Substantial effort was expended in the development of materials to clearly set out what agreement was for and how the linking process worked. This included a short animation that was embedded in the web and CAPI versions of the instrument. The agreement process itself was a significant section in the interview, with consent obtained to each administrative source individually, an opportunity to review and a final consent declaration.

5.2 Multimode design

5.2.1 Overview of design

Wave 8 follows Waves 5 to 7 of the study in implementing a multimode design involving online (Web), telephone (Tel) and face-to-face (F2F) data collection.

For Next Steps Wave 8, a single instrument was used across the modes - cohort members received an identical questionnaire (except to adapt questions to be read out by an interviewer or be read as part of online self-completion) whatever their mode of participation.

These modes ran sequentially, with the least costly mode first, so as to maximise cost-savings. Cohort members were initially invited, by letter and email, to participate via web. Those who did not participate were then approached by telephone via interviewers in NatCen's Telephone Unit and finally in person by face-to-face interviewers if there was still no interview (Figure 5:1).

Participant mailing

Advance ~~mailing~~

Web always available

Web

Tel

F2F
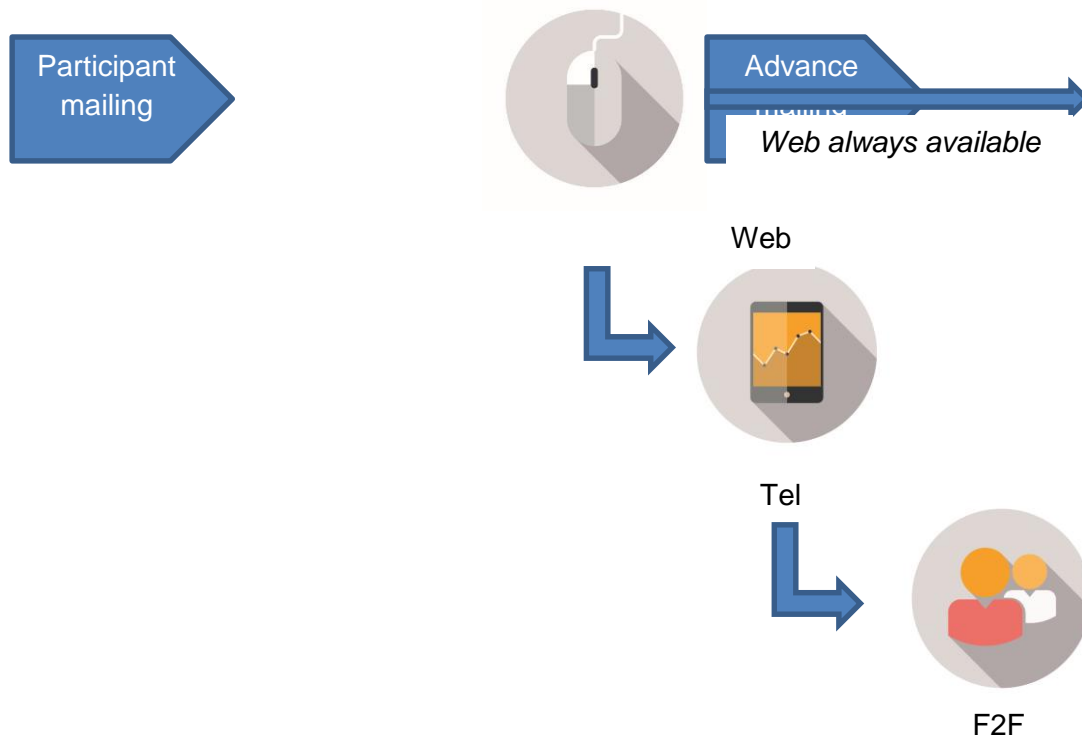
Such a design offers the opportunity to minimise survey costs whilst maximising response where the cheapest mode is offered first but followed by interviewer-led approaches that enable full tracing and persuasion techniques. They are particularly effective for longitudinal studies where a relationship with a cohort member has already been established and good contact information has been obtained, including email addresses and mobile phone numbers.

In principle, there is the potential for response to be higher in a mixed mode design due to there being more points of contact through different channels. In addition, a mixed mode design offers a range of options for a cohort member to participate in the way in which they find most convenient and appropriate. In particular, it may be important for this young cohort to be offered an online option given their expectation that a task such as this could be completed in this way. Enabling approaches that fit well with cohort members' day-to-day experiences of dealings with services and tasks will set a cohort study on a surer footing in the long term.

However, it was felt essential for sample quality to have a face-to-face follow-up to encourage and cajole where there is reluctance. These modes can complement one another, with face-to-face interviewers helping to manage and encourage web completion and a communications strategy that ensures messaging is consistent and branding clear.

5.2.2 A 'soft launch' approach to assessing response in the multimode design

A difficulty facing the study's implementation was that costs were likely to vary considerably depending on the success of the initial web element. If online completion was lower than anticipated, more cases would need to be issued to the more expensive modes.

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork there was little solid evidence on which to base assumptions about the proportion of the sample who would take part by each mode due to the specific age group involved and the time since the previous interview. There was a great deal of uncertainty in relation to the likely success of locating, contacting and persuading cohort members to take part. The age group was known to be relatively challenging to engage in other survey contexts and the long gap since the cohort members' previous participation may have resulted in a loss of the relationship with the study established in previous waves and contact information being out of date.

A 'soft launch' was implemented to reduce this uncertainty sufficiently early in the fieldwork process for decisions to be taken in particular about the scale of required issuing of cases for face-to-face fieldwork. The soft launch consisted of an initial batch of 2,215 cohort members – large enough to ensure reasonably reliable estimates of response rates for each mode - who would go through each of the modes before the rest of the sample so that resourcing decisions could be made (see Chapter 2 for further details of its size and composition).

In addition to obtaining firmer response rate and tracing information, the soft launch would also enable accurate questionnaire timing estimates to be produced and allow the assessment of fieldwork procedures, such as contact strategies and tracing procedures. A small number of design changes were implemented between the soft launch and subsequent batches of sample and these are highlighted with the sections below.

Managing uncertainty: fixed fieldwork budget

To manage the uncertainty in financial terms, the fieldwork budget for the project was considered fixed; CLS and NatCen would monitor projected fieldwork costs as estimates around about response became more concrete and make amendments to the survey design if the predictions suggested that the costs would otherwise go over the budget.

The main 'amendment' considered is the potential restriction of the size of the issued face-to-face sample – the last and the most expensive mode of fieldwork. Specifically, if the web and/ or telephone response rates were to be lower than predicted, otherwise resulting in a larger than anticipated issued sample for face-to-face, some of the sample could be held back from being issued to face-to-face to keep the costs within the fixed fieldwork budget. An approach was developed that involved the assessment of sample quality to help with the prioritisation of cases to issue in such a situation.

Another area of design that could be amended to reduce costs was the proportion of cases reissued in the face-to-face mode and the extent of tracing activities during it (e.g. parental address visits, see section 5.4.4).

In the event, despite a higher than anticipated level of cases that needed to be issued for face-to-face fieldwork than in the original costing, additional funding from the ESRC meant that all cases that were eligible for face-to-face fieldwork were issued to that mode and it was not necessary to reduce the level of tracing required of interviewers.

Soft launch review process

Response and calls data was analysed to provide a description of the fieldwork effort in both telephone and face-to-face (NatCen produced a report for CLS, unpublished).

Following soft-launch fieldwork all interviewers were asked to complete a feedback form on their experiences and were invited to take part in a conference call for face-to-face interviewers or a face-to-face debrief for telephone interviewers.

The feedback forms covered the following topics and acted as the basis of discussions in the conference calls/debrief as well as being returned to the research team for closer analysis:

- IBM DC software interface usability.
- Laptop (new touchscreen devices were issued to face-to-face interviewers during Next Steps).
- CATI dial screen (Telephone Unit only).
- Managing assignments in IBM (face-to-face interviewers only).
- Using the 'admin module' for recording call outcomes (see section 5.2.4).
- The mixed mode approach.
- Contacting cohort members, including tracing.
- Doorstep persuasion.
- The interview and CAI.
- Data linkage.
- Respondent facing materials.
- Briefings and interviewer instructions.

A total of 6 conference calls were held with up to 10 interviewers in each. All soft launch telephone interviewers attended the TU debrief.

5.2.3 Eligibility of cases for each mode

The population for the study and principles of eligibility are discussed in section 2.1.3, but to restate the exclusions, cohort members were not issued for fieldwork where they were known to be:

- In prison;
- Deceased;
- Outside the UK; or
- Identified by CLS as in the armed forces or as out of the survey for another reason.

Web eligibility
All cases included in Wave 8 were eligible for web fieldwork and were sent letters and emails to facilitate this (where an email address was available). Cohort members completed via web wherever they were living. However, advance mailings were not sent outside the UK and therefore in practice these cases would only have learnt about the survey if they had previously provided a valid email address (or post was forwarded). Emails were sent even where the latest available address was outside the UK, although in general these cases would have been excluded by CLS in advance of passing the sample to NatCen.

Telephone eligibility
Cases in the UK were eligible for the telephone stage in the following conditions:

- They had a valid telephone number (those with only a stable contact telephone number were not included);
- They had not proceeded past the end of module 10 (stable contact and partner details) in the web mode (the point of a 'partial' interview was set to be the end of Module 1, but partials were issued in the next mode to try to complete all parts of the questionnaire);
- In Batch 1 all cases that met the above criteria were issued to telephone irrespective of their last wave of interview.
- From Batch 2 onwards, only those cases last interviewed at Wave 7 were issued (see below).

In addition, cases were excluded if the cohort member where there had been an office refusal or a request for data to be deleted.

The difference noted above in the treatment of Batch 1 cases and those in Batches 2 to 4 followed a review of the soft launch telephone phase (a note was produced for CLS, unpublished). This found that, looking at response by wave of last participation, those who last participated in Wave 7 were considerably more likely to participate (18% compared to 7% among those participating last in Wave 6). This was partly due to the contact rate, but the rate of cooperation was also considerably higher for this wave. The Wave 6 cooperation rate was also relatively higher than for those participating last in Waves 4 and 5.

Based on these finding only cases that matched the above criteria and were productive at wave 7 were issued to telephone fieldwork from Batch 2 onwards.

Face-to-face eligibility
Eligible cohort members in England who did not complete an interview during the web or telephone stages were issued for face-to-face fieldwork. Cases where an interview had been partially completed in web or telephone were eligible for face-to-face where the cohort member had not reached the end of Module 9 (data linking), but not if they had passed that point.

Cases were excluded from face-to-face where there was an office refusal, a request for data to be deleted, or the CM had been found to have moved outside England.

In addition, some refusals and other cases (such as terminally ill, mentally incapable of participation) were not issued for fieldwork following review by NatCen researchers on a case-by-case basis with reference to interviewer comments. Cases were reviewed if they had a telephone outcome of refusal, ill at home or in hospital, mentally or physically incapable or other reason for unproductive.

Cohort members in Wales and Scotland were eligible for face-to-face but were issued for this mode on a case-by-case basis if there was an interviewer able to cover the case. Cases in Northern Ireland were not issued for face-to-face fieldwork.

Cases where there was no address for the CM (minimum first line and town or postcode) were not issued for face-to-face even where there were tracing details.

5.2.4 Sample management

This section describes the range of sample information inputs before and during fieldwork that the sample management system for Next Steps would need to be able to deal with. These include proactive updates from cohort members, office tracing processes and information obtained by interviewers. It was essential to the success of

a complex multimode design that a system was implemented that ensured the most recent contact information was available to all processes, including mailings, to office-based staff and of course to interviewers.

Sample management requirement and architecture

The multimode design and multiple points at which sample could be updated during fieldwork required robust systems for live data and sample management. During fieldwork at NatCen these were handled by its in-house Sample Management System (SMS). This system sat at the centre of NatCen's allocation, booking-in and monitoring systems and interacted directly with the sample handling functionality of the IBM Data Collection software.

Following receipt of the initial sample file from CLS containing full contact and case status information, there were several routes through which changes could be made to the sample, case status or fieldwork outcome during fieldwork:

- Direct contact from the cohort member to CLS. Any urgent information received was passed to NatCen on a daily basis (e.g. refusals and deaths). All other sample updates, including changes to contact details, were included in a standardised weekly sample update.

- Direct contact from cohort members to NatCen head office with refusal to participate further and to update contact information. Tracing letters were also returned directly to NatCen from current occupiers and stable contacts. All information was logged in the central database and passed on to interviewers automatically via the 'admin module' used in the Telephone Unit and by face-to-face interviewers on their laptop (see below).

- Interviewers (in telephone and face-to-face) updated contact information and outcomes during calls in the admin module. During web and telephone fieldwork these were updated in SMS in real time. With face-to-face they were updated at the point when the interviewer next 'synced' their device with the system via secure internet transfer.

- CLS traced movers: cases where an interviewer found a cohort member had moved but was unable to trace them were passed to CLS for further in-office tracing. Files were sent to CLS once a week. If CLS found new contact details, these were passed back to NatCen as part of a weekly sample update.

- From cohort members during the interview. In all modes, the questionnaire asked for confirmation of contact information. Central database records were updated with this information automatically.

To ensure that the latest information from the SMS was reflected in the information available for the CAI instrument, and, vice versa, that any updated information on the sample captured in the IBM DC instrument (outcome codes, contact detail updates) was reflected in the SMS, the two systems were set to interact with each other (automatically).

In this way, the most up to date information was always available for interviewers (as long as face-to-face interviewers were required to sync regularly), office staff and the various communications to participants, including reminders and thank you mailings.

Admin module for calls and outcomes

The process of managing case information, calling cases, tracing and recording outcomes for all modes was handled by an 'admin module' that was developed specifically for Next Steps. It was designed to operate in both CATI and CAPI so that call information and outcomes recorded in one mode could be presented in the same format in the other mode. Interviewers could see details of calls in every mode and at each issue.

Upon opening a case in CAPI or CATI, the interviewer was presented with the 'sample information' screens to help them plan their remaining work on a case and provide demographic and participation history information to assist with their approach. Among the information provided was:

- Contact details for the cohort member, including address, telephone numbers, and emails addresses.
- Sample information for the cohort member, including gender, known communication difficulties and details of participation at previous waves.
- Details of the timing and outcome of previous calls (whether during telephone or face-to-face) including interviewer comments.
- Whether there had been any attempt to complete the interview online.
- Appointments.
- Tracing activities undertaken to date and their outcomes.
- Details of stable contacts, the parental address and the last interview address (which may or may not be different to the current cohort member address).

Figure 5:2 shows two screens from the CAPI admin module containing (dummy) sample information.

Details of all calls and tracing attempts including date and time, outcome and interviewer comments were recorded by interviewers and these details added to the sample information screens to be visible to subsequent telephone and face-to-face interviewers (Figure 5:3). Numbers that were found to be incorrect or disconnected were set as invalid and marked as such in the admin module.

Figure 5:3   CAPI interviewer admin module screenshots – tracing attempts

Trace	Date	New CM Addr	SC Addr	SC TelNo.1	SC TelNo.2	Parental Addr	Addr Last Interview	Mode	Int	Action	Outcome	Comment
3		[unchanged]				21 High Street, Sundweed, Mirnploy, V54 9HS, England	22 Sing Avenue, Sundweed, Mirnploy, V54 9HS, England	CAPI	9990	Attempting to visit the respondent's address at last interview if in your area/issuing an occupier letter	Contact made - does not know current contact details of respondent	dxtt
2		[unchanged]				21 High Street, Sundweed, Mirnploy, V54 9HS, England	22 Sing Avenue, Sundweed, Mirnploy, V54 9HS, England	CAPI	9990	Attempting to visit the parental address if in your area/issuing a parental tracing letter	Contact made - unwilling to pass on contact details	left tracing letter will pass on
1		[unchanged]				21 New Road, Sundweed, Mirnploy, V54 9HS, England	22 Sing Avenue, Sundweed, Mirnploy, V54 9HS, England	CAPI	9990	Attempting to contact the neighbours at the latest address	Contact made - (some) new contact details/information obtained	Neighbour at number 12 gave new parental address

Interviewers were prompted to collect updated contact details for the CM in both calls to the CM and tracing. Any details collected were updated in the sample information screens and elsewhere in the sample management system.

When a final outcome for the case was reached, details were recorded in the final admin section, including reasons for refusal and comments following a successful interview.

Data from the admin module was extracted and used for monitoring and analysis purposes. Whilst not a perfectly accurate picture due to some interviewers using the admin module incorrectly or not recording all calls made, it nonetheless provided a very good sense of progress, call patterns and call outcomes.

5.3 Maximising response

The key challenges for maximizing response in Wave 8 were the length of time since the previous interview (six years for most, and over 10 for some) which was likely to mean a high proportion of movers with this age group, and the age group itself – young and consistently under-represented in survey work in general due to the difficulties of engagement.

5.3.1 Communications with participants

Given the length of time since the last point of participation for many, the challenges for engaging this young cohort in research, and the aim for web to be the main mode of data collection, a comprehensive communication strategy was vital. This underpinned the fieldwork approach and it was a considerable focus of effort on the part of CLS and NatCen. Its thread ran through the study from participant communications to interviewer briefings. The strategy included:

- The development of coordinated mailings and other communications to individual cohort members;

- The development of a new participant-facing study website;
- A social media campaign;
- A dedicated cohort maintenance team at CLS;
- Response maximisation sections in interviewer briefings; and
- Running through all these elements, the development of key messages and content in a range of media that could be used to engage the cohort and encourage participation.

As part of this strategy, CLS sought to develop a strong brand for the study and commissioned a specialist agency to develop a new logo and visual identity for Next Steps and to produce brand implementation guidelines. The 'Next Steps' name was retained from previous waves as this was how the study was known to cohort members. The brand was developed based on qualitative fieldwork with participants in the required age range. Following this exercise a full brand toolkit and logo was developed. The branding guidelines were followed on all participant materials as well as in the development of the new study website and social media accounts.[4]

A. Participant pack mailing

Prior to the commencement of fieldwork, CLS attempted contact with cohort members, introducing themselves and the re-branded study with the mailing of a 'participant pack'. This was sent by post (and email if held) around 6 weeks in advance of fieldwork to allow time for any updates to be incorporated into the sample file for Wave 8 fieldwork.

The purpose of the participant pack was to re-introduce the re-branded Next Steps study and highlight its impact to date as well as signposting cohort members to the new participant website which contained further information on the study, in particular, a short engagement video.

The participant pack included (see Annex A):

- Introduction letter.
- Welcome back leaflet - leaflet giving information on the history of the survey, including its transfer to CLS from DfE. It also highlighted key findings and policy impacts as well as introducing the CLS team.
- Timeline. An A4 booklet with one year per page going back to 2004 showing key news events each year, according to cohort member's age/stage at school, as well as key findings from that year's survey.
- Change of details card. Included as a means of cohort members updating their details before the start of fieldwork.
- Three gifts (frisbee, travel card holder and sticky note deskset).

Spare copies of the participant pack were provided to interviewers to use on the doorstep.

As well as introducing the study, the participant mailing also enabled CLS to verify the latest sample addresses held for cohort members:

- The cohort maintenance team recorded any packs returned as 'return to sender', 'recipient unknown' etc., and undertook further office tracing to find a more recent address.

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[4] https://nextstepsstudy.org.uk/

- Cohort members who receive their pack via email or re-directed mail were prompted to inform CLS of any changes in their address details. They could update their contact details through the website, e-mail, using the Freephone number or through returning the change of details card included in the participant pack. The CLS cohort maintenance team then update individual records when they received notification of any changes.

B. The web invitation - advance mailing and email

As detailed above, web was the first of the modes of data collection in the sequence and all cohort members who were eligible for Wave 8 were included in the communication process for this mode. Communications in this phase were sent in a range of mediums including email, post and text message to maximize the probability of them being received by the cohort member, to remind and to reinforce messages.

NatCen sent an advance postal mailing to all cohort members by first class post in a white unbranded envelope, the day before the start of web fieldwork for each batch. See section 5.8 for a full project timetable). An error on Batch 1 meant that these were sent out second class for that batch.

Cohort members with an email address (58% of the cohort) were also sent an email version of the advance mailing to increase the chances of them receiving and reading this information (see Figure 5:4).

The main aim of the advance mailing was to announce the opening of fieldwork and encourage cohort members to participate via web as early as possible. It also aimed to increase the chances of making contact with the cohort members during fieldwork and to inform and motivate them to take part through the provision of engaging information about the study, information on the incentive as well as sign-posting them to the study website and videos.

Participants were asked to take their time to read these materials and were encouraged to contact the study team, free of charge, with any questions they might have.

The advance mailing included:

- Advance letter – giving details of the background of the survey, guidance on how to take part online, details of the incentive and how to find out more about the survey.

- Survey leaflet - giving information about the funding and management of the Age 25 survey and examples of how data from previous waves has been used.

- Data linkage leaflet – giving information on purpose, value and process of data linkage.

Appendix A provides a full set of examples of the communications materials used in the study.

NEXT STEPS
LEARNING FROM YOUR GENERATION

<FF_CM_FIRSTNAME> <FF_CM_SURNAME>
<FF_ADDRESSLINE1>
<FF_ADDRESSLINE2>
<FF_ADDRESSLINE3>
<FF_COUNTY>
<FF_TOWN>   Our Ref: <NCSerial>
<FF_POSTCODE>   Your unique log-in: <FF_LOGIN>

BE THE VOICE OF YOUR GENERATION.

Hello there, <FF_CM_FIRSTNAME>,

You may remember taking part in a research study called Next Steps a few years ago, which you first joined when you were at school. The next survey is happening right now and we really hope you can take part again. You'll receive a £20 shopping voucher to thank you for your help.

Next Steps is a major research study following the lives of 16,000 people in England born in 1989-90. Back in 2004 we got in touch with you and other young people in schools across the country to ask questions about your education, family life, and hopes for the future. Since then there have been six more surveys with Next Steps study members to see how your lives have changed. We're keen to find out where you are now and what you've been doing since we last spoke to you.

Find out more about Next Steps by watching our video: **www.nextstepsstudy.org.uk**

This time around, the Next Steps survey is being carried out by NatCen Social Research, on behalf of the Centre for Longitudinal Studies at University College London.

The two booklets which accompany this letter, 'Why we need your help' and 'Adding other information about you', give you more details about what the survey involves.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

We would like you to complete a survey about what your life is like now and how things have changed for you over the past few years. We will ask about your health, housing and family life, your education and work, as well as what you do in your spare time. We will also ask your permission to add some other information to your survey responses, as explained in the accompanying booklet 'Adding other information about you'.

All the information we collect will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Your personal details will be kept strictly confidential and separate from the answers you give, so you can't be identified.

NatCen Social Research   T   0808 1681356 (Freephone)
Kings House   E   nextsteps@natcen.ac.uk
101-135 Kings Road   W   nextstepsstudy.org.uk
Brentwood
Essex   Facebook: www.facebook.com/nextstepsstudy
CM14 4LX   Twitter: @nextstepsstudy

Replacement advance mailings were sent throughout all modes of fieldwork where new address details were received directly by the office.

C. Reminders during web fieldwork

It was originally intended that the web period would be three weeks in total. After this point, fieldwork would commence in NatCen's Telephone Unit (although web would remain open throughout the rest of the fieldwork period).

Over the three weeks following the advance mailing, cohort members were sent two postal, three email and two text reminders if they had not started the web survey at the time of dispatch. These reminders were sent in the sequence set out in Figure 5:7.

Figure 5:7   Timing of web fieldwork communication

Communication	Days from launch of Web
Advance letter	Timed to arrive with cohort member on Day 1
Advance email	Day 1
Reminder email 1	Day 4 (first Saturday of fieldwork)
Reminder letter 1	Day 7 (Tuesday after the first weekend)
Reminder letter 2	Day 11 (second Saturday of fieldwork)
Reminder email 2	Day 11 (second Saturday of fieldwork)
Reminder text 1	Day 11 (second Saturday of fieldwork)
Reminder email 3	Day 18 (third Saturday of fieldwork)
Reminder text 2 (from Batch 2 onwards)	Day 19 (Third Sunday of fieldwork)

The impact of the different points of communication is presented in Chapter 6.

The first email and letter reminders focused on the importance of taking part. The second email and letter reminders mentioned a date after which we will contact them in other ways and that the higher incentive would no longer be available (after 3 weeks of fieldwork).

The postal reminders were sent first class in a white unbranded window envelope (as used in advance mailing).

The reminder text messages were sent from a no-reply number. They included a message saying there was still time to take part and mentioning the mailing/website as sources for more information. The website URL was hyperlinked to be optimised for smartphones.

Break-off reminder emails messages were sent to all cohort members, for whom an email address was held, who had started or partially completed the web questionnaire 24 hours and 48 hours after the point of break-off. Where a valid mobile telephone number was held break-off text messages were also sent.

Each cohort member was sent one break-off reminder 'set' each, not one per break-off point, receiving a maximum of two emails and two texts if an email and mobile number was held and they did not complete the survey within 48 hours of break-off.

Soft launch review of web contact strategy
Following the soft launch, analysis was carried out of the effectiveness of the participant communication strategy for the web phase (NatCen provided a note to CLS, unpublished), particularly in relation to emails.

There were two emails scheduled to be sent on the first and second Saturdays of soft launch web fieldwork. The first of these was sent to all cases where we held an email address; of those who received the email, 8% opened it.

The second email was sent a week later to all cases where we had an email and they had not completed the web survey. It was found that 23% of those that received this email opened it and that 90% of those opening reminder email 2 had not opened reminder email 1.

Based on the evidence from reminders 1 and 2 that further reminders were reaching new people a third reminder email was added on the third Sunday of fieldwork for cases still not completed on web. This email was opened by 15% of those who received it, 40% of whom had not opened reminder email 1 or 2. The approach of sending 3 reminder emails was adopted for batches 2 to 4.

Following the soft launch reviews and delays to fieldwork, there were minor planned variations to the communications sent during web (a third email reminder was included after the soft launch) and after telephone (an additional email was sent to remind cohort members of the web option).

In addition, during the soft launch and at Batch 4, there was an unintended delay in the reminder letters such that the intended coordination with the email sends was not followed. These were sent as close to the original dates as possible, but taking account of the aim of having reminders of some kind arrive at the weekend.

D. Face-to-face fieldwork communication with cohort members

Telephone reminder text
After fieldwork had commenced, text messages were sent to all valid mobile numbers held for the cohort member to inform them that a telephone interviewer was attempting to contact them and included office contact details. These text reminders were sent once all telephone numbers had been attempted for the cohort member without making contact.

Appointment reminder text
An appointment reminder text message was sent to all valid mobile numbers held for the cohort member 24 hours before all agreed interview appointments. The aim of these messages was to reduce the proportion of broken appointments.

End of telephone phase email
From Batch 2, an email was sent after the telephone stage was completed but before face-to-face to once again mention the possibility of completing the survey online.

Face-to-face advance letter
An additional advance letter was sent out to all cases issued to face-to-face fieldwork. This was to inform cohort members that we had been unable to contact them previously and that an interviewer (who was named in the letter) would call at their address in the next few weeks.

The face-to-face advance letter was sent out in time to be received for the start of face-to-face fieldwork. Due to the delay to soft-launch face-to-face fieldwork there was a large gap between the sending of these letters and fieldwork starting.

Doorstep message/appointment card
Interviewers were provided with a study-branded message card to leave a message (e.g. 'I tried to call on X day and time, I will try again on X day), or to record and leave behind the details of an appointment made to cohort members to reduce the chance of a broken appointment.

Text and/or emails appointment confirmation
Text and/or emails messages to confirm appointments, were sent as appropriate based on the preferred contact method of each respondent. These messages were sent by interviewers.

Reissue letters
Reissue letters were sent to cohort members that were re-issued during face-to-face fieldwork, providing a further contact point encouragement, a point of reference for interviewers, and the opportunity for participants to contact the office if required.

Doorstep materials
Interviewers were provided with one laminated copy of the generic advance letter and copies of the survey leaflet/data linkage leaflet along with copies of both survey and data linkage FAQ sheets for doorstep use.

E. Study websites

Online content was available pre-fieldwork and throughout the fieldwork period to maximise participant understanding of, and participation in, the survey. This also

served as a reference point for researchers and interviewers at all stages of planning, training and communication.

CLS launched a Next Steps Age 25 website for participants, to provide cohort members with engaging information and resources. It included an FAQ section that provided reasons to participate, as well as detail on privacy and data protection. There were sections on the findings that the study had provided to date and links to news articles based on the study's evidence. Contact details were also available there for those with further questions.

A page on the NatCen website introducing the study and directing participants to the fuller CLS site was also created.

F. Social media

Facebook
A Next Steps Facebook page was set up and maintained by CLS throughout fieldwork to give updated information on the study including highlighting the use of findings from previous waves and directing to the CLS website and twitter accounts. Cohort members only had to 'like' the study Facebook page to see updated information and only their Facebook friends were able to see that they had 'liked' this page. The comment function on the page was disabled to protect their identity from others.

Twitter
CLS also maintained a twitter account as a further means for cohort members to receive updates on the study.

The Next Steps Twitter account was protected, so cohort members needed to request to follow it. Their Twitter handle was only visible to our other followers.

G. Engagement video

A short engagement video was developed for cohort members, the purpose of it was to spark the interest of Next Steps cohort members, connect them with the research, and to motivate and inspire them to take part in the Age 25 survey.

The engagement video was hosted on YouTube, and embedded on the Next Steps participant website and appropriately signposted in all other appropriate survey documents (e.g. advance letters, advance emails and survey leaflet).

The video was designed in line with Next Steps branding, used 2D animation combined with photography and images and made use of the timeline concept introduced in the participant pack. The video included the following elements of content:

- To explain the study in general.
- What it is.
- Why it is important.
- What impact it has had.
- Introduce how the study is changing.
- Explain why we are interested speaking to 25-year-olds in 2015.
- Contact details including website and telephone number included at the end of video.

H. Thank you letters

A thank you letter was sent to all cohort members who had completed a full questionnaire (in whichever mode) for whom we had a postal address, with their selected incentive, a change of details card, and confirmation of data linkage consent choices. Thank you letters were sent within one week of survey completion using a white unbranded window envelope.

In addition to the thank you letter a thank you email with the same information was sent to participants for whom we held an email address and who selected an Amazon e-voucher. Thank you emails were sent within one week of survey completion, at the same time as their thank you letter.

Following the completion of all face-to-face field work all partial cases that had completed Module 9 were sent a thank-you letter to inform them of the consents they had given and a £10 Love2Shop voucher (see section 5.3.2).

5.3.2 Incentives

An experimental approach was taken to the use of an incentive to improve response and in particular to improve response to web (the more cost effective mode).

During the soft launch the incentive value was tested experimentally to determine whether use of a differential incentive rate has an impact on response. In both cases the incentive was conditional on participation, with participants completing the questionnaire being offered a choice of two incentive types; an Amazon e-voucher redeemable at www.amazon.co.uk or a Love2Shop gift card accepted in a wide range of High Street shops (see 0 for a description of the types of voucher trialled before these were selected).

In Group A the incentive was dependent on the mode and timing of survey completion and was adopted to encourage completion over the web, the cheapest of the modes to administer. The higher £20 web incentive amount would only be received if the participant completed their interview over the web during the first three weeks of fieldwork (i.e. the initial web-only phase) and £10 otherwise.

In Group B a standard incentive of £10 was offered on completion of the questionnaire, irrespective of mode or timing.

Analysis of the incentive experiment in soft launch showed a higher fully productive rate was achieved for experimental group A (25% compared with 20%, Table 5:1). This was sustained to some extent during the telephone phase but was not statistically significant, and by the end of face-to-face fieldwork differences in overall response were no longer apparent.

Table 5:1	Response rate by incentive experimental group during soft launch						
Base: all cases issued for fieldwork in soft launch	**Experimental group**						
	£10 flat		£20 then £10		Sig level		Total
	N	%	N	%	-	N	%
Issued to Web	1107	100	1108	100		2215	100
Web fully productive in first 3 weeks	277	25	226	20	.010	503	23
Fully productive by end of Tel (via Web or Tel)	342	31	312	28	.159	654	30
Via Web	*286*	*26*	*243*	*22*	*.031*	*529*	*24*
Fully productive at end of all fieldwork	545	49	555	50	.686	1100	49
Via Web	*314*	*28*	*282*	*25*	*.122*	*596*	*27*
Fully or partially productive by end of all fieldwork	562	51	574	52	.686	1136	51

On this basis the differential incentive strategy of Group A was adopted for all respondents in Batches 2 to 4.

5.4 Contact and tracing

5.4.1 Accessing the web questionnaire

The first point of contact with cohort members as part of fieldwork was intended to be the web questionnaire following invitations via letter and email. Access to the web questionnaire was controlled by use of a unique login ID for each issued cohort member. Two pre-questionnaire pages were designed to facilitate access:

- A **login page**, where participants are asked to type in their unique ID.
- A **landing page**, welcoming participants to the questionnaire with some additional information provided, with a button provided to indicate the commencement of the survey.

Web participants could access the landing page and start the survey by either typing in their unique login ID on the login page, or by accessing a cohort member specific URL (incorporating the generic URL and their unique ID) to go directly to the landing page.

The login page generic URL and the participant's unique ID were provided on the advance letter, advance e-mail, reminder letters and e-mails and break-off reminder e-mails. The unique URLs (presented in the form of a 'Take part now' button) were provided in all e-mail communications about the survey (advance email, reminder emails, break-off reminder e-mails).

Web participants were able to complete the questionnaire on a desktop, laptop or a tablet; completion on a smart phone was not allowed due to the complexity of the questionnaire (in particular the event history section).

5.4.2 Making contact

Telephone

Cases that had not completed via web and were eligible (see section 5.2.3) were made available in NatCen's Telephone Unit three weeks after web started.

There were two particular challenges envisaged for the telephone phase; firstly the availability of working telephone numbers given the elapsed time since the last interview, and second the challenge of encouraging 25 year olds to answer a call from a withheld or unrecognised number.

The advantage of the Telephone Unit over issuing telephone numbers to interviewers in the face-to-face stage was the ability to systematically attempt contact at different times of the day and days of the week over a period of weeks. However, given that there was to be a further stage to the fieldwork it was decided initially to set a maximum number of calls to 10 over the period, so as to avoid provoking a negative reaction at face-to-face (in the end this was relaxed where TU supervisors felt there was potential value in continuing to call particular cases). These calls were to include weekday day time, week day evenings and weekends in trying to make contact. All available numbers were tried in each call attempt where no contact was made. As Table 5:2 shows, the mean number of telephone calls made to cases where there was a productive telephone interview was 5.4 calls.

The contact approach for interviewers was managed by the admin module as described above. The timing of calls was handled by a call scheduler working to a set call pattern and which responded to the type of outcome of the previous call (this was overridden where appointments were made by interviewers). Multiple phone numbers were available for a proportion of cohort members and these were all tried in any given session until contact was made.

The approach to making contact was continually reviewed during fieldwork to try to improve contact and cooperation rates. Very often, calls went unanswered, and attempts were made to call on both a withheld number and a number that could be recognised to check whether this made a difference. Trials were also carried out with leaving messages on voicemails and answerphones to try to encourage picking up at the next call. It was not clear whether these variations were effective and establishing contact continued to be the major challenge throughout fieldwork.

Face-to-face

Over 10,000 cases were issued for face-to-face as the third and final mode of data collection – a larger volume than was originally envisaged. Inevitably, after the previous two modes and multiple contact attempts these would be the more difficult cases, either due to having moved from the issued address or a need to overcome some reluctance to participate. The challenges of this operation were considerable as a result, and as the response analysis in Chapter 6 describes. Fieldwork periods were extended considerably to accommodate extended tracing attempts and multiple reallocations of work.

Interviewers' assignments varied considerably in size to the relatively geographically dispersed sample and variations in the proportion of interviews that were completed in

the web phase. To illustrate the variation and to provide an indication of the varying levels of involvement in the study between interviewers we can consider the number of interviews achieved per interviewer.

- In relation to first issue, the mean number of interviews achieved amongst the 214 interviewers was 10, with the range being 1 to 43.
- Amongst the 40 interviewers who carried out reissues, the mean was 2 and the range 1 to 3.

First contact during face-to-face fieldwork was always face-to-face. Unless a case was confirmed as a hard refusal/other firm unproductive, ineligible or a mover untraceable at issued address, interviewers were required to make a minimum of six face-to-face calls including a minimum of one call each at evenings and weekends and three evening/weekend calls in total, with no maximum number of calls set.

The number of calls that face-to-face interviewers made to cases that were productive in the face-to-face mode is provided in Table 5:2. This shows that the average number of face-to-face calls per productive interview was 3.8 and the average number of telephone calls was 0.5. These figures hid a wide variation between cases, with 10% visiting more than the required 6 times.

Table 5:2	Number of face-to-face and telephone calls by face-to-face interviewers to productive face-to-face cases						
	Number of calls by Tel interviewers to Tel productive cases		Number of calls by F2F interviewers to F2F productive cases				
			In-person visits		Tel calls by F2F interviewers	
Number of calls	n	%	n	%	n	%
0	0	0%	0	0%	1659	75%
1	57	8%	151	7%	303	14%
2	118	16%	547	25%	140	6%
3	94	13%	503	23%	64	3%
4	86	12%	380	17%	21	1%
5	73	10%	262	12%	22	1%
6	73	10%	164	7%	8	0%
7	43	6%	83	4%	3	0%
8	32	4%	56	3%	0	0%
9	51	7%	34	2%	0	0%
10	27	4%	16	1%	0	0%
11	15	2%	11	0%	0	0%
12	18	3%	4	0%	0	0%
13	11	2%	3	0%	0	0%
14	7	1%	4	0%	0	0%
15+	13	2%	2	0%	0	0%
Total calls	3,849		8,358		1,038	
Mean calls	5.4		3.8		0.5	
Median calls	5		3		0	
Base (productive interviews)	718		2,220		2,220	

Interviewers were provided with the doorstep message/appointment card to leave if no contact was made on a visit to encourage the cohort members to initiate contact with the interviewer. They were also encouraged to use mobile phone numbers and ultimately email addresses if direct contact could not be made after a number of attempts.

Making contact with the cohort member was a particular challenge with Wave 8. Chapter 6 describes the level of movers encountered, and very often the contact that interviewers made was with parents of cohort members. Parents had often been involved in the research themselves in earlier waves and interviewers were encouraged to see parents as potential champions of the study to help them engage cohort members and encourage contact. However, other parents acted as gatekeepers who aimed to protect their children from being bothered by the research. During fieldwork, experience and guidance developed for interviewers on how best to approach these important relationships.

The admin module was used to collect details of all visits and telephone attempts. Interviewers were equipped with touchscreen devices to enable them to complete this at the time on the doorstep.

Proxy interviews were not allowed for Next Steps, although it was possible to have household members assist with communication where necessary during the interview.

No design changes were implemented for the face-to-face approach between the soft launch and main stage, except with respect to the anticipated first issue fieldwork length allowed (which moved from 8 to 10 weeks).
However, considerable effort was made to pass on the experiences of interviewers in the soft launch, for instance in relation to tracing and the role of parents, and briefings and instructions were updated to reflect this (see sections 5.2.2 on the soft launch, 5.8 on fieldwork timing and 6.1 on response).

5.4.3 Managing multimode

Telephone

Interviewers were encouraged to try to secure a telephone interview at this stage, but where cohort members were adamant that they wanted to complete the survey via web (or where interviewers felt this was a more appropriate mode for the cohort member given communication or other difficulties) this was facilitated and managed. Login details and the URL were given out over the phone to cohort members and appointments made to call back a few days later to check whether there had been any problems (where the interview was completed the case would be removed from the available telephone sample).

Face-to-Face

In a multimode design where the web option was still available during face-to-face, it was important that face-to-face interviewers remained confident in their approach to cohort members in order to maximise response. Interviewers were briefed to expect to achieve a face-to-face interview and to push hard for this over web where cohort members suggested this would be their preference. This was on the basis that it was easy for cohort members to say this without a strong intention to complete the interview online. Even where there was an intention to do so, in a proportion of cases the interview, in the end, would not be completed.

Where cohort members were adamant that completing online was their preference, interviewers were instructed to manage this process in two ways. Firstly, they would ensure that the cohort member had everything they needed to log in to the questionnaire online (access code, URL); secondly, they would manage the process of participation by suggesting they would call again in a few days to 'check there had not been any technical problems'. Interviewers were incentivised to ensure online interviews were completed (though at a lower rate than face-to-face interviews).

5.4.4 Tracing

Telephone

As part of all answered calls interviewers were asked to confirm whether this was the correct telephone number for the cohort member and check for information about updated telephone number and/or address and email address.

Once all number held for the cohort member had been exhausted the CAI prompted the interviewer to conduct tracing on the stable contact telephone number where held.

The stable contact telephone was attempted up to four times including the first immediately after all cohort member numbers confirmed as not valid or tried the maximum number of times. Up to two stable contact numbers were held with each being tried at each of the four telephone attempts.

Where a new cohort member telephone number was received from the stable contact the admin module prompted the interviewer to attempt that number at that point and the new number was subsequently included in the ongoing fieldwork process.

Face-to-Face

More options were open to field interviewers for tracing compared with the telephone approach. Interviewers were required to start in field tracing if they were informed that a cohort member had moved or if they had made six face to face calls without making contact. The suggested order for tracing activities was:

1. Re-trying available telephone numbers. To be attempted at least once during the week during the day and in the evening and once at weekends for telephone numbers not found to be unobtainable/wrong during the telephone phase. Numbers were not to be attempted until after an initial face-to-face visit, and not usually until after 6 visits.

2. Tracing with current occupier and neighbours. Asking for contact details from current occupiers and neighbours; anyone who knew the cohort members' contact details but was unwilling to reveal these was asked to pass on or post a Tracing letter (and a Freepost return envelope) to the cohort member. Where no contact was made with the current occupier an occupier letter was left.

3. Telephoning stable contacts. Interviewers were required to attempt each telephone number held at least once during the week during the day and in the evening and once at weekends for telephone numbers not found to be unobtainable/wrong.

4. Visiting the stable contact or leaving / sending a letter to stable contacts. Actions here depended on stable contacts' geographical location in relation to

the interviewer. If within the interviewer's area, the interviewer attempted two doorstep visits, including at least once in the evening or at the weekend. Where there was no contact on the second visit, a stable contact letter was left behind. If the stable contact was not in the interviewer's area, the stable contact letter was posted. If contact was made on the doorstep, but they were unwilling to pass on the details, interviewers asked the stable contact to check with the cohort member and returned after an agreed period, or asked them to pass on a tracing letter to the cohort member.

5. Visiting the parental address or leaving / sending a parent tracing letter. Actions depended on geographical location of the address, as per the stable contact.

6. Visiting address at last interview (if different to other addresses). Again actions depended on the geographical location of the address. An occupier letter was left if no contact was made, or else a tracing letter.

A summary of the letters used for in field tracing and their uses is given in the table below:

Letter	Purpose	Where used
Occupier letter	Asks current occupier whether the named sample member lives at the address and whether the occupier knows of their details if not. Include a Freepost envelope for the reply slip. This is unbranded so does not reveal that the person we are trying to contact is a Next Steps cohort member.	Where no contact is made at the main address or at an address provided during tracing. Also left/posted where no contact made at the last interview address or where it is outside interviewer's area.
Tracing letter	Given to occupiers of addresses where the cohort member has lived and the occupier is unwilling to provide updated contact details. It can also be given to neighbours who know the cohort member or their family. The occupier/neighbour is asked to pass on the tracing letter to the cohort member, asking them to inform us of their updated contact details. These letters have Next Steps branding so should be provided in a sealed envelope so not to compromise confidentiality. Include a Freepost envelope for the reply slip.	Any contact who knows the cohort member but who is unwilling to provide contact information themselves.
Stable contact letter	Sent to the stable contact given by the participant at previous waves of the study. The stable contact is asked to either provide us with updated contact details for the cohort member, or pass	Left behind after visit where stable address is local and no contact is made. If the stable contact lives further afield, the stable contact letter can be posted.

	on the letter to the cohort member, to allow them to update their details themselves Letter is branded Next Steps as we have permission from the cohort member to make contact with their stable contact. Include a Freepost envelope for the reply slip.	
Parent letter	Sent to the parents of cohort members. The parent is asked to either provide us with updated contact details for the cohort member, or pass on the letter to the cohort member, to allow them to update their details themselves. Letter is branded Next Steps as the parents have been involved in Next Steps so aware of the cohort members involvement in this study. Include a Freepost envelope for the reply slip.	Left behind after visit where parental address is local and no contact is made. If the parent lives further afield, the letter can be posted.

Once the first interviewer had completed all tracing cases with stable contact, parental or last interview address outside of the interviewers area were allocated to an interviewer in the area of the tracing address for a visit. Where there was more than one address to be visited in different locations, the order of allocation was parental address, stable address then last interview address.

In addition to the defined tracing activities interviewers also followed up on leads they received as they judged to be appropriate. This included telephoning/visiting places of work and estate agents. Interviewers were instructed not to attempt to trace cohort members through social media.

At the end of each successful interview, interviewers asked the participant if they knew anyone else who had taken part in the study in previous waves. If they did, they asked them if they would be willing to pass on a doorstep card with a note of the interviewers name and phone number to the cohort member, along with a study leaflet. These materials were also given if the cohort member mentioned they knew someone else in the study before the interview was conducted.

In-office tracing at CLS
Cases returned as untraced were delivered to CLS in a file containing a record of all calls and tracing activities attempted in field, the outcomes of those attempts and interviewer comments made at the time of the attempted activity. Further office tracing was performed on these cases as a last attempt to locate cohort members. The additional office tracing involved further attempts to contact cohort members, parents and stable contacts by phone, email and letter; comments provided by the interviewers were used in this tracing.

Other forms of office tracing included asking to the secondary school where the cohort member studied to pass on a tracing letter, database searches involving the electoral register and phone directories, and searching on the internet and social networks.

Advertising via Facebook
At a late stage, as face-to-face fieldwork was drawing to a close, two means of advertising the study to those who had not yet participated were attempted via Facebook in a further effort to boost response.

The first of these was to target Facebook users whose email address was available to us with a banner advertisement when they visited Facebook.

In the second approach, all 26 year old Facebook users were targeted with a banner that gave a brief introduction to the study (this would be visible at most once per day over the period the advertisement was running).

In both instances, users were asked to click through to a screen where they could provide some contact information so that an email invitation to the web survey could be sent.

Despite the approach reaching over 150,000 individuals in the age group, neither of the approaches yielded any further interviews at this late stage of the fieldwork.

5.5 Reallocation and reissuing

Reallocations
Reallocation of cases took place throughout face-to-face fieldwork, reasons for reallocation during first issue were:

- Interviewer unable to cover work
- In field tracing identifying a new CM address outside the interviewers work area
- Tracing activities available outside the interviewers work area
- CLS tracing identifying a new CM address

Reissues
The occurred after a final outcome had been recorded at first issue with the following unproductive outcomes considered for reissue:

- Non-contact
- Refusal before interview
- Refusal during interview
- Contact with CM but no interview by end of first issue fieldwork
- Ill at home throughout field period
- Away/in hospital throughout field period
- Other reason, not covered elsewhere, for no interview
- Case not issued at first issue
- Other unknown eligibility - non-contact

All cases with these outcomes were reviewed by researchers to determine their suitability of reissue, with consideration given to interviewer comments and responses given to admin module questions on likelihood of conversion at reissue.

Cases identified as suitable for reissue were made available to FPMs for allocation. FPMs were instructed to reissue all cases with the only exception being no interviewer available to take the work. This differed from NatCen standard practice where FPMs review interviewer comments to assess suitability for reissue.

5.6 Interviewer training

Next Steps involved a number of technical innovations, new technology and new approaches to making contact, in addition to being a challenge in terms of tracing and gaining participation with this age group and given the time since the last interview. Interviewer training was particularly vital to the success of the study.

The general approach to the training was to separate the technical issues, in particular relating to new touch-screen devices for face-to-face interviewers and the use of new data collection software, from the study's requirements in terms of things like maximising response.

For both telephone and face-to-face interviewers, additional guidance was provided during the fieldwork process in an effort to improve response and to resolve queries with the technical process they were required to operate.

5.6.1 Telephone interviewer training

All telephone interviewers attended a one day project briefing, with the first section of the day focused on the functioning of the admin module and the second on the study and interviewing task.

The briefings were run by researchers from NatCen and CLS, and were managed by members of the NatCen field team. 40 interviewers were briefed in total, with around 10 in each briefing.

Briefing Content
Before attending the briefing interviewers were asked to complete pre-briefing task of familiarising themselves with the participant pack materials and participant website and listing out three facts that would help to persuade Next Steps cohort members to take part in the Age 25 survey.

The Project briefing covered the following topics:

- Background and overview of Next Steps.
- Introduction to the Age 25 survey.
- Development and design of Age 25 survey.
- Sample and feed-forward information provided and its use.
- Participant communications.
- Overview of the questionnaire, focussing on the event history calendar and SOC coding.
- Data linkage.
- The interviewer task.
- Maximising participation.

A workbook was used throughout the briefing with exercises being completed after each section of content; interviewers took part in practical exercises (group exercises and practice sessions) on explaining and answering queries on data linkage and on methods for maximising response. Interviewers were shown the video developed by NatCen for web participants on using the Event History Calendar and worked examples of SOC coding.

Practice sessions and homework task
Telephone interviewers were required to complete several tasks following the briefing, before beginning work on the project:

- Complete specified practice interview scenarios in the CAI programme.
- Read IBM DC and project instructions.
- Practice responses to FAQs and encouraging participation in pairs.

5.6.2 Face-to-Face

As with telephone interviewers, all face-to-face interviewers attended a one day project briefing before starting work on the study. In addition to the project briefings, interviewers attended a one day technical briefing to familiarise them with new laptops, interviewing software and paperless admin module. Briefings were timed so that interviewers attended the technical briefing approximately one week before the project briefing.

Pre-briefing homework and the project briefings were similar in content to those for telephone interviewers, although there was a greater focus on tracing and other relevant contact procedures.

A total of 214 interviewers were briefed, with briefings varying from 12 to 20 interviewers.

Project briefings sought to be as engaging as possible and using a range of mediums to deliver information and practical sessions to apply learning. In addition to the provision of information from slides, briefings included:

- Training videos on the Event History Calendar and participant engagement.
- One-to-one role play reinforcing explanation and responses to FAQs on the doorstep and around data linkage.
- Exercises for more complex elements of the questionnaire such as the event history calendar and SOC look-up.
- Exercises around the admin module and new procedures for call recording.
- Briefing workbook used throughout the briefing with exercises being completed after each section of content.

Practice sessions and homework task
Between the technical training and project briefing interviewers were required to complete several homework tasks:

- Complete 3 practice interviews covering a range of specified scenarios.
- Complete 2 specified contact scenarios in the admin module.
- Connect to their home Wi-Fi and syncronise IBM DC, contacting NatCen IT support with any problems.

5.6.3 Interviewer instructions

Interviewers were provided with a very comprehensive set of instructions for the study which were referenced during the briefing and retained for reference. Additions were made to these instructions to update advice on making contact and refusal conversion following the review of the soft launch (see Appendix B).

5.7 Quality control of fieldwork

Telephone

Tight fieldwork monitoring was carried out by supervisors (who run and monitor shifts and oversee quality) and by Telephone Unit managers and researchers. This monitoring covered a number of areas:

- Interview quality
- Strike rates and productivity
- Response rates (including data linking and sensitive questions consents)
- Interview length
- Following of call and outcome procedures
- Reasons for refusals and consistency

All telephone interviewers were subject to silent monitoring during the early stages of their work on the project to ensure they were carrying out interviews to the required standards. There was specific focus on the elements of the questionnaire most likely to provide divergence in practice, such as around the event history calendar and SOC coding. As well as listening in to interviews, supervisors were able to see their screens and the responses they recorded live.

This monitoring activity was in addition to the general monitoring that supervisors are able to carry out as a result of their close proximity to interviewers in the unit.

The sample management system ensured that cases were presented to interviewers in line with the required call patterns.

Supervisors and TU managers monitored interviewer performance in terms of both their productivity (strike rates), the response rates they achieved (compared to the response expectation for their cases) and consent to data linkage. Interviewers were identified for close monitoring / additional training where their performance fell too far below the mean on those measures. On an ongoing basis, Supervisors sought to share the best practice developed by high performing interviewers.

Face-to-Face

Performance monitoring
The performance of individual interviewers was monitored and managed by Field Performance Managers (FPMs). Each FPM manages a small group of interviewers speaking with each on a weekly basis in order to discuss their progress and agree solutions to any problems they might be experiencing. FPMs report to Area Managers who monitor the performance of each survey in their field area, and will intervene via the FPM to ensure effective action plans are in place for any interviewers who are falling behind on their targets. On a national level, strategic management and resourcing decisions were made by the Field Manager.

In addition to coverage milestones, targets were set for response, consent to Data Linkage and CASI completion. These targets were to act as an expectation rather a strict requirement with FPMs monitoring each interviewer's performance on these measures and responding to situations where interviewers are not meeting targets on an individual basis. FPMs were provided with daily updated reports of these measures at a case and interviewer level.

In general interviewer quality assessment is carried out above the project level (all interviewers are accompanied in the field by a supervisor twice a year and 10% of all interviews are subject to a telephone back-check).

Quality assurance process

Cases that were returned as no contact, address inaccessible or not found or as untraced movers where there were tracing activities available but not attempted were entered into a quality assurance process to ensure that they met the quality requirements of this study in terms of call patterns, recording of call information and tracing.

A report of these cases was produced for FPMs to review with input from interviewers. FPMs were asked to determine if the correct call/tracing procedures had been carried out and the correct outcome recorded. Where there were activities outstanding the case was issued back out into field (either to the same interviewer or another if further activities were in another area), for further work to be carried out. Outcome codes were changed where these were incorrectly assigned and untraced movers where the interviewer confirmed all possible tracing had been attempted were included in the untraced mover file delivered to CLS for further in office tracing.

5.8 Timing of fieldwork

The eventual pattern of fieldwork is provided in Figure 5:8 below. The web 'start' is the point at which cohort members would have been able to access the web questionnaire (i.e. when emails and letters arrived with them). Within F2F, '1st issue' refers to the initial issue of the case to interviewers within the first fieldwork period for that batch. The 'mop-up' phase followed this first period and was intended to be used for honouring appointments and completing tracing activities / attempts on traced cases. The 'reissue' phase was for those unproductive cases issued as a separate fieldwork period following the allocation to the original interviewer.

Figure 5:8 Timing of fieldwork by mode and batch

		Batch 1	Batch 2	Batch 3	Batch 4
WEB					
	Start	20-Aug-15	12-Nov-15	07-Jan-16	22-Jan-16
	End	14-Feb-16	25-Sep-16	25-Sep-16	25-Sep-16
	Duration	21	21	21	21
TEL					
	Start	17-Sep-15	03-Dec-15	28-Jan-16	11-Feb-16
	End	15-Oct-15	21-Jan-16	10-Mar-16	24-Mar-16
	Duration	28	49	42	42
F2F					
	1st issue				
	Start	12-Jan-16	05-Apr-16	19-Apr-16	03-May-16
	End	20-Mar-16	29-May-16	12-Jun-16	26-Jun-16
	Duration	68	54	54	54
	Mop-up				
	Start	21-Mar-16	30-May-16	13-Jun-16	27-Jun-16
	End	05-Jun-16	25-Sep-16	25-Sep-16	25-Sep-16
	Duration	76	118	104	90
	Reissue				
	Start	25-Apr-16	11-Jul-16	11-Jul-16	25-Jul-16
	End	05-Jun-16	25-Sep-16	25-Sep-16	25-Sep-16
	Duration	41	76	76	62

Variations from the intended timetable

The most significant variation from the intended design related to extensions to the timetable. This included several months of delay to fieldwork starting following the pilot in late 2014 due to a combination of problems with the scale and technical difficulty of the scripting task at NatCen and obtaining ethical clearance from HSCIC for tracing work.

Further delays were encountered once fieldwork started. A major software bug in the IBM DC software used for the study which affected the syncing of data from interviewer laptops meant that face-to-face fieldwork had to pause for three months while a solution was developed.

Finally, despite the best efforts of interviewers and their managers, face-to-face fieldwork periods were extended considerably in the mop up stages in order to be able

to work the cases issued as intended. Much of this related to the difficulty of the task in terms of elongated contact processes and tracing activity. As a result of the challenges faced by interviewers, including low response rates, it was necessary to relaunch fieldwork and focus relatively intense management on it to motivate and to ensure all cases were worked.

6 Response

6.1 Response by mode

Table 6:1 below shows the overall response to the survey by mode. Outcomes in the table are prioritised between modes, such that outcomes for the 'total' survey are the most relevant for the study overall, whichever the mode in which they were achieved. For instance, partial web interviews are prioritised over unproductive face-to-face outcomes, and refusals (where contact was made) are prioritised over non-contacts.

A total of 15,531 cohort members were issued for fieldwork, with 423 found to be ineligible during fieldwork. Interviews were achieved with 7,707 cohort members, representing a 51% response rate. Of the total, 7,481 were fully productive (97%).

This response rate was lower than originally hoped. A total of 8,682 interviews had been achieved in Wave 7 in 2010 where only those productive in the previous wave a year earlier were issued for fieldwork. This represented a 90% response rate of those cases (the equivalent figure for last wave productives in Wave 8 was 69%, see Table 6:2). The length of time since the previous interview was a minimum of 5 years for Wave 8, which proved to be very significant for fieldwork for this age group, as discussed below.

Web response

Including partial interviews, most of which were issued to later modes and some of which were completed in those modes, 4,909 interviews were achieved via web, representing a 32% response rate. This included web interviews achieved during telephone and face-to-face fieldwork (4%). Given the high level of movers in the sample (see Table 6:6) and the relatively long gap since the last interview (a minimum of 5 years and up to 11 years) this represents a relatively strong result (the web response rate in Wave 7 was 40%).

Telephone response

Those not fully productive in web were moved to telephone fieldwork where a telephone number was available. In Batches 2 to 4, only those who had taken part in Wave 7 were issued. A total of 5,297 cases were issued to this mode, and 719 interviews achieved. This represented a very low 14% response rate or 5% of all cases issued (40% of all cases were interviewed by telephone in Wave 7). This was largely due to the level of non-contacts with this sample. It proved very difficult to get through to cohort members, even where numbers were found to be still valid, despite systematic attempts at different times of the day and days of the week and up to 15 calls being made. Calls often went unanswered. Even where contact was made, convincing cohort members to participate on the phone was difficult (the co-operation rate was 28%). It was more often the case that contact with the CM just did not result in an interview at that point, rather than outright refusal (25% compared to 8%).

Face-to-face response

As a result of a lower than anticipated response rate after the first two modes in the sequence, many more cases than anticipated needed to be issued for face-to-face fieldwork. Of the 10,357 issued to the face-to-face mode, 2,220 were interviewed (a 22% response rate, or 14% of all issued cases).

This level of response was again lower than anticipated, but was enough to push the overall response rate to 51%.

This represented a very significant level of effort by interviewers. The level of tracing required was very high compared with other longitudinal studies (see Table 6:6), and the co-operation rate was relatively low (47%). This made it a particularly demotivating task for interviewers in combination with a relatively dispersed sample. Despite the considerable efforts to trace in the field and office described in Chapter 5, the level of untraced movers was 34%.

Non-contact was also high, with the whole household not being contacted in 9% of cases, sometimes due to a new address being found late in fieldwork. Even where contact was made with the household, interviewers noted it was difficult to make contact with the cohort member themselves. Interviewers very often made repeated contact with cohort members' parents who would sometimes do their best to encourage their son or daughter to make contact or participate, and at other times act as a gatekeeper who would try to protect them from further contact. Proxy refusals stood at 4% for this reason, with 9% of cohort members refusing in person.

Table 6:1	Response by mode of data collection							
	Web		**Tel**		**F2F**		**Total***	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Issued sample	15,531		5,297		10,357		15,531	
Total ineligible	1		67		365		423	
Moved out of UK	0		56		251		298	
Died	1		4		7		12	
Armed forces	0		4		37		41	
In prison	0				29		28	
Other ineligible	0		3		41		44	
Total eligible	15,530	100%	5,230	100%	9,992	100%	15,108	100%
Total uncertain eligibility	10,553	68%	234	4%	3,697	37%	3,159	21%
Untraced mover	0	0%	74	1%	3,373	34%	2,984	20%
Traced mover - not attempted	0	0%		0%	147	1%	97	1%
Other not attempted	0	0%	153	3%	145	1%	52	0%
Not located / inaccessible	0	0%		0%	19	0%	17	0%
Other unknown eligibility	0	0%	7	0%	13	0%	9	0%
Web unproductive	10,553	68%		0%		0%		0%
Productive interview	4,909	32%	719	14%	2,220	22%	7,707	51%
Fully productive interview	4,615	30%	660	13%	2,206	22%	7,481	50%
Partial interview	294	2%	59	1%	14	0%	226	1%
Refusal	65	0%	430	8%	1,332	13%	1,564	10%
Office refusal	4	0%	6	0%	32	0%	34	0%
Refusal before interview	0	0%	295	6%	920	9%	1,069	7%
Refusal by proxy	0	0%	112	2%	355	4%	383	3%
Refusal during interview	61	0%	17	0%	11	0%	64	0%

Data deleted at request of CM	0	0%	0	0%	14	0%	14	0%
Non-contact	0	0%	2,424	46%	1,579	16%	1,372	9%
Non-contact with household	0	0%	2,026	39%	914	9%	776	5%
Non-contact with CM	0	0%	398	8%	665	7%	596	4%
Other unproductive	3	0%	1,423	27%	1,164	12%	1,306	9%
Contact with CM, no interview by end of fieldwork	0	0%	1,307	25%	485	5%	681	5%
Broken appointment, no re-contact	0	0%	6	0%	183	2%	180	1%
Ill at home throughout field period	0	0%	1	0%	17	0%	14	0%
Away/in hospital throughout field period	0	0%	28	1%	57	1%	68	0%
Physically or mentally unable/incompetent	0	0%	3	0%	31	0%	32	0%
Technical failure	3	0%	0	0%	10	0%	10	0%
Other unproductive	0	0%	78	1%	381	4%	321	2%
Response rate (productive/(total issued-ineligible)		32%		14%		22%		51%
Co-operation rate (productive/(productive+refusal+other unproductive)		NA		28%		47%		NA

* 'Total' response refers to prioritised outcomes across the modes (multimode outcome) with partial productives prioritised above unproductives and unproductives where contact was made prioritised over those where there was no contact.

6.2 Response by sample characteristics

For those last participating in Wave 7 (53% of the total issued sample), the overall response rate was 69% (Table 6:2). This was considerably higher than for those who had not participated in that most recent waves, and was lower the further it was since the last interview (43% of those last participating in Wave 6 down to 26% for those in Wave 1 – although as given they were interviewed back in 2004 this may be considered a positive result).

Co-operation rates were also considerably higher for Wave 7 cases compared to those participating less recently, although the differences were less substantial (80% for Wave 7 compared to 67% for Wave 6). There was not a consistent decline in co-operation rates between Wave 5 and Wave 1 cases, suggesting that the beneficial impact of a 'recent' interview on willingness to participate had fallen away for those not participating after Wave 5.

The major reason for the difference in the response rates between the last wave of interview groups was the contact rate. Nearly two-fifths (38%) were untraced movers amongst those who had not been interviewed since Wave 1 with a further 15% non-contacts, compared with 8% and 5% respectively for Wave 7 cases.

Table 6:2   Response by last wave of participation prior to Wave 8

| | Last wave of participation | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Wave 1 | | Wave 2 | | Wave 3 | | Wave 4 | | Wave 5 | | Wave 6 | | Wave 7 | | Total | |
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Issued sample	2,121		1,050		946		940		956		1,237		8,280		15,531	
Total ineligible	59		27		33		33		44		50		177		423	
Moved out of UK	44		17		23		18		29		30		137		298	
Died	1		1		0		2		2		1		5		12	
Armed forces	4		1		4		2		8		10		12		41	
In prison	7		5		4		4		1		4		3		28	
Other ineligible	3		3		2		7		4		5		20		44	
Total eligible	2,062	100%	1,023	100%	913	100%	907	100%	912	100%	1,187	100%	8,103	100%	15,108	100%
Total uncertain eligibility	813	39%	432	42%	367	40%	341	38%	269	29%	291	25%	646	8%	3,159	21%
Untraced mover	775	38%	415	41%	341	37%	318	35%	249	27%	277	23%	609	8%	2,984	20%
Traced mover - not attempted	14	1%	9	1%	12	1%	11	1%	13	1%	7	1%	31	0%	97	1%
Other not attempted	16	1%	6	1%	9	1%	8	1%	4	0%	5	0%	4	0%	52	0%
Not located / inaccessible	6	0%	2	0%	2	0%	3	0%	2	0%	1	0%	1	0%	17	0%
Other unknown eligibility	2	0%	0	0%	3	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	9	0%
Web unproductive	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Productive interview	535	26%	274	27%	258	28%	229	25%	318	35%	507	43%	5,585	69%	7,707	51%
Fully productive interview	509	25%	262	26%	250	27%	216	24%	305	33%	496	42%	5,442	67%	7,481	50%
Partial interview	26	1%	12	1%	8	1%	13	1%	13	1%	11	1%	143	2%	226	1%
Refusal	261	13%	114	11%	100	11%	129	14%	135	15%	140	12%	685	8%	1,564	10%

Office refusal	4	0%	3	0%	2	0%	6	1%	2	0%	2	0%	15	0%	34	0%
Refusal before interview	184	9%	72	7%	68	7%	82	9%	92	10%	99	8%	472	6%	1,069	7%
Refusal by proxy	61	3%	34	3%	27	3%	38	4%	38	4%	36	3%	149	2%	383	3%
Refusal during interview	7	0%	3	0%	2	0%	1	0%	3	0%	3	0%	45	1%	64	0%
Data deleted at request of CM	5	0%	2	0%	1	0%	2	0%	0	0%	0	0%	4	0%	14	0%
Non-contact	307	15%	135	13%	121	13%	125	14%	114	13%	135	11%	435	5%	1,372	9%
Non-contact with household	200	10%	81	8%	81	9%	74	8%	57	6%	79	7%	204	3%	776	5%
Non-contact with CM	107	5%	54	5%	40	4%	51	6%	57	6%	56	5%	231	3%	596	4%
Other unproductive	146	7%	68	7%	67	7%	83	9%	76	8%	114	10%	752	9%	1,306	9%
Contact with CM, no interview by end of fieldwork	42	2%	21	2%	22	2%	22	2%	27	3%	46	4%	501	6%	681	5%
Broken appointment, no re-contact	28	1%	17	2%	17	2%	20	2%	13	1%	19	2%	66	1%	180	1%
Ill at home throughout field period	1	0%	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%	5	1%	3	0%	3	0%	14	0%
Away/in hospital throughout field period	7	0%	6	1%	3	0%	5	1%	3	0%	7	1%	37	0%	68	0%
Physically or mentally unable/incompetent	8	0%	3	0%	1	0%	6	1%	1	0%	6	1%	7	0%	32	0%
Technical failure	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%	2	0%	5	0%	10	0%
Other unproductive	59	3%	20	2%	23	3%	29	3%	26	3%	31	3%	133	2%	321	2%
Response rate (productive/(total issued-ineligible)		26%		27%		28%		25%		35%		43%		69%		51%
Co-operation rate (productive/(productive+refusal+other unproductive)		57%		60%		61%		52%		60%		67%		80%		73%

Note: In 1 case the last wave was not provided. This case is included in the total, but not presented as a separate column.

As discussed in Chapter 2, issued sample was grouped into four balanced batches in order to enable efficient management of fieldwork. The first of these was a 'soft launch' where procedures and response rates could be tested. Table 6:3 shows the response for each batch. The overall response is relatively similar for each, with Batch 1 slightly higher and Batch 4 slightly lower (53% compared to 49%). In Batches 2 to 4, cases that did not

participate in Wave 7 were not included in the telephone phase, which may have slightly reduced overall response there. However, in Batch 4, the initial web response rate was slightly lower than for the other batches. Overall, fieldwork with the soft launch batch performed similarly to subsequent batches, indicating that it was relatively successful in its aim of providing accurate response estimates for planning purposes.

Table 6:3	Response by fieldwork batch									
	Batch									
	Batch 1 (soft launch)		**Batch 2**		**Batch 3**		**Batch 4**		**Total**	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Issued sample	2215		4453		4504		4359		15531	
Total ineligible	64		131		122		106		423	
Moved out of UK	37		96		83		82		298	
Died	1		4		3		4		12	
Armed forces	9		10		16		6		41	
In prison	6		7		9		6		28	
Other ineligible	11		14		11		8		44	
Total eligible	2151	100%	4322	100%	4382	100%	4253	100%	15108	100%
Total uncertain eligibility	399	19%	879	20%	934	21%	947	22%	3159	21%
Untraced mover	388	18%	830	19%	893	20%	873	21%	2984	20%
Traced mover - not attempted	4	0%	26	1%	21	0%	46	1%	97	1%
Other not attempted	4	0%	17	0%	11	0%	20	0%	52	0%
Not located / inaccessible	2	0%	5	0%	8	0%	2	0%	17	0%
Other unknown eligibility	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	6	0%	9	0%
Web unproductive	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%

Productive interview	1136	53%	2252	52%	2253	51%	2066	49%	7707	51%
Fully productive interview	1100	51%	2185	51%	2194	50%	2002	47%	7481	50%
Partial interview	36	2%	67	2%	59	1%	64	2%	226	1%
Refusal	260	12%	460	11%	435	10%	409	10%	1564	10%
Office refusal	4	0%	11	0%	9	0%	10	0%	34	0%
Refusal before interview	179	8%	327	8%	294	7%	269	6%	1069	7%
Refusal by proxy	65	3%	102	2%	108	2%	108	3%	383	3%
Refusal during interview	12	1%	17	0%	20	0%	15	0%	64	0%
Data deleted at request of CM	0	0%	3	0%	4	0%	7	0%	14	0%
Non-contact	186	9%	371	9%	384	9%	431	10%	1372	9%
Non-contact with household	100	5%	210	5%	226	5%	240	6%	776	5%
Non-contact with CM	86	4%	161	4%	158	4%	191	4%	596	4%
Other unproductive	170	8%	360	8%	376	9%	400	9%	1306	9%
Contact with CM, no interview by end of fieldwork	85	4%	170	4%	207	5%	219	5%	681	5%
Broken appointment, no re-contact	25	1%	43	1%	66	2%	46	1%	180	1%
Ill at home throughout field period	1	0%	4	0%	5	0%	4	0%	14	0%
Away/in hospital throughout field period	10	0%	25	1%	12	0%	21	0%	68	0%
Physically or mentally unable/incompetent	1	0%	8	0%	10	0%	13	0%	32	0%
Technical failure	2	0%	4	0%	0	0%	4	0%	10	0%
Other unproductive	46	2%	106	2%	76	2%	93	2%	321	2%
Response rate (productive/(total issued-ineligible)		53%		52%		51%		49%		51%
Co-operation rate (productive/(productive+refusal+other unproductive)		73%		73%		74%		72%		73%

The source of the address at the start of fieldwork was significantly related to response. Where updates had been obtained from the cohort member between their last interview and the start of fieldwork, the response rate was 71% (Table 6:4). Where the address was that from the last interview, the response rate was 54%, with the level of untraced movers at 17% after tracing efforts during fieldwork. Where there had been an update from the HSCIC health records, the response rate was 53% and the untraced mover rate 20%. Where an update was obtained from databases held at the Department for Education (Individualised Learner Record and National Pupil Database) the response rate dropped to 31% and the untraced mover rate was 31%.

Table 6:4 Response by source of address at start of fieldwork										
	Address source									
	Address at last interview		**Update from ILR/NPD records**		**Update from HSCIC records**		**Contact with CM (since last interview)**		**Total**	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Issued sample	9055		2755		2461		1177		15,531	
Total ineligible	238		93		46		44		423	
Moved out of UK	187		53		29		28		298	
Died	7		2		2		1		12	
Armed forces	14		23		3		1		41	
In prison	10		6		2		9		28	
Other ineligible	20		9		10		5		44	
Total eligible	8817	100%	2662	100%	2415	100%	1133	100%	15108	100%
Total uncertain eligibility	1597	18%	874	33%	527	22%	153	14%	3159	21%
Untraced mover	1514	17%	833	31%	490	20%	141	12%	2984	20%

Traced mover - not attempted	55	1%	20	1%	16	1%	5	0%	97	1%
Other not attempted	13	0%	16	1%	17	1%	5	0%	52	0%
Not located / inaccessible	11	0%	2	0%	2	0%	2	0%	17	0%
Other unknown eligibility	4	0%	3	0%	2	0%	0	0%	9	0%
Web unproductive	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Productive interview	4743	54%	828	31%	1269	53%	806	71%	7707	51%
Fully productive interview	4595	52%	799	30%	1232	51%	794	70%	7481	50%
Partial interview	148	2%	29	1%	37	2%	12	1%	226	1%
Refusal	974	11%	358	13%	172	7%	56	5%	1564	10%
Office refusal	16	0%	12	0%	6	0%	0	0%	34	0%
Refusal before interview	671	8%	231	9%	131	5%	34	3%	1069	7%
Refusal by proxy	236	3%	101	4%	29	1%	15	1%	383	3%
Refusal during interview	43	0%	10	0%	5	0%	6	1%	64	0%
Data deleted at request of CM	8	0%	4	0%	1	0%	1	0%	14	0%
Non-contact	673	8%	381	14%	246	10%	66	6%	1372	9%
Non-contact with household	335	4%	239	9%	162	7%	35	3%	776	5%
Non-contact with CM	338	4%	142	5%	84	3%	31	3%	596	4%
Other unproductive	830	9%	221	8%	201	8%	52	5%	1306	9%
Contact with CM, no interview by end of fieldwork	476	5%	86	3%	96	4%	22	2%	681	5%
Broken appointment, no re-contact	97	1%	43	2%	31	1%	9	1%	180	1%
Ill at home throughout field period	9	0%	1	0%	2	0%	2	0%	14	0%
Away/in hospital throughout field period	40	0%	12	0%	10	0%	5	0%	68	0%
Physically or mentally unable/incompetent	18	0%	9	0%	5	0%	0	0%	32	0%
Technical failure	5	0%	2	0%	3	0%	0	0%	10	0%

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Other unproductive	185	2%	68	3%	54	2%	14	1%	321	2%
Response rate (productive/(total issued-ineligible))		54%		31%		53%		71%		51%
Co-operation rate (productive/(productive+refusal+other unproductive))		72%		59%		77%		88%		73%
Note: In 23 cases the address source was described as 'other'. These cases are included in the total, but not presented as a separate column.										

The majority of interviews (64%) were achieved via web (Table 6:5). Some of these were partials (4% of all interviews) and would have been issued at the subsequent modes: 62% of fully productive interviews were achieved via web. Including partials, 9% of interviews were achieved via telephone (the next mode in the sequence). In face-to-face mode, 29% of interviews were achieved. In Wave 7, 46% of all interviews were achieved online.

Those who last participated in Wave 7 of Next Steps were much more likely to have provided an interview via web than those who had not participated for a longer period of time. This is likely to reflect the availability and accuracy of contact information; particularly email addresses. Those who had not been contacted since Waves 1 or 2 back in 2004 and 2005 were much more likely to have been interviewed by face-to-face (although after Batch 1, cases were not issued to telephone, so the comparison with Wave 7 cases is not straightforward). This emphasises the importance of the face-to-face stage in bringing specific hard-to-reach groups back into the surveyed sample.

Table 6:5 Mode of productive interviews by last wave of participation								
Last wave of participation								
	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3	Wave 4	Wave 5	Wave 6	Wave 7	Total
Issued to Web	2121	1050	946	940	956	1237	8280	15531
Productive in Web	254	112	132	113	178	269	3850	4909
% of issued to Web	12%	11%	14%	12%	19%	22%	46%	32%
% of all eligible cases	12%	11%	14%	12%	20%	23%	48%	32%
% of total achieved	47%	41%	51%	49%	56%	53%	69%	64%

Issued to Tel	4	0	4	74	108	144	4963	5297
Productive in Tel	1	0	0	3	3	10	702	719
% of issued to Tel	25%	0%	0%	4%	3%	7%	14%	14%
% of all eligible cases	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	9%	5%
% of total achieved	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	2%	13%	9%
Issued to F2F	1948	966	841	857	808	999	3938	10357
Productive in F2F	299	163	134	119	144	236	1125	2220
% of issued to F2F	15%	17%	16%	14%	18%	24%	29%	21%
% of all eligible cases	15%	16%	15%	13%	16%	20%	14%	15%
% of total achieved	56%	59%	52%	52%	45%	47%	20%	29%
Total issued	2121	1050	946	940	956	1237	8280	15531
Total productive	535	274	258	229	318	507	5585	7707
% of issued	25%	26%	27%	24%	33%	41%	67%	50%

6.3 Tracing response by mode

During live fieldwork a total of 7052 (45%) cohort members were identified as having moved from the original address at the start of fieldwork. This includes cases identified in web interviews, telephone fieldwork and face-to-face fieldwork (not included in this figure were movers who were identified via cohort members responding to the participant mailing before the start of fieldwork).

Of those identified as movers new addresses were collected for 4,119 (58%) with new addresses being collected in web interviews for 19% of movers, during the telephone phase (telephone calls, tracing and interviews) for 6%, during the face-to-face phase (face-to-face calls, tracing and interviews) for 29% and in-office tracing for 5%.

Most of those traced during the face-to-face fieldwork were traced via the current occupier (16% of all movers). In practice this would often be a parent of the cohort member. A separate address was available for the parent in some instance so visiting or telephoning this was an additional source of new addresses for the cohort member (4% of movers).

Stable contacts were a further source of new addresses, with visits or calls to them providing a further 186 addresses (3%). A neighbour (which in practice could have been anyone in the area local to the issued address) contributed a further 2% of mover addresses.

Interviews were achieved with 947 cases (41%) amongst movers that were not just identified during web or other interviews (i.e. of those for whom tracing work was carried out as part of the fieldwork process – some cohort members noted a change of address during an interview). This represents 12% of the total interviews achieved. Telephone tracing led to 43 productive telephone interviews and face-to-face tracing led to 693 productive face-to-face interviews.

Table 6:6 Level of movers and tracing		
	n	*% of total issued*
Total issued (all cases issued to Web)	15531	100%
Issued to Tel	5297	34%
Issued to FTF	10357	67%
Total movers identified[1]	7052	45%
		% of movers
Total traced (new address obtained at any point in fieldwork)	4119	58%
Traced in Web (new address obtained in Web interview)	1323	19%
Traced in Tel (new address obtained)	395	6%
Traced via cohort member's number	144	2%
Traced via stable contact's number	13	0%
New address obtained in Tel interview	238	3%

Traced in F2F (new address obtained)	2040	29%
Traced via current occupier	1183	16%
Traced via parent	303	4%
Traced via stable contact	186	3%
Traced via neighbour	146	2%
New address obtained in F2F interview	222	3%
Traced in office (new address)	361	5%
		% of those traced(excluding where change of address flagged in interview)
Total interviewed [2]	947	41%
Interviewed via Web	142	6%
Interviewed during Tel	44	2%
Interviewed during F2F	761	33%
% interviewed by Tel of traced in Tel	43	27%
% interviewed by F2F of traced in F2F	693	38%
% interviewed of traced	947	41%

[1] *Includes a) cases confirmed as having moved in Tel/F2F calls to the cohort member, b) cases with a new address collected in tracing activity in Tel / F2F, c) cases with an untraced mover outcome at any point in fieldwork or a final outcome that suggested a mover, d) cases where a new address was collected in the interview (particularly during web).*

[2] *Base excludes cases where there was no tracing and new address collected in interview (web completes before fieldwork started)*

The final response position for traced movers is provided in Table 6:7. Overall, the response rate was 43% for traced movers including 47% amongst those traced by a face-to-face interviewer.

Cases that were traced by CLS using an in-office approach produced a 13% response rate, with relatively high untraced mover outcomes for the new address and non-contacts. Some of these cases were not released for fieldwork until late in the fieldwork period and some were not worked to the required call pattern. A 70% response rate was achieved among traced cases in the telephone phase, so particularly effective in the small number of cases where tracing was successful.

Table 6:7   Response for traced cases

	Traced in Tel		Traced in F2F by interviewer		Traced by CLS		Total traced	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Issued sample	157	7%	1818	78%	361	15%	2336	100
Total ineligible	6		123		6		135	
Moved out of UK	5		106		0		111	
Died	0		0		1		1	
Armed forces	0		5		0		5	
In prison	0		3		0		3	
Other ineligible	1		9		5		15	
Total eligible	151		1695		355		2201	
Total uncertain eligibility	1	1%	302	18%	156	44%	459	21%
Untraced mover	1	1%	255	15%	121	34%	377	17%
Traced mover - not attempted	0	0%	41	2%	33	9%	74	3%
Other not attempted	0	0%	4	0%	2	1%	6	0%
Not located / inaccessible	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%
Other unknown eligibility	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%	1	0%
Web unproductive	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Productive interview	106	70%	796	47%	45	13%	947	43%
Fully productive interview	101	67%	761	45%	43	12%	905	41%
Partial interview	5	3%	35	2%	2	1%	42	2%

Refusal	14	9%	215	13%	28	8%	257	12%
Office refusal	0	0%	3	0%	0	0%	3	0%
Refusal before interview	11	7%	161	9%	20	6%	192	9%
Refusal by proxy	3	2%	45	3%	7	2%	55	2%
Refusal during interview	0	0%	4	0%	0	0%	4	0%
Data deleted at request of CM	0	0%	2	0%	1	0%	3	0%
Non-contact	3	2%	104	6%	84	24%	191	9%
Non-contact with household	2	1%	31	2%	59	17%	92	4%
Non-contact with CM	1	1%	73	4%	25	7%	99	4%
Other unproductive	27	18%	278	16%	42	12%	347	16%
Contact with CM, no interview by end of fieldwork	23	15%	132	8%	18	5%	173	8%
Broken appointment, no re-contact	0	0%	49	3%	7	2%	56	3%
Ill at home throughout field period	0	0%	2	0%	0	0%	2	0%
Away/in hospital throughout field period	1	1%	9	1%	2	1%	12	1%
Physically or mentally unable/incompetent	0	0%	6	0%	0	0%	6	0%
Technical failure	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Other unproductive	3	2%	80	5%	15	4%	98	4%
Response rate (productive/(total issued-ineligible)		70%		47%		13%		43%
Co-operation rate (productive/(productive+refusal+other unproductive)		72%		62%		39%		61%

6.4 Response to reissues

Across the issued batches, 10% of cases issued for face-to-face fieldwork were identified to be reissued to interviewers to be worked again (see Chapter 5 for a description of which cases were eligible for reissue).

Table 6:8 provides the response to these reissue cases at that issue. The overall response rate was 7%, with a co-operation rate of 21%. However, 29% of reissue cases were not in the end worked by an interviewer despite having been allocated (7% were therefore allocated and worked of all cases issued to face-to-face fieldwork, and the response rate was 9% excluding those not worked).

Of those that were worked, non-contact was the major unproductive category, with refusals relatively high compared with the first issue fieldwork (as we would expect).

Table 6:8 Response for reissues in face-to-face		
	Reissues	
	n	%
Total reissued	1017	
Total ineligible	14	
Moved out of UK	5	
Died	1	
Armed forces	2	
In prison	1	
Other ineligible	5	
Total eligible	1003	100%
Total uncertain eligibility	404	40%
Untraced mover	102	10%
Traced mover - not attempted	13	1%
Other not attempted	289	29%
Not located / inaccessible	0	0%
Other unknown eligibility	0	0%
Web unproductive	0	0%
Productive interview	67	7%
Fully productive interview	67	7%
Partial interview	0	0%
Refusal	151	15%
Office refusal	2	0%
Refusal before interview	90	9%
Refusal by proxy	56	6%
Refusal during interview	0	0%
Data deleted at request of CM	3	0%

Non-contact	271	27%
Non-contact with household	171	17%
Non-contact with CM	100	10%
Other unproductive	108	11%
Contact with CM, no interview by end of fieldwork	36	4%
Broken appointment, no re-contact	18	2%
Ill at home throughout field period	3	0%
Away/in hospital throughout field period	8	1%
Physically or mentally unable/incompetent	1	0%
Technical failure	1	0%
Other unproductive	41	4%
Response rate (productive/(total issued-ineligible)		7%
Co-operation rate (productive/(productive+refusal+other unproductive)		21%

6.5 Self-completion response

As described in Chapter 3, sensitive questions were administered using a self-completion approach during face-to-face. It was preferred that they were completed via self-completion, but participants could choose to have the interviewer read them out, for instance due to literacy or sight issues.

As Table 6:9 shows, the vast majority accepted the sensitive questions (97%) and were able to complete via self-completion.

Amongst those who did not accept the module, in 37% of cases this was due to not being able to complete the module as a self-completion. Amongst those refusing, the most common reason was that the interview had already taken too long.

Table 6:9	Consent to the self-completion of sensitive questions in face-to-face	
	Total	
	n	%
Total F2F fully productive interviews	2206	100
Agreed to sensitive questions	**2135**	**97%**
Completed by CM	*2071*	*94%*
Read out by interviewer	*64*	*3%*
Not completed	**73**	**3%**
Unable to complete	*27*	*1%*
Refused	46	2%
Didn't like computer	*5*	*0%*
Child crying/needed attention etc.	*8*	*0%*
Worried about confidentiality	*5*	*0%*
Concerned because someone else was present	*2*	*0%*

	n	%
Couldn't be bothered	*11*	*0%*
Interview taking too long/ran out of time	*21*	*1%*
Other	*3*	*0%*

6.6 Data linkage consent

Data linkage was a very important part of the study and considerable effort was expended in developing an approach that would maximise consent (see Chapter 4).

Table 6:10 provides the level of consent by mode for each of the separate requests for data linkage. Overall, the level of consent was higher for telephone phase (90%) and face-to-face (89%) compared to web (69%) where there was no interviewer to answer questions and provide reassurance.

Overall, the level of any consent to any linkage was 77%. There was considerable variation within the types of consent being requested, with higher levels of consent for education (70%) and relatively low for the Department for Work and Pensions (59%).

| Table 6:10 Consent to data linkage by mode of data collection								
	Web		Tel		F2F		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Total asked consent questions (includes partials reaching this point in the questionnaire)	4635	100%	660	100%	2207	100%	7502	100%
Any consent	3190	69%	592	90%	1967	89%	5749	77%
NHS	2558	55%	505	77%	1839	83%	4902	65%
Education	2806	61%	564	85%	1893	86%	5263	70%
UCAS	2699	58%	555	84%	1832	83%	5086	68%
Student Loans Company	2327	50%	491	74%	1688	76%	4506	60%
HMRC	2147	46%	469	71%	1676	76%	4292	57%
DWP	2230	48%	505	77%	1727	78%	4462	59%
MoJ	2526	54%	513	78%	1740	79%	4779	64%
NINO	2039	44%	307	47%	1420	64%	3766	50%
No consent	1445	31%	68	10%	240	11%	1753	23%
Consent withdrawn	0	0%	0	0%	2	0%	2	0%
Other no consent	1445	31%	68	10%	238	11%	1751	23%

6.7 Pattern of web response and email outcomes

The cumulative progression of web interviews achieved during the 3 week web-only phase is shown in Figure 6:1. In total, 4,222 web interviews were achieved in this period, representing a 27% response rate. Advance letters arrived on day 1 in the chart, along with advance emails for those with an email address. Reminder letters,

emails and texts were sent to those who had not responded by that point in the period and where contact information was available. See section 5.3.1 for a description of the timing of these various sends.

After the first day, there was a steady progression in the completion of web interviews, with a rise in the rate of completion in the day or two following each reminder (letters were the most widely received, email addresses were available for 58% of cases).

Figure 6:1   Cumulative web interviews over web-only phase
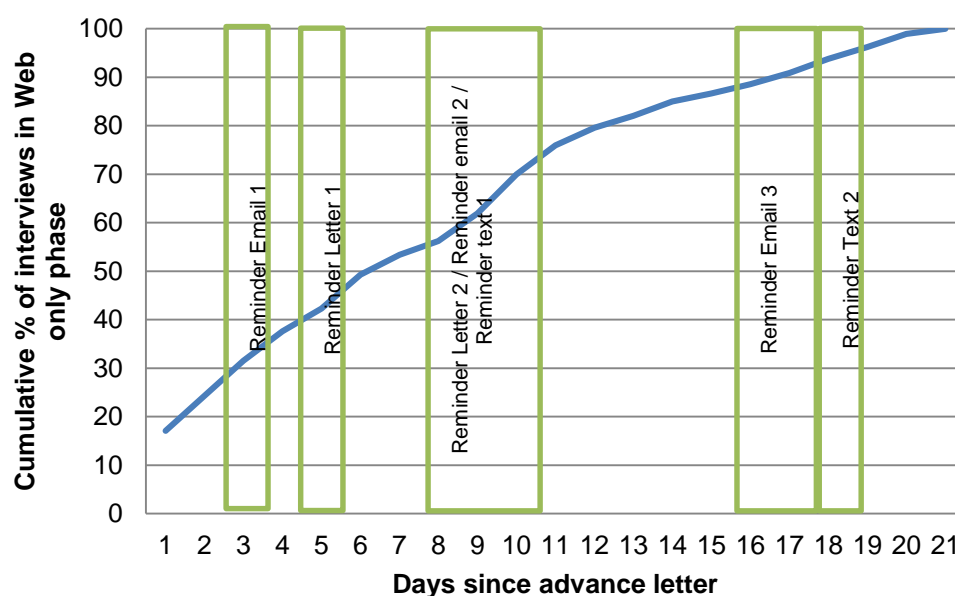
A further 687 interviews (4% of cases) completed a web interview after the 3 week web-only phase, often at the encouragement of interviewers (Table 6:11). There was a steady flow of interviews from this source throughout the fieldwork period.

Table 6:11   Stage of process that web productive achieved

Base: all Web productives	n	%
Before any reminders	957	19
After email reminder 1	526	11
After letter reminder 1	893	18
After email reminder 2/ letter reminder 2 / text 1	1428	29
After email reminder 3	253	5
After text 2	165	3
After issue to Tel / F2F	687	14
Total	4909	100

All issued cohort members were sent a letter inviting them to participate via web that provided login and survey URL details. Emails provided a direct link to the participant's survey, meaning they did not need to enter an access code. Given the efficiency of

email sends and the range of devices on which they can be accessed, email is likely to be an important channel of communication for web surveys.

Table 6:12 shows the outcome of the email send for Batch 1 cases based on paradata from the system used to send emails to cohort members. For this and subsequent reminder emails, the proportion of the total sample actually opening the email is relatively low. There was some variation in the rates of opening subsequent reminder emails, with some suggestion that those timed to be sent earlier in the day were more likely to be read.

Table 6:12 Outcome of advance email send		
Base: Batch 1 cases eligible to receive an advance email	**Number**	**%**
Unsuccessful send	155	13
Received – not opened	641	55
Received – opened	363	31
Unsubscribed	1	0
Base	*1160*	*1160*

Text messages are more likely to be read than emails making them a potentially useful means of sending a reminder, but for Next Steps they have the disadvantage that they are received on mobile phones on which participants are not able to conduct the survey, it being restricted to tablets and computers. A reminder text message was sent around 10 days into web fieldwork (the second Saturday) to all participants with a mobile phone number that had not yet started the web questionnaire. Where multiple mobile numbers were associated with a participant, a text message reminder was sent to each of the numbers. Table 6:13 summarises the outcome of the reminder text message send in Batch 1 at the participant level.

Of the 477 participants that received the reminder text message 31% did not receive a second reminder email (sent on the same day), and 82% did not open the second reminder email.

Table 6:13 Outcome of reminder text message send – participant level		
Base: Batch 1 cases eligible to receive a reminder text message	**Number**	**%**
Failed (all numbers)	609	56
Received	477	44
Unsubscribed	9	1
Base	*1095*	*1095*

Table 6:14 shows the devices on which participants last opened the advance email. A large majority of participants opened their emails with a smartphone, on which they would not have been able to complete the web questionnaire.

Table 6:14 Device on which emails last opened	
Base: Batch 1 cases opening email message	
Desktop/Laptop	21%
Smartphone	69%
Tablet	5%
Other	4%
Base	*363*

6.7.1 Breakoffs and number of sessions

Despite the relatively long interview for an online questionnaire (44 minutes – see Chapter 7), partial completion was relatively uncommon. The vast majority (93%) of those who went into the web questionnaire and answered the first question (i.e. they did more than simply click the link in an email) went on to provide a fully completed interview at that point or a later, with a further 6% providing a partial interview (defined as reaching the end of the first module of questions). The remaining 1% broke off and did not complete the end of the first module (Table 6:1).

Within those who fully completed the interview online, 87% completed it in one session, with 10% completing it on their second session and 2% completing on their third. The remaining 1% took more than three sessions, with the maximum being 11 sessions.

This means that the total proportion of cohort members who started the web questionnaire but broke off (whether or not they went on to return to it) was 20%. As discussed in Chapter 5, this group would have been sent break-off emails and texts where contact details were available.

7 Timings

The questionnaire had a total mean length of 47.3 minutes across all modes and median length of 44.3 minutes compared to a target of 45 minutes (Table 7:1). The employment and household relationships were the longest individual modules. Both of these had a relatively higher mean length than median length, reflecting the longer time in the module where the relationship or employment history was more complex. In both of these modules there were loops of questions relating to each item and a history established going back to the previous interview or to a point where participants had been 16 years old.

Table 7:1	Questionnaire module timings			
	Module timings			
Module	Mean seconds	Median seconds	Mean minutes	Median minutes
1 Household relationships	447	386	7.5	6.4
2 Housing	173	150	2.9	2.5
3 Employment	615	539	10.3	9.0
4 Finance	348	308	5.8	5.1
5 Education and training	163	131	2.7	2.2
6 Health and wellbeing	164	139	2.7	2.3
7 Identity and participation	267	239	4.5	4.0
8 Self-completion/ sensitive questions	395	354	6.6	5.9
9 Data linkage	185	149	3.1	2.5
10 Future contact details	176	150	2.9	2.5
Total	2837	2658	47.3	44.3

Note: Table based on 6,612 fully productive cohort members – timings paradata not available for remainder of fully productive cases.

The questionnaire was, on average, longest in the face-to-face mode (56.8 minutes) and shortest in web (44.1 minutes; Table 7:2). There was little variation between the modules in this pattern, although there was some suggestion that the self-completion and data linkage modules were particularly quick in the web mode. The sensitive questions module involved some additional introduction from interviewers and the data linkage module involved a long question text and read out statements.

Table 7:2	Questionnaire module timings by mode of interview					
	Web		**Tel**		**F2F**	
Module	Mean minutes	Median minutes	Mean minutes	Median minutes	Mean minutes	Median minutes
1 Household relationships	7.1	6.2	7.1	6.3	8.2	7.1
2 Housing	2.8	2.5	2.8	2.5	2.9	2.6
3 Employment	9.8	8.7	10.9	9.3	11.0	9.7
4 Finance	5.4	4.8	7.2	6.4	6.2	5.4
5 Education and training	2.5	2.1	3.6	3.0	2.9	2.2
6 Health and wellbeing	2.4	2.1	3.5	2.9	3.4	2.8
7 Identity and participation	3.8	3.4	5.9	5.5	6.0	5.4
8 Self-completion/ sensitive questions	5.7	5.1	8.9	8.6	8.4	7.4
9 Data linkage	2.5	2.1	4.4	4.4	4.6	4.2
10 Future contact details	2.6	2.3	3.6	3.3	3.6	3.2
Total	44.1	41.2	51.4	51.2	56.8	52.3

Note: Table based on 6,612 cohort members – timings paradata not available for remainder of productive cases.

8 Coding, editing and data preparation

8.1 CAI interview checks

The survey instrument was programmed in IBM Data Collection (now known as Unicom Intelligence) data collection software which controlled all question appearance and routing. This Computer Assisted Interviewing approach ensures that all questions are answered by the specified group and enforces question requirements such as single versus multicode rules, avoiding the problems of a pen and paper approach.

In addition to routing specification, checks were used throughout the instrument to improve data quality, for instance to query differences between answers provided and sample information held, to flag inconsistencies in dates recorded for related events and to enforce formatting rules when collecting contact information. These included 'soft' checks (that raised a query about the answer provided to the interviewer or participant but did not require a specific action) and 'hard' checks (that would not allow them to continue without resolving an inconsistency).

These rules and checks were used in combination to on-screen guidance and access to help screens to maximise data quality at the point of collection and minimise editing required at the data processing and analysis stages.

8.2 Office quality checks and editing

Extensive checking of pilot data, early mainstage data and final mainstage data were carried out to ensure that the instrument was delivered to specification and errors flagged and corrected. This included reproducing the specification's routing rules and checks on levels of missing data at the item level.

Case-level edits were carried out in a very small number of cases, for instance to amend data linkage consent information where a cohort member had been in touch after their interview to retract their consent.

There were no changes to the main survey instrument during fieldwork. Extensive data checks revealed consistency with the questionnaire specifications in all respects aside from a small number of cases affected by slight differences to the specification in the complex financial loops in Module 4 in relation to the treatment of 'don't know' and 'refused' responses e.g. at GROP4 (period over which would most easily be able to tell main job's gross pay) and subsequent questions. Data was collected for these cases, but not in the way suggested in the specification.

In terms of processing non-questionnaire paradata, outcome codes were a particular focus to ensure they were consistent with survey data collected, each individual call outcome and interviewer-assigned final outcomes. Outcomes were prioritised within an issue / reissue and within modes. These were then prioritised across modes to confirm the final multimode outcome for the study (for instance prioritising unproductive outcomes that recorded contact with a cohort member over non-contact). Another area of particular focus was the mode flags and page-level timings data.

In a small number of cases Unicom Intelligence software problems led to the deletion of interview data in the face-to-face phase. This data could not be recovered and no repeat interview could be conducted in nine cases. A further case was lost in the web phase.

Process and timings data from interviewer devices was captured and synced to the office separately to the main survey data. In a proportion of cases (11% of all productive cases), this data was not synced back by interviewers before the end of the project, resulting in missing paradata for these cases (no admin module or questionnaire data was affected).

8.3 Coding

CLS provided codeframes for 'other specify' and open ended questions. Coding was carried out at NatCen by specialist coders who were briefed by researchers on the project and whose first batch of work was 100% verified by a supervisor whose role was to pick up with them any changes required to their approach. For 'other specify' questions, coders would either 'back code' into the original codes available where appropriate, or else use one of the codes defined in the codeframe specification supplied by CLS. Where the response could not be coded into the existing codeframe, coders would look across the responses for similar responses that might constitute a new code, or else code as 'other'. Any new codes would need CLS approval.

For other specify questions, the survey data set includes the original binary variables as answered in the interview, a set of variables with just the coded response and a final set of binary variables that combine the original and coded variables.

Perhaps the major part of the coding for Next Steps was that for Standard Occupation Classification (SOC 2010, 4 digit) and Standard Industry Classification (SIC 2007, 5 digit). As described in Chapter 3, SOC coding was primarily done by participants themselves (in web) or interviewers (in telephone and face-to-face) using a look-up. A code was available there for 'unable to find code', and in these cases the detail of the nature of the occupation was captured in verbatim text. This was subsequently coded by specialist coders at NatCen using the SOC 2010 codes (15% of cases where SOC was coded were coded in the office). A look-up was not used for the SIC coding and all coding was completed in the office.

8.4 Data outputs

8.4.1 Survey data

The survey data was created at the level of data collection, with most variables at the respondent level but with data from loops delivered as separate files (for instance loops of questions relating to benefits). The separate datasets delivered were:

- Respondent level questionnaire data.
- Respondent level questionnaire data (Strings).
- Hierarchical file of previous relationships.
- Hierarchical file of previous relationships (Strings).
- Hierarchical file of children.
- Hierarchical file of children (Strings).
- Hierarchical file of other household members.
- Hierarchical file of other household members (Strings).
- Hierarchical file of activity history.
- Hierarchical file of benefits.

8.4.2 Sample contact information

The latest available productive and unproductive contact information was provided separately to the questionnaire and paradata. For the productive data, this referenced the fields in the questionnaire, and for the unproductive cases the most recent contact information from the calls and tracing process was identified.

8.4.3 Paradata

Substantial paradata was collected during the course of the study from the questionnaire instrument itself, the admin module used by interviewers to manage their call attempts (see Chapter 5) and systems and process information held outside the instrument.

Data sets delivered to CLS include:

- Respondent/case-level information from the admin module, questionnaire, and paradata exports. This included outcome codes for each mode and the final overall outcome, mode of completion, summary paradata on the number of calls and visits, consents to data linkage and the dates when reminder emails and letters were sent.
- A hierarchical file of all telephone numbers available during fieldwork.
- A hierarchical file of all attempts to contact the cohort member.
- A hierarchical file of all phone calls made to the cohort member.
- A hierarchical file of all tracing activities.
- A herarchical file of updates to contact information during fieldwork.
- A hierarchical file of interim outcomes during fieldwork.
- Page-level questionnaire timings paradata (all modes).
- Session-level web paradata that included start and end times of sessions, screen size and a browser string that enables the identification of the browser used.
- Interviewer characteristics.