

**Department for Work and Pensions**

**Research Report No 462**

# **Job Outcome Target National Evaluation**

**Dr. Alex Nunn, Dr. Steve Johnson, Sarah Kelsey and Dr. David Usher**

A report of research carried out by the Policy Research Institute on behalf of the  
Department for Work and Pensions

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# Summary

## Background

The Job Outcome Target (JOT) was rolled out in April 2006 after an extensive period of piloting and evaluation. JOT replaced a previous system of performance management in Jobcentre Plus: the Job Entry Target (JET).

Two versions of the JOT system were piloted in seven Districts. After comprehensive qualitative and quantitative evaluation, a modified version of one of these options was selected for national roll-out.

Six months after national roll-out the pilot Districts that had worked with the selected option were re-evaluated to ascertain how they were operating after 18 months of working with JOT. Findings from this study led to a 'relaunch' of JOT with key messages about how to ensure high levels of performance in the context of JOT.

This evaluation investigates further some of the concerns raised in the follow-on evaluation and also considers issues of apparent under-performance against both national and District-level JOT targets that have emerged since national roll-out.

## Aims and objectives

The aim of this research was to determine if JOT is working as intended after ten months of operation.

With the principal objectives of:

- establishing what working behaviours/patterns have emerged as a result of working with JOT;
- establishing what specific working processes and tools are being used to ensure the achievement of JOT;
- determining the intended and unintended outcomes of JOT in relation to: staff, customers, employers and providers;
- determining how the delivery of JOT fits in with other initiatives.

## Methods

The evaluation involved the following:

- interviews with more than 110 **Jobcentre Plus managers and staff** in 11 Districts;
- interviews with 25 **employers** selected from the national database;
- 22 interviews with **providers** using a national sample;
- three strands of fieldwork with Jobcentre Plus **customers**:
  - focus groups with customers from Priority Groups 1-3;
  - an exit survey in Jobcentre Plus offices of customers from Priority Groups 4 and 5;
  - a telephone survey of former Jobcentre Plus customers who left the benefits register after November 2006.

## Overall findings

- The evaluation concluded that, **in the main, JOT is working as intended**, with evidence of changes in staff working practices, behaviour and motivation that are consistent with the intentions of JOT and with the changes observed in the pilot Districts. While there is a range of factors driving these changes, JOT is playing both a driving and a facilitating role in the process.
- It is clear from the evaluation that **JOT is a key component of a wider cultural change** that is occurring across Jobcentre Plus and that this will take time to bed in and have a lasting impact on the way that the organisation operates. In particular, many managers need further support to help them to implement a more qualitative approach to monitoring and improving staff performance. Furthermore, there is a need to ensure that performance measurement instruments such as the Adviser Achievement Tool (AAT) are compatible with, and supportive of, the emerging 'JOT culture'.

## Working practices, behaviour and motivation

- The vast majority of respondents noted the trend towards encouraging the **use of self-help channels** among those who were able, and concentrating resources more intensively on providing assistance to 'harder to help' groups. To a large extent JOT is seen as supporting and reflecting this trend rather than driving it.

- Managers and staff noted a number of **changes in working practices** that had occurred since the introduction of JOT. In general, managers felt that JOT had led to more efficient working practices in some areas, for example the more effective use of the Adviser Discretionary Fund (ADF), fewer resources devoted to verifying job entries and a reduction in the generation of spurious interventions to 'thumb-print' job entry points.
- Other changes in working practice felt by managers and staff to be linked to the introduction of JOT include an increased willingness among some staff to refer customers to **provision**, improved **team working** within and between staff groups and **less unproductive competition** between individual staff members.
- In the case of advisers, there was a strong feeling that the **AAT** played a more important role than JOT in bringing about changes in their working practices, with many feeling that some elements of the AAT were in fact contradictory to the underlying ethos of JOT.
- The shift from JET to JOT has important potential implications for the **motivation and behaviour** of different groups of Jobcentre Plus staff. In particular, many respondents highlighted the important role under JET of the Daily Placing List (DPL). This research confirmed that many advisers felt that the loss of DPL was demotivating and that JOT did not provide an adequate substitute. However, many other advisers and respondents felt that JOT had made little difference to their motivation or that its introduction had increased their motivation.

## Performance management

- Managers identified a number of issues concerning the management of performance under JOT, principally relating to **delays in reporting** and the difficulties of attributing performance to specific individuals or groups. It was acknowledged that JOT implied a shift from quantitative to qualitative-based approaches to management and some felt that they needed more help and support to implement the new system effectively.
- Overall, there was considerable evidence that the introduction of JOT had **disrupted widely held assumptions** about the impact of individual and group behaviour (inputs) on the behaviour of customers (outputs) and the achievement of off-flows from benefits into work (outcomes).

## Relationships with employers

- Managers and staff members felt that, in general, **JOT was beneficial to relations between Jobcentre Plus and employers**, primarily through reductions in bureaucracy associated with follow-up of submissions and job entries. This feeling was corroborated by discussions with employers.

- Another key factor complicating assessment of the impact of JOT is the fact that **employers are increasingly placing vacancies direct**, meaning that Jobcentre Plus has limited influence over the 'self-submission' decisions of customers. However employers reported few differences since JOT in the quantity or quality of applicants or the service provided by Jobcentre Plus.

## Customer views

- Customer responses to focus group discussions and surveys largely support the view that 'job-ready' customers are increasingly being encouraged to use **self-service channels**. The vast majority were happy to use the channels available with minimal intervention from Jobcentre Plus staff. **Jobcentre Plus is only one element of customers' job search strategies**, but one that is particularly important for those in the higher priority groups. Many customers appreciate that Jobcentre Plus contributes to their job search activities in a range of ways, even if, in most cases, Jobcentre Plus is not directly responsible for their finding work.
- Customers identified a number of ways in which they felt that the service provided to them could be improved; however, only a small proportion expressed an explicit desire for more intensive or extensive **face-to-face contact** with advisers.
- The survey of **former customers** who had left the benefit register and moved into work was particularly instructive in this regard. Around a third felt that Jobcentre Plus had helped them to find a job, but a wide range of methods were used in order to search for work. For many, particularly Priority Group 1 customers, 'word-of-mouth' was important.
- Around a third of former Priority Group 1 customers went into **part-time work**, some of whom may not show up on Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) databases. In other cases, customers had found temporary jobs and/or moved on quite quickly from the job that they took up on leaving the benefit system.

## Conclusion

- At this relatively early stage of the national roll-out of JOT, which represents a significant operational and cultural change for Jobcentre Plus, the research findings are **broadly in line with what might have been expected** following the evaluation of the JOT pilots.
- Wider labour market changes and organisational developments across Jobcentre Plus have interacted with JOT, making it difficult to isolate a 'JOT effect'. It also needs to be noted that the shift to JOT means that the impact of Jobcentre Plus interventions on overall outcome performance figures will have weakened considerably in comparison with JET.

- The **AAT** has played an important role in the early stages of JOT roll-out, providing advisers and managers with individual performance measures and potentially confusing JOT messages about the need for fewer but more appropriate submissions.
- The research identified **changes in work practices**, most of which were in the 'desired' direction.
- advisers and managers reported a mixed response in terms of the **motivational** impact of JOT.
- JOT is **supporting and reinforcing important trends in the delivery of the Jobcentre Plus service**, notably the increasing use of self-service channels and the provision of more intensive support for 'harder to help' groups.
- The research highlighted a number of issues regarding the **management of JOT**. In particular, the crucial role of Advisory Services Managers (ASMs) was emphasised. As this group of staff become more confident and experienced, it is likely that the positive impact of their introduction will increase.
- As demonstrated in the pilot evaluations, there is **minimal awareness among employers and limited awareness among providers** of JOT and its potential implications for them.
- **Customer responses largely reinforce the case for JOT** in that job search behaviour broadly follows the expected pattern with more intensive support for those in higher priority groups and a wide range of job search methods used by all types of customer. Customers indicated that Jobcentre Plus intervention had helped and influenced them in a number of indirect ways.
- While customers suggested a number of areas for improvement there is little evidence that customers feel that the service has got worse and only a relatively **small latent demand among lower priority groups for more face-to-face contact** with Jobcentre Plus staff.
- However, there are indications that customers in the **higher Priority Groups** are less satisfied than others with the service, suggesting a need to further consider how improvements can be made in the context of a more intense policy focus on this group and continuing pressures on available resources.
- Evidence regarding the **destinations** of Priority Group 1 customers – notably a high proportion of part-time and/or short-term positions – also raises questions about whether all off-flows by these customers are fully reported under the JOT system.



# Part One – Background and methodology



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The Job Outcome Target (JOT) was rolled out in April 2006 after an extensive period of piloting and evaluation. JOT replaced a previous system of performance management in Jobcentre Plus: the Job Entry Target (JET).

Two versions of the JOT system were piloted between January 2005 and March 2006 in seven pilot Districts. After comprehensive qualitative (Johnson and Nunn, 2005) and quantitative evaluation (Frankham *et al.*, 2005), a modified version of one of these options was selected for national roll-out.

Six months after national roll-out the pilot Districts that had worked with the selected option were re-evaluated to ascertain how they were operating after 18 months of working with JOT (Johnson, Nunn and Bickerstaffe, 2006). Findings from this study led to a 'relaunch' of JOT with key messages about how to ensure high levels of performance in the context of JOT.

This evaluation investigates further some of the concerns raised in the follow-on evaluation and also issues of apparent under-performance against both national and District-level JOT targets that have emerged since national roll-out.

## 1.2 The Job Outcome Target

The JOT system collects performance data automatically from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) records of people flowing off the benefits register and into work. It was intended to realise the following objectives:

- capturing job entries achieved through the expanding number of modernised channels (of which Jobcentre Plus has stewardship), and which involve people applying for jobs directly rather than having to receive a Jobcentre Plus intervention;
- encouraging the most cost effective use of new self-service channels for those customers who can help themselves, whilst enabling personal advisers to focus intensive support on the hardest to help; and

- removing/reducing the need for expensive follow-up activity with employers, thus, encouraging staff to spend time on more value-added activities, rather than on measuring and validation work with the sole aim of capturing job entry performance.

### 1.3 Previous evaluation findings

The initial qualitative and quantitative evaluations suggested that:

- JOT contributed to achieving increased efficiency, encouraged the use of self-service channels for those customers that can help themselves and encouraged staff to focus their attention on the hardest to help customers;
- there was though, some concern about the capacity of managers to work with JOT to manage the performance of advisers without the daily performance information that they had become used to. There was also concern that the lack of individualised, or even office-level, outcome data would lead to a lack of individual accountability among advisers;
- the switch to JOT would involve a significant change in organisational culture that would take time to become fully embedded;
- the impact on outcomes for Jobcentre Plus customers was very difficult to discern but the final results of the evaluation suggested that there was no more than a small negative impact on any of the customer groups.

The recommendation of the qualitative evaluation, taking into account those of the qualitative study, was, therefore:

*'...that JOT should be rolled out on a national basis as soon as is operationally possible.'*

(Johnson and Nunn, 2005:84)

This recommendation was, though, qualified by the assertion that the introduction of JOT would involve difficult cultural change meaning that ongoing support for the desired behavioural changes would be needed. It was also suggested that:

*'...a degree of flexibility will need to be built in as the whole system beds in, meaning that apparent under- or over-performance in the initial period of implementation will need to be interpreted with caution.'*

(Johnson and Nunn, 2005:84)

While continuing to suggest that this was the right decision, the follow-on evaluation of the pilot Districts after working with JOT for 18 months found that a number of contextual changes had impacted on performance under JOT. These included changes to the size and structure of staffing (especially the introduction of a new band of Advisory Services Managers (ASMs)) and the introduction of a new individual-level system of performance management: the Adviser Achievement Tool (AAT). This study continued to suggest that there was a need to support

behavioural change under JOT, including by enhancing the skills and capacity of advisers and ASMs in particular. It also suggested that there was a need to review the operation of the AAT and its relationship to JOT. The JOT Key Performance Group in Jobcentre Plus accepted this recommendation and commissioned a separate review of AAT which was undertaken concurrently with this evaluation.



## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Aims of the evaluation

The aim of this research was to determine if the Job Outcome Target (JOT) is working as intended after ten months of operation.

With the principal objectives of:

- establishing what working behaviours/patterns have emerged as a result of working with JOT;
- establishing what specific working processes and tools are being used to ensure the achievement of JOT;
- determining the intended and unintended outcomes of JOT in relation to: staff, customers, employers and providers;
- determining how the delivery of JOT fits in with other initiatives.

More generally, the research sought to determine to what extent JOT is supporting the:

- Jobcentre Plus Channels Strategy;
- Jobcentre Plus Employer Engagement Strategy; and
- wider Welfare to Work Strategy.

### 2.2 Fieldwork

Fieldwork for the evaluation covered four main groups of respondents: Jobcentre Plus staff, employers, providers of training and support to Jobcentre Plus customers and Jobcentre Plus customers.

#### 2.2.1 Interviews with Jobcentre Plus Staff

Interviews were undertaken with more than 110 Jobcentre Plus staff in 11 Districts, distributed between each of the 11 Jobcentre Plus regions. Districts were selected

to include a distribution of performance rankings against JOT Key Management Indicators (KMI) and are set out in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1 Selected Districts**

District
Glasgow
South Tyne & Wear Valley
Staffordshire
Cumbria
South West Wales
Gloucestershire, Swindon & Wiltshire
Lincolnshire & Rutland
Norfolk
South Yorkshire
West London
Berks, Bucks & Oxfordshire

In each of the Districts interviews were undertaken with:

- ten members of staff to cover a range of responsibilities including District Manager (or Deputy), Performance Manager, at least one Business Manager, Advisory Services Manager(s) (ASM), Customer Engagement Team Leader(s), Vacancy Service Manager(s) (VSM), advisers, frontline staff and staff from Employer Engagement Teams;
- Regional Performance Managers for each of the regions.

Interviews were conducted on a face-to-face basis where possible, though a small number of telephone interviews were undertaken where this was not possible for practical reasons. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured topic guides (included at Appendix A) and, where permission was given, digitally recorded and analysed using structured analysis templates.

The purpose of these interviews was to uncover how JOT was implemented and the different management practices used and their impact on staff motivation and behaviour and working practices.

### 2.2.2 Interviews with employers

Interviews were undertaken with 25 employers selected from the national database. A larger number of interviews was initially hoped for but this element of evaluation was constrained by the willingness of employers from the national database to contribute to the research. Interviews were undertaken over the telephone, using a structured topic guide which is included at Appendix B. The purpose of these interviews was to ascertain the impact of JOT on the relationship between employers and Jobcentre Plus from the employer perspective.

### **2.2.3 Interviews with providers**

A total of 22 interviews were undertaken with providers using a national sample. A cross-section of contracted and non-contracted providers were sampled from the Jobcentre Plus national database. Interviews were undertaken over the telephone using a structured topic guide, which is included at Appendix C. The purpose of these interviews was to understand how the introduction of JOT has impacted on the relationship between Jobcentre Plus and providers and on provider working practices and performance.

### **2.2.4 Fieldwork with customers**

Three strands of fieldwork were undertaken with distinct Priority Customer Groups. The first involved focus groups with customers from Priority Groups 1-3. The second involved undertaking an exit survey in Jobcentre Plus offices of customers from Priority Groups 4 and 5. The third strand involved a telephone survey of people who had been a Jobcentre Plus customer but who had left the benefits register after November 2006.

#### *Priority Groups 1-3 focus groups*

Two focus groups were undertaken in each of the 11 Districts selected for staff interviews. As the Priority Group 3 customer group was seen as a higher priority for exploration, one focus group was organised with these customers in each of the Districts. The remaining focus group in each District was split between Priority Group 1 and 2 customers.

Samples were drawn from the Jobcentre Plus Labour Market System (LMS) to include a broad cross-section of customers by personal characteristics, benefit type, office, etc. within each focus group location catchment area, though no attempt was made to be statistically representative and the approach taken was purely qualitative. The targeted individuals were contacted by letter and, where necessary, telephone, to invite them to participate. Each participant was offered a cash gift of £20 and costs of travel and childcare were reimbursed. Focus groups were undertaken using a semi-structured topic guide and were held in neutral local venue to ensure an atmosphere of independence from Jobcentre Plus. Topic guides are included at Appendix D. The purpose of these interviews was on changes in the way in which customers are treated by Jobcentre Plus staff which might be interpreted as a result of the introduction of JOT.

#### *Priority Groups 4 and 5 exit survey*

The exit interviews with Priority Group 4 and 5 customers were undertaken in Jobcentre Plus offices. Interviewers were located in offices for one day and asked participants leaving the Jobcentre Plus office to participate in the survey, using filter questions to ensure that the survey focused on customers from the correct Priority Groups. 233 interviews were undertaken overall. The questionnaire for this work is included at Appendix E. The purpose of the exit survey was to understand what, if any, changes have taken place in the way that this group of customers are helped in Jobcentre Plus offices.

### *Past Customer Telephone Survey*

The survey comprised 311 telephone interviews, approximately 100 each with Priority Groups 1, 2 and 3 customers, drawn from a representative sample of recent leavers from the LMS. All sampled respondents were written to in advance of the survey and given the opportunity to opt out of the research. The remaining respondents were contacted and invited to participate in a ten-minute telephone survey. The questionnaire for this survey is included at Appendix F. The purpose of this strand of research was to understand how customers found work and to what extent Jobcentre Plus had helped them to do so, in the process interpreting how JOT might have impacted on the assistance received.

## Part Two – Evidence from Jobcentre Plus staff



# 3 Background to working with Job Outcome Target

## 3.1 Contextual issues

Interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff explored the context for the introduction of the Job Outcome Target (JOT) in order to understand the types of local and national factors which may have impacted on the changes in working practices driven by JOT and the types of impact that JOT might have had on performance.

### 3.1.1 Local factors

Respondents in each District were asked to comment on issues that might help to explain levels of performance in their own District. A range of District-level influences on performance and managing the implementation of JOT were identified.

In several Districts, respondents highlighted **negative labour market** events in their District such as large-scale redundancies in key employers for Jobcentre Plus. Additionally, respondents also noted a recent acceleration in long-term trends of industrial change away from low-skilled manufacturing and primary industries. In several Districts these changes were thought to have resulted in a change to overall aggregate labour market trends in comparison to the period prior to the last 18 months.

In addition, and often reinforcing changes in levels of labour market demand, many respondents identified the impact of recent increases in flows of **economic migrants** (particularly from the ten accession states (A10) of the European Union) on the labour market as having a potential negative impact on the performance of Jobcentre Plus. These migrants were thought to be having three direct potential impacts on JOT performance: First, economic migrants were thought to be crowding out Jobcentre Plus customers from the low-skill and low-pay work that they traditionally enter. Second, employers who have in the past placed vacancies with Jobcentre Plus, were thought to increasingly adopt recruitment practices

aimed at attracting economic migrants in preference to Jobcentre Plus customers, including by placing vacancies with agencies, gang masters and by recruiting directly in A10 countries, with the cumulative implication being that Jobcentre Plus is bypassed in relation to the placement of vacancies. Third, while the majority of economic migrants do not use Jobcentre Plus services, this had changed in two of the Districts where there had been a sudden downturn in agricultural and food production industries, with the impact that Jobcentre Plus resources were being taken up with dealing with economic migrants.

**Organisational changes** were also reported to be important in understanding the implementation of JOT at a local level. For instance, District-specific issues resulting from reduction in headcount and Organisational Design Review (ODR), such as the use of peripatetic management or changes to staffing structures of large offices in order to sustain smaller offices in spatially dispersed Districts.

### 3.1.2 National contextual issues

Jobcentre Plus staff who were interviewed also commented on national issues which were impacting on the implementation of JOT and performance. Several issues were specifically identified. These included the **ODR** which was identified by some respondents as having had a negative impact on morale and having resulted in some cases in a mismatch of staff resources and skills. Moreover, the general **reduction in headcount** that has resulted from the ODR has generated perceived resource constraints on performance and adaptation to JOT. This was thought to be particularly important in Districts facing negative labour market changes where fewer staff are coping with increasing customer numbers.

An additional widely reported factor was the introduction of the **Advisory Services Manager** (ASM) role. This was also identified in the follow-on study of the JOT pilots as a capacity constraint on the implementation of JOT (Johnson, Nunn and Bickerstaffe, 2006). The implication of the introduction of the new ASMs, more specifically in terms of staffing changes, is that many advisers are being managed by staff without an advisory background. Given the changes driven by JOT and the enhanced emphasis that this places on the role of coaching and support to advisers (Johnson and Nunn, 2005), this may have been a constraint on adapting to JOT and consequently, on performance.

One additional feature reported in several Districts was the interruption of **provider contracts**. While these are now back in place, several respondents suggested that the interim period may have impacted on outcome performance. In addition, there was some concern that backlogs of customers who would have otherwise taken up New Deal provision have built up, meaning that the impact of interruptions to provider contracts continues to have an impact on outcome performance.

### 3.1.3 Targeting and statistical issues

Respondents' responses to questions about contextual issues revealed that there was limited understanding about, and confidence in, the calculations made to

establish national and local District JOT performance targets. There were also some concerns that in setting the JOT targets some miscalculations might have been made, meaning that apparent under-performance is in fact being over-estimated in JOT performance figures. Indeed, there is a perceived acceptance from Jobcentre Plus staff that overall target levels were set around eight per cent higher than they should have been, though this is an average level and will vary between different Districts. As such, target levels have been revised downwards.

In addition, a wide range of other potential reasons was mentioned in relation to these concerns. The validity of these have been investigated by the evaluation team. The factors mentioned, the rationale underpinning the concerns raised and an assessment of the likelihood of their explaining performance levels is set out below:

- **The target levels set reflected an unreasonable uplift for continuous improvement** – while it had been normal for the Job Entry Target (JET) to be increased on an annual basis to reflect demands for continuous improvement, the uplift added to the JOT target was very small in comparison.
- **Short-term levels of performance prior to JOT ‘go-live’ may have been built into expectations of trend-level performance** in the future. In fact, JOT targets were set well in advance of the last six months of JET performance and so would not have included high levels of performance, whether explained or otherwise, in the last six months of the JET regime.
- **JOT targets were based on JET performance and underestimated the level of ‘thumbprinting’ of job entries** and, therefore, overestimated the total number of job entries that would have been apparent if using JOT, meaning that the JOT target was overestimated. JOT targets were set using historical JOT data which was used to calculate historical trend performance for all applicable off-flows and, therefore, there was no estimation of the prior relationship between Jobcentre Plus job entries and all off-flows from benefits.
- **JOT data does not capture all relevant job outcomes (principally to self-employment or for part-time workers)** – it may be that some off-flows from benefit are not captured from Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC) data. However, because of the way that the target levels were calculated, there would need to have been an increase in these off-flows since JOT went live if this were to be able to explain underperformance.
- **Assumptions about the roll-out of Pathways to Work were built into JOT targets but there have been delays in roll-out**, meaning that performance has been below the expected level – assumptions about the roll-out of Pathways to Work were built into the calculation of JOT target levels and where there have been delays, this may explain performance below the target level.

- **The impact of increased flows of economic migrants may have 'crowded out' Jobcentre Plus off-flows** – this has been the subject of research by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). This research (Portes and French, 2005; Gilpin *et al.*, 2006) investigated the impact of migration from Accession countries on benefit claimant rates, on competition with Jobcentre Plus customers and on the notification of vacancies with Jobcentre Plus. In all cases, the research found little, if any, negative impact from migration from Accession states. While there is no reason to question this analysis, the level of emphasis given to this by Jobcentre Plus respondents may mean that continual analysis on up-to-date data is required to rule out the impact of migration on the JOT outcome performance.

This suggests that the majority of the widespread staff concerns, raised in the interviews, about the target setting process and how this might now be impacting on performance in relation to expected levels, can be offset. However, there is a potential impact on performance levels from a failure to capture some job outcomes, such as part-time employment for lone parents, where these have increased over the last 18 months. There may also be some scope to suggest that the impact of economic migrants may have been significant where flows have increased or the nature of the labour market has changed since the DWP research was undertaken. In addition, there is some evidence that there may be a long-term trend towards lower outcome performance from Jobcentre Plus as a result of both changes to the labour market and the increasingly hard to help nature of the Jobcentre Plus customer group. Discussions with Jobcentre Plus staff responsible for setting the national target suggest that this may be particularly the case for lone parent customers. Since setting the national target, more recent historical data has suggested that the initial target was set too high, by 8.4 per cent. It will be important to continue to study trends in the historical data as it becomes available, in order to investigate whether this longer-term pattern continues, to investigate the reasons for this and ultimately to reflect this in the assumptions underpinning future target calculations.

In addition, though, the concerns raised by respondents are also important in understanding performance, even where they can be rejected as having had a direct influence on target levels. This is because cumulatively they resulted in a lack of confidence in the target setting process. Additionally, many respondents were also sceptical about the production of job outcome data, especially in the way that this fed through to Jobcentre Plus from HMRC. This latter point is hard to overstate, having been mentioned in almost all Districts and by a large number of respondents (especially at management levels) in each. The specific concerns are that this data is poor quality and does not reflect either a consistent or accurate measure of performance. Concerns about exactly when all performance data would be captured were particularly important. These general and more specific concerns were so important because they had behavioural implications. Where managers lacked confidence in outcome performance data, especially in the early months of the year when there was an expectation that actual performance had not yet fed through into recorded performance, they were reluctant to vary practice in order to raise performance levels.

## 4 Communication and understanding

Jobcentre Plus staff respondents were asked about the ways in which the Job Outcome Target (JOT) issues and expected behaviour were communicated within the Districts. Most staff had become aware of the roll-out of JOT via the cascading of information through the team meeting structures. Staff also commented that JOT issues had been communicated via the distribution of information packs, through participation at regional events, the intranet or through specially produced videos.

Respondents offered comments about the success of these communication activities. While they were widely undertaken, there was some concern that there was less awareness of the behavioural implications of JOT than on the functional and technical details of how the performance data is measured. Additionally, several respondents reported that while behavioural messages were given, these have taken a long time to be fully understood. In this context there was some concern that confusion may have been increased by the introduction of the Adviser Achievement Tool (AAT) or by uncertainties and lack of confidence in the outcome data which does not help to reinforce behavioural messages.

Staff respondents were generally unaware of any revised communication materials around appropriate behaviour or use of AAT as a result of the JOT re-launch. In some Districts, District Managers reported that they had purposefully refrained from cascading this information as they felt staff had already absorbed appropriate messages and they did not want to cause confusion about appropriate behaviours.



# 5 Changes in working practices

## 5.1 General

Jobcentre Plus staff respondents were asked a wide range of questions about the impact that the Job Outcome Target (JOT) has had on their working practices, beginning with an open and unprompted question and progressing on to much more detailed questions about specific areas of working practices.

In response to unprompted questions about the impact of JOT on their working practices, District management-level respondents (District Managers, Deputy District Managers) reported a number of changes in working practices.

### 5.1.1 District Managers' perspectives

Working practices were felt by managers to have become more efficient, for example through the reduction in the use of the Adviser Discretionary Fund (ADF) and, even more importantly, the reduction in staff resource dedicated to chasing, recording and validating Job Entries, including in the generation of spurious interventions to 'thumb-print' job entry points.

A number of management respondents also reported increased opportunities to engage in more positive working practices as a result of this. For instance, district management respondents reported that there is increased emphasis on the appropriate use of provision, with some advisers being more willing to refer customers to providers as a product of the removal of incentives to hold on to them. In general, managers felt that since the introduction of JOT, there had been an increased focus of staff resource on the 'right' customers, shifting staff time away from dealing with job ready customers who are capable of helping themselves to working with those who require the most help to move toward the labour market. The introduction of JOT had also, according to management respondents, led to an enhanced sense of team working between advisers and between advisers and frontline staff as a result of the removal of competition for

job entry points. Discussions with managers revealed some evidence of increased emphasis on training and capacity building in relation to adviser interviewing skills in response to these changes.

However, respondents at this level also raised concerns about the impact of increased uncertainty and delays regarding performance information and many felt that this reduced their capacity to identify and rectify under performance in a timely and responsive fashion. They were also concerned that Business Managers and Adviser Managers now found the management of adviser performance to be more challenging. In addition, there were worries about the lack of individual adviser accountability and the impact of this on motivation and performance.

### 5.1.2 Local managers' views and experiences

Business Managers and ASMs reported that JOT had required a large-scale cultural change. While many thought that this was the 'right' change, some reported that it was only partly complete. This level of management was generally happy that advisers' working practices were beginning to change. They noted an increased emphasis on tackling customers' barriers to work and a greater willingness to look for information about the range of provision available and to be interested in the quality and nature of that provision.

*'Staff have said that...how much better it was as they felt that they are getting to grips with underlying issues and they felt they were getting to know customers so that could direct them in the right way, whereas before they were just following a process...now [there is] more freedom to look at different ways of helping them...'*

(Jobcentre Plus Office Manager)

They also welcomed the removal of the overwhelming emphasis on submissions activity and the reduction of customer follow-up with employers. However, several respondents were keen to highlight that this change is as yet incomplete and will take more time to become fully embedded.

Advisory Service Managers also reported a range of changes in working practices for them and for advisers. The ASM role has been impacted on by JOT-related factors such as the introduction of the Adviser Achievement Tool (AAT) and the requirement to do compliance checks on the Labour Market System (LMS) records of interviews. For example, ASMs reported placing more pressure on advisers to ensure that LMS markers were correct and up-to-date. Some respondents questioned the introduction of the AAT and whether this confused messages about desirable working practices, especially with regard to submissions activity. ASMs and Business Managers were also concerned about the motivational and job satisfaction impacts of the losing the Daily Placing List (DPL). One ASM was concerned at the impact of the reduction of direct contact with employers on the ability to hold customers to account, ensuring that they are actively seeking work. Additionally, one Business Manager felt that the organisation still misdirected resources into 'massaging' performance data rather than delivering services to

customers, for instance by spending time reviewing LMS records to ensure that all possible childcare barriers to work markers were set appropriately.

### **5.1.3 Adviser perspectives**

Advisers themselves also reported a range of impacts on their working practices, unprompted. Advisers appeared to be more willing to refer customers to appropriate provision, including non-contracted provision, as a result of the removal of the Job Entry Target (JET)-related incentive to hold onto them. They also reported that they were more willing to work as part of a team and to share information about provision, customers and vacancies. The main change in the nature of their working practices was away from undertaking submissions, with a much stronger emphasis on undertaking Better Off Calculations (BOCs).

However, advisers also reported more negative implications: The loss of the DPL and information about customer destinations had led to declining job satisfaction and motivation for some. Other advisers, echoing the responses of their managers, were concerned about the impact of the loss of follow-up with employers on their ability to challenge the job seeking activity undertaken by customers.

### **5.1.4 Frontline staff**

Frontline staff, including Fortnightly Job Review (FJR) staff reported that job-ready customers who could help themselves were now expected to do so and that staff time was focused on those who required help as opposed to chasing easy job entries. An increased focus was evident among some FJR staff on checking job search activity rather than identifying submission opportunities. FJR staff also reported better working relations with advisers as a result of the absence of competition for job entry points since the introduction of JOT. However, the impact of JOT was much less pronounced than other initiatives such as limitations on the amount of time available for signing customers.

## **5.2 Dealing with people who have found a job**

Most respondents reported that there had been little or no change in the practice of dealing with customers who advise Jobcentre Plus that they have found employment.

However, where respondents acknowledged that previously, under JET, some inappropriate behaviour had been present, this has now disappeared. In a small number of cases respondents noted making appointments for customers to discuss in-work benefit eligibility and to undertake an In Work Benefit Calculation (IWBC).

The vast majority of respondents who could make a comment about the use of ADF suggested that it had reduced dramatically:

*'It has nearly halved. Sometimes we were doing an ADF to get a thumbprint on a job entry...we are only using it where it is appropriate.'*

(Advisory Services Manager)

That said, ADF was still being used, but where this was the case respondents reported that this was either appropriate and that they had always used ADF appropriately or that they had witnessed a change of behaviour away from the use of ADF to 'buy' job entries.

### 5.3 Follow-up with customers and employers

Follow-up of customers to ascertain information about destinations or to check on submissions with employers were key aspects of JET when it was important to track every possible entry into work that might be attributed to Jobcentre Plus. Discussions with respondents suggested that this activity had reduced dramatically in most cases, though there was some evidence that this still took place occasionally.

Where members of staff were still 'chasing destinations' of previous customers, this was much more infrequent and tended to be for a variety of reasons other than collecting performance information, principally revolving around job satisfaction and self-motivation. While this practice had not disappeared, many reported that it was slowly declining as the cultural shift to JOT working practices became embedded. In only one case did a respondent report that destinations were being sought for performance information purposes and in this case, follow-up was done at the behest of local managers. In a small number of cases staff members were still keeping their own records of destinations.

Where staff were still contacting employers to follow-up submissions this tended to be in cases where they suspected a lack of 'Actively Seeking' behaviour or Refusal of Employment. In such cases, an adviser might submit a customer to a job precisely so that they can follow this up with an employer to ensure that the customer is undertaking active job search. Reasons for suspecting that a customer was not seeking work included where their self-reported evidence of job search was unconvincing, where Vacancy Service Manager (VSM) staff were notified by employers that specific customers had not attended an interview and this was fed back to advisers or where customers failed to attend an interview. This last trigger may lead to suspicions that serious job search is not underway or that a customer is working and claiming benefits. In other cases, employers were contacted to gain feedback to assist customers or to build relationships with specific employers.

### 5.4 Team work

The shift from JET to JOT had removed competitive pressures felt by advisers in relation to job entries. In some cases, this was merely a contextual change and little beneficial practical change had resulted, in relation to positive examples of

team work. In others this had led to a more positive working relationship between advisers, with a greater willingness to share information about customers and about vacancies or provision being a concrete result of this. In some cases networking between advisers had been introduced to increase peer support and this was attributed, in part, to the removal of competition for points.

The impact of JOT on the relationship between job broking and benefit processing staff was less clear. In some cases it was felt to have become more distant as a result of reduced contact driven by the removal of the need to chase points. In most places JOT had resulted in a more positive relationship between frontline staff and advisers. This was associated with improved outcomes for customers such as increased involvement of frontline staff in reviewing Jobseeker's Agreements (JSAs).

## 5.5 Customer service

Respondents were asked a series of questions about the service provided to different Priority Group customers. The aim of these questions was to assess the impact of JOT on the ways in which services are delivered to these different groups and whether resources were being more effectively focused on those that require the most help.

In all cases staff respondents reported that customers that are able to help themselves are identified by floor walkers or at new claim stage and are referred to self-help channels. In places there remains some concern among staff that refusing staff time to job-ready, employed customers or that encouraging customers to help themselves represents poor customer service. This is a continuing theme from previous JOT evaluations but appeared to be less prominent than in the past, suggesting that staff may be adjusting to the new reality of referring some customers to self-help channels. Nevertheless, one management respondent questioned the strategy of removing staff resource from Priority Groups 3, 4 and 5 suggesting that significant results had come from these customer groups and that there may still be benefit from focusing some staff time on them:

*'We are referring customers who can help themselves to self help channels – a large amount of our results under JET were with the [Priority Group] threes, fours and fives who are clearly able to help themselves but the expectation is that you will walk into a Jobcentre and receive that help and now we are saying to them "go away and help yourself" but I think if we continued to invest that resource we would get better results.'*

(Business Manager)

In most cases it was also noted by staff respondents that there was an enhanced ethos of focusing attention on the hardest to help. The vast majority of respondents reported that advisers in particular were spending more time with harder to help customers or that more of these customers were being seen. Examples of how this worked in practice were less forthcoming, especially as advisers widely reported

having no change to their case-loaded customers or that there was little change to the management of their diaries. Examples of how time was being spent on those that required more help included several Districts which offered differentiated signing time at FJR, with those identified as requiring additional help being given ten-minute appointments as opposed to five-minute appointments for more able customers.

In one District, pressure from the regional level had encouraged a focus on BOCs and this was being fed through to advisers. However, some advisers questioned the efficacy of this, suggesting that this resulted in spending time completing BOCs that customers did not require because they already understood how much better off they would be in work.

The emphasis on harder to help was thought to be limited in its effectiveness by the changing nature of the customer group on the one hand and the labour market on the other. Several respondents reported that the hardest to help were becoming progressively harder to help as a result of the success of Welfare to Work provision in helping those that were closest to the labour market move into employment. As such those that remained, as well as the increasing emphasis on Incapacity Benefit (IB) customers, meant that advisers were often faced with more profound or combined barriers to work than in the past. At the same time, several respondents reported that the changing labour market meant that there was now less demand for the types of entry-level low-skilled and low-pay work that many harder to help customers would otherwise be able to access. Additionally, as reported in Section 3.1, there is also increasing competition for work in these occupations in some Districts.

The practical implications of this were also limited by constraints such as volumes of customers, headcount and productivity pressures arising from AAT and Key Management Indicators (KMIs):

*'advisers are seeing more people in a day than they used to, so they spend less time with one individual.'*

(Fortnightly Job Review Officer)

In a small number of Districts the amount of adviser time available to customers was constrained by a lack of available desk space, rather than adviser time.

Nevertheless, respondents were clear that they had no incentive to spend time with other customers and there were suggestions that there may be increased quality of service resulting from changes in the overall ethos and a reduced pressure to submit customers to jobs, a greater emphasis on tackling barriers to work and increased willingness to look for appropriate, including non-contracted, provision.

There was also some evidence of advisers and FJR staff reporting an enhanced work focus in their interaction with customers. However, in relation to the hardest to help Priority Group 1 and Priority Group 2 customers, some advisers

noted that JOT allows them to work more effectively precisely because they are freed of the pressure to submit them to vacancies and can instead, work more progressively to remove their barriers to work, ensuring more sustainable progress toward active labour market participation. The role of the AAT was also thought, in places, to contradict the emphasis of support to the hardest to help customers to move closer to the labour market, either through reintroducing an incentive to work with customers that could be immediately submitted to a vacancy or by encouraging advisers to make inappropriate submissions where a customer was not yet job-ready. The impact of enhanced work focus was constrained at FJR by the amount of time available and in at least one District this had led to an emphasis on checking active seeking activity rather than identifying vacancies or encouraging applications.

What was more difficult to ascertain was the influence that could be attributed to JOT in these perceived changes in emphasis and customer service to the harder to help. While JOT was widely thought to have been part of the wider change, some either attributed the bulk of the increase in emphasis on the harder to help on other initiatives or thought that the change pre-dated JOT. For instance, in several Districts the focus on harder to help customers was related explicitly to their having Pathways to Work. Others clearly related the emphasis on referring job ready customers or Priority Groups 4 and 5 customers to self-help channels as a product of the channels strategy rather than JOT. Similarly, the differentiation of FJR time was related to the Trailblazer initiative, rather than JOT. All that said, the role of JOT may have been to either reinforce these other initiatives or as a 'permissive variable'; allowing managers to implement them where they may have previously been reluctant to do so as a result of the pressure to generate JET points.

## 5.6 Submissions

Generally, respondents reported a lower level of submissions activity than they had undertaken under JET. That said, in several Districts there was some confusion between respondents in the District about whether submissions activity had increased or decreased.

Respondents also generally noted that submissions had initially fallen dramatically and initiatives had been put in place locally and nationally through the AAT to reinflate the level of submissions. Local initiatives included communication from District management and in one district the agreement of 'submissions pledges' at an office level.

It was universally reported that inappropriate speculative submissions had declined as a result of the removal of the need to generate an intervention in order to gain job entry points. There was near universal recognition that JOT implied that submissions activity should be focused on quality rather than quantity in contrast to the approach under JET.

However, the precise meaning of this was not always clear and little hard evidence of improved quality submissions emerged. Indeed, there was also concern that this emphasis was not reflected in the matching aspect of the Employer Outcome Target (EOT). Several possible reasons for this apparent contradiction emerged from discussions with Jobcentre Plus staff. These included a perception that the quality of vacancy information provided by Employer Direct was occasionally poor and that the focus on self-help and the use of Apply Direct may also lead to poorer quality (self-) submissions. Some VSMs and Employer Engagement staff were also concerned about the emphasis on the hardest to help customers which might have resulted in negative experiences for employers who may be faced with applicants with more complex and challenging needs.

In addition, there was reasonably widespread concern about the role of the AAT in driving submissions behaviour and that this might have begun to counteract the emphasis of JOT on quality submissions, leading to poor quality and inappropriate submissions:

*'I would say there has been an increase in submissions and not really the best, because in my opinion advisers now have the AAT, where they have to achieve certain percentages of submissions, I think you have gone back a bit and where we did before have to fight against inappropriate referrals to employers...'*

(Employer Engagement Officer)

Submissions activity at FJR was constrained by the amount of time available and in a number of places the emphasis on submissions had been switched to checking compliance and seeking evidence that active job search was underway.

In relation to the type of vacancies being submitted to the main change was felt to be labour market related with many respondents reporting an intensification of long-term structural changes in the UK labour market, especially out of low-pay and low-skilled manual manufacturing and agricultural employment, with implications for the level of demand in traditionally important sectors for Jobcentre Plus customers.

## 5.7 Referrals to providers

Respondents were asked a range of questions about their use of contracted and non-contracted provision and their reasons for using these different types of provision. They were also asked about the ways in which JOT has impacted on their use of provision and their level of awareness of what provision is available.

Respondents' answers about the levels of use of provision and how JOT had impacted on this were sometimes unclear. For instance, in some Districts the full range of responses was received, from JOT enabling increasing use of provision, to no change and even reduced use of provision out of a reduced emphasis on moving people into work. The balance of responses tended to suggest, however,

that in general JOT has had the impact of removing the JET points incentive that may have operated at times to constrain the use of provision as a defensive tactic to avoid 'losing' performance, which would not necessarily then be allocated to that individual adviser. In one District, referrals to provision had been encouraged by the agreement of referrals 'pledges' with local offices.

The impact of JOT on the use of contracted provision had, though, been overshadowed in most Districts by interruptions to provider contracts and subsequent attempts to reduce backlogs of customers who were past the point at which some form of mandatory provision becomes necessary (for example New Deal 'overstayers'). While the agreement of contracts had acted to reinstate higher levels of referrals it may be that interruptions to the availability of contracted provision might provide part of the explanation for apparent 'under-performance'. In some Districts referrals had increased within the year as a result of additional non-JOT factors such as the increases in the availability of other provision funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

Equally, on the other hand, in another District, increasingly strong working relationships between Jobcentre Plus and providers were reported. However, these were attributed to a range of factors other than JOT. These factors included the presence of Pathways, an Employment Zone and local area-based initiatives.

While levels of referrals to contracted provision may be rising, there were widespread continuing concerns in some Districts about the level of provision available throughout the District as a whole or the availability in parts of the District, especially in rural Districts with long-travelling distances and poor public transport between population centres. In addition, there were also widespread concerns in some Districts about the quality of contracted provision available. This was, in some places, related to concerns about the nature of the single-provider contracts and the impact that this had on the competitiveness and, therefore, quality of provision:

*'...we now have, not as a result of JOT but impacting on it, we have prime providers now. Up until a year ago we would have had a range of different suppliers for work readiness. We now go through one contract, but the efficiency, shall we say, the numbers of people who get jobs as a result of that provision has reduced quite substantially in the 2006/07 year. Take an example; if we were looking to get 100 people into work two years before I would have expected 25 of those people to come from my providers, and the other 75 to come from my advisers. At the moment we are barely getting 15 people out of that provision...so never mind whether it is JET or JOT, the number of people getting work from providers has dropped by probably 40% to 50%.'*

(District Manager)

In several cases these concerns had also resulted from sustained negative feedback from customers. In one case the quality of contracted provision was being taken up with the provider by the District Manager.

Overall, advisers in particular reported an increased willingness to refer customers to non-contracted provision. While this had been, in part, driven by limited availability of contracted provision it was also attributed to the introduction of JOT, in making advisers more willing first to refer to a provider that might find a customer a job (which would have in the past been a 'lost' job entry). Second it resulted from the ability of advisers to work with a customer to help them move toward the labour market, using non-contracted provision to tackle barriers to labour market participation without being under pressure to make immediate submissions. The use of non-contracted provision was also affected in some places by the availability of ESF monies, and the restructuring of European funding.

The use of non-contracted provision was also identified by some respondents as being in line with the increased emphasis on harder to help customers as a result of the role of this provision in tackling a wider range of issues preventing customers moving from inactivity to availability for work rather than merely helping them to be more competitive while they are already actively seeking employment:

*'If that isn't suitable in that point in time for a customer who's been out of work, on Incapacity Benefit for a number of years then we can take a step back...the customer may not be ready for New Deal so we may find some provision in the community that takes a step back before New Deal... then we build them up to the point where they can start to go through our provision.'*

(Advisory Services Manager)

Where it was used, non-contracted provision was seen by advisers as a genuinely effective intervention, rather than simply a 'nice thing to do' for customers. However, others were concerned that this was unproved, especially as a result of a lack of recording referrals to non-contracted provision:

*'We're not capturing feedback from those non-contracted providers are providing a decent service...I think it's a weak link in our armour that we've not made that link back and not reviewed the effectiveness of that area of work.'*

(District Performance Manager)

On the other hand, there were equal concerns about the quality of some contracted provision. There were also concerns in some Districts, where there are high numbers of customers with English language barriers to work, about the level and quality of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision available locally.

There was also evidence from staff responses of advisers seeking more information and becoming more aware of the range of provision, including non-contracted, available locally. There were examples, for instance, of providers visiting local offices to make advisers aware of the sorts of services they offer, or of advisers visiting providers, to witness first hand the services that they offer. In some Districts, directories of provision had been compiled while in others programmes of Action

Learning Sets had been established to share knowledge and awareness of non-contracted provision available.

Awareness of how to record referrals to provision may be mixed with a small number of respondents suggesting that this was not always widely understood or reporting concerns about the complexity of this. In some cases, management respondents were concerned at the lack of ability to record and monitor referral activity.

## 5.8 Relations with employers

JOT was felt by respondents to have impacted on relationships with employers in a number of ways. These include the reduction in follow-up of employers to collect evidence of job entries, changes in submissions practices and changes to the structure and nature of services offered to employers.

The reduction of follow-up was identified as having a broadly positive impact on employers and their relationship with Jobcentre Plus. The majority of respondents reported that employers welcomed the reduction of follow-up and some even speculated that this was making employers more willing to work with Jobcentre Plus. However, some respondents also noted that some employers missed the customer service contact that had resulted from follow-up. In some cases this had resulted in minimal follow-up being reintroduced in a reduced or targeted form, to ensure customer service to employers.

The impact of JOT and associated reforms of Jobcentre Plus on submissions was also mixed. On the one hand, advisers reported that they engaged in enhanced matching activity, though this might have been constrained by the impact of the AAT. Here the role of the AAT may be to encourage inappropriate submissions or the concentration of submissions activity on a small number of customers. However, on the other, the impact of increased referral of customers to self-service channels may have led to a decline in matching activity, as customers self-submit, rather than being guided by frontline, FJR staff and advisers. In addition, some advisers and FJR staff were concerned about the role of Employer Direct in taking vacancies and noted problems in the quality of vacancy information which constrained their efforts to ensure appropriate matching activity. One respondent reported that an indirect impact of recent changes to equalities legislation was that employers could be less specific about their demands in vacancy information and advertisements, meaning that less matching was possible.

While direct feedback from employers on the quality of submissions was mixed, respondents widely reported that changes in performance against the EOT suggested that the quality of matching activity had declined. However, several respondents suggested that this is probably related to the increased role of self-submissions and submissions from self-service channels. This led some to question the continued relevance of the EOT to measuring Jobcentre Plus performance in the context of JOT:

*'The way that the Employer Outcome Target is being measured at the moment, I don't think gives a true picture of what Vacancy Service Managers do really.'*

(Vacancy Services Manager)

Most Districts reported that they had changed the type of services that they offer to employers. This includes a reduction of emphasis on jobs fairs and recruitment events or a restructuring of the emphasis to Priority Customer Groups. Despite this, though, some respondents suggested that higher Priority Group customers did not necessarily benefit from jobs fairs or recruitment events:

*'...every jobs fair had to be evaluated to see exactly how successful it was in terms of taking our hardest to help Priority Group clients, as opposed to just satisfying employers' needs. It was becoming more and more obvious to us that we were just appeasing the employer and not helping our customers, so it's died a death really.'*

(Vacancy Services Manager).

In addition, the reduction in follow-up activity had created opportunities to engage in more proactive work to engage with a wider range of employers or to 'sell' Welfare to Work services such as guaranteed interviews or Work Trials for core Priority Customer Groups. There was evidence in several Districts that this was being taken up in a 'barter' approach, with Jobcentre Plus offering assistance with large-scale recruitment exercises in exchange for the employer 'buying-into' the Welfare to Work agenda, for instance by agreeing to take a certain percentage of harder to help customers or to subscribe to Work Trials.

In one District, where there had been negative labour market events, the value of this potentially additional resource had been constrained by the demands of coping with large-scale redundancies. However, it was thought that this had allowed them to cope with redundancies more effectively and there was hope that increased employer engagement capacity will have more positive impacts in the future.

In many Districts the role of VSMs and Employer Engagement staff had been restructured to allow greater engagement with employers. In some Districts there was a noted increase in the willingness of VSMs to share vacancy information, rather than being territorial or protective about them. The introduction of Labour Market Recruitment advisers was mentioned in several Districts as a further development of these roles.

Other factors also impacted on relationships with employers and in some cases these were more significant than any JOT impact. These included the partnerships and close working relationships with employers through external forums such as City Strategy forums or regeneration partnerships.

## 6 Motivation and behaviour

### 6.1 Impact of Job Outcome Target on incentives and motivation

Jobcentre Plus staff respondents were asked a range of questions about the impact of Job Outcome Target (JOT) on their own motivation, and in particular the motivation of advisers. Answers to these questions suggested that the major impact of JOT on motivation falls on advisers. Other staff groups were relatively unaffected by the change.

Adviser responses to the loss of the Daily Placing List (DPL) and shift to JOT fell into four broad categories: The first group could be described (or described themselves) as 'target-driven' and this group typically reported reduced motivation due to loss of JET, individual points targets and the DPL, which had provided very immediate information on the destination of individual customers. These advisers also missed the incentive effects of competition with others:

*'For those doing well the placing sheets were a great motivator. To go from that to not having any feedback other than what you know for yourself can be hard. It is like not being recognised.'*

(Advisory Services Manager)

The second group of advisers tended to report that they were never driven in the first place by the accumulation of Job Entry Target (JET) points, appearing on the DPL or by competition with their colleagues. This group instead suggested that their primary motivation was related to 'customer service', removing barriers to work and helping people in difficult situations to find employment and improve their personal situation. This was particularly, though by no means universally, the case for specialist advisers working with lone parents or Incapacity Benefit (IB) customers. This group reported that their reaction to JOT was broadly positive in that they had witnessed no change in their motivation but the overall working environment may have been improved as a result of less emphasis being placed on the accumulation of points and more recognition being given to the kinds of work that they do to move people toward sustainable employment.

The third group, mostly not advisers, reported that JOT had made little difference to their motivation. The fourth group were drawn from those who missed the DPL and those who were motivated rather by customer service objectives. The responses of some of these staff suggested that whatever their main reaction, a secondary and positive impact of the introduction of JOT was to improve the working atmosphere with less overt competition and a perception of reduced pressure.

In determining these responses, individual attitudes to targets in general and levels of performance under JET were important. In general, advisers who had performed well under JET were less likely to find JOT motivational. The attitudes of Adviser Managers and Business Managers were also important in shaping reactions.

Overall, respondents' views on the motivational impact of JOT were much more negative than were found in the pilot Districts. However, there was also evidence to suggest that the initial negative impact of the introduction of JOT might reduce over time. First, a number of respondents highlighted that the immediate introduction of JOT had led to a reduction in motivation for advisers which has subsequently been, at least partly, recovered. This was highlighted by some to lie behind initial reductions in the volume of submissions which have since stabilised, an effect which was also felt in the pilot Districts. Second, some respondents reported that the one-off increase in the points total had a negative psychological impact, even where staff understood that the rationale for this was the broadened scope for capturing points:

*'From a psychological point of view, if you work in an office and say your target for the District was 18,000 points and then for the next year you are told it is 42,000, even though you might have an idea of how Job Outcome Target works and how the stuff feeds into your performance, its still quite a big leap for you to get your head around...it is a dramatic change in the way we measure our performance, and I think as well as it being overestimated which hasn't helped, I think the cultural change along with other changes has put a bit strain on the organisation.'*

(Regional Performance Manager)

The scale of the culture change required was mentioned by several other respondents who all stressed that time would be needed in order for staff to adapt to the revised structure and to feel motivated within this. This included the time necessary for Advisory Services Managers (ASMs) to learn to motivate advisers who were so attached to the DPL and JET points. A central part of this was learning to adapt to the absence of real-time outcome performance data, the impact of which was reported by some to have been significant:

*'...up until March 2006 they [advisers] knew if they needed to improve... if they don't know, or perceive that their ability to influence on a personal basis has been reduced or taken away, that is not good for the human psyche and does not get you job satisfaction.'*

(District Manager)

It is also important to note that JOT is only one factor impacting on individual motivation. A range of other issues was mentioned. These included de-motivation and a lack of job satisfaction arising from reductions in resources and headcount, and frequent staff changes. The Adviser Achievement Tool (AAT) was seen by many advisers as being particularly demotivating. They reported that AAT confused messages about appropriate behaviour but despite this was seen as the most important motivational tool in driving behaviour, ranked above qualitative coaching or feedback resulting from structured observations or other Key Management Indicators (KMIs).<sup>1</sup>

In some it may be possible to suggest that the impact of the way in which aspects of JOT were implemented has combined with that of the AAT and wider organisational changes, as well as wider labour market changes, to undermine motivation. However, it may equally be possible to interpret the evidence to suggest that this demotivating impact will decrease and that the culture change required will gather pace over time. Though not entirely positive, the impact of the AAT does demonstrate that it is possible to replace deeply embedded tools for motivating staff. What is important is that the design of tools and approaches designed for this purpose is robust and avoids replicating any perverse incentives. As the ASM tier of management becomes more confident and embedded, the take-up and use of more qualitative methods should improve.

## 6.2 Working with the 'harder to help'

A key assumption behind the introduction of JOT was that it would support the shift in emphasis toward working with the hardest to help customers. Most staff in all staff groups included in the research were clear that 'harder to help' customers are the main priority and universally report that they are working almost exclusively with these customer groups.

The vast majority of staff respondents stated that they no longer engage in 'face-to-face' contact with customers who are in work or not claiming benefits<sup>2</sup>. While this is not specifically driven by JOT, it is seen as supporting this change that was already being driven by the Jobcentre Plus Channels Strategy and the other initiatives such as the roll-out of Jobcentre Plus, resource constraints and the introduction of floorwalkers.

Previous research on the impact of JOT on encouraging staff to refer 'job-ready' customers to self-help channels suggested that a lack of capacity in relation to 'Warm Phones' in Jobcentre Plus offices constrained the impact of this behaviour, with long queues and customers frequently being referred by call centres back

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<sup>1</sup> The operation of the AAT is the subject of a separate piece of research.

<sup>2</sup> One notable exception to this last point relates to migrant workers, with several respondents stating that the number of such customers had increased in recent months.

to staff in the offices. However, the national evaluation fieldwork provided very little evidence of these sorts of responses, suggesting that there may have been improvements in the availability of warm phones and/or quality of customer service being provided by Jobseeker Direct. Some respondents also reported that they were encouraging customers to use their own telephone and/or IT facilities if appropriate.

### 6.3 Impact on team working

Under JET it was widely reported that competition between advisers or between advisers and frontline staff for job entry points militated against team working. One of the key reasons for the introduction of JOT was to overcome this, thus providing better customer service experiences for customers.

Staff reported that JOT had removed some of the drivers of unhelpful competition, though many respondents denied or played down the significance of conflict under JET as a result of competition for points. Broadly, there were three categories of response to these questions: The first group of respondents was clear that JOT had helped to improve team working, primarily due to a reduced focus on individual targets, DPL and job entries and consequent lack of incentives for individuals to fight over the attribution of job entry points. The reduction of conflict was seen as facilitating team working and other beneficial behaviour such as increased sharing of information about job vacancies or successful provision. Advisers were also more willing to see each others' clients when a colleague was unavailable or when it was thought that a particular adviser may be able to help a specific customer more successfully.

A second group of respondents felt that JOT had made no difference to team working. This group tended to argue that colleagues had always worked cooperatively under JET and this had simply continued under JOT. However, a small number of respondents felt that the introduction of JOT had made no difference to team working in the sense that they believed that an individualistic and competitive approach still predominated within their office or team. This was now focused around AAT and other operational targets rather than around JET.

### 6.4 Impact on efficiency

When asked about the impact of JOT on efficiency and productivity, staff reported that they did not immediately see the connection between JOT and efficiency and regarded other initiatives such as Organisation Design Review (ODR) or staffing reductions as more important. However, District Management-level staff reported large-scale reductions in administrative activity to follow-up submissions with employers and chase destinations of customers who leave the register.

In addition, advisers report that they have gradually adjusted to the removal of the requirement to chase destinations. Despite understanding that this pressure

had been removed, some advisers continued to keep clerical records of their own performance, for a variety of reasons including maintaining job satisfaction, fear that JOT would be replaced by a JET-like system or in order to maintain up-to-date customer records.

Some respondents reported that wasteful behaviour continued to be actively driven by the structure of JOT. An example was dedicating staff time to revisiting Labour Market System (LMS) records to ensure that all relevant markers were set correctly (e.g. Childcare Barrier to work) to ensure that Job Outcomes resulted in maximum possible attributed performance. Another drain on staff time included the energy put into administering the AAT, including doing checks on LMS records.

## 6.5 Impact of the Adviser Achievement Tool on motivation and behaviour

Respondents were asked about the role of the AAT and KMIs on motivation and behaviour. For the most part, advisers reported that the AAT was much more relevant to their motivation than JOT. Where respondents commented on the KMIs they suggested that these were treated in a much more piecemeal fashion with advisers picking on aspects of the KMIs that relate to their own role, rather than the whole set.

The impact of the AAT was thought to be mixed, though with the majority of respondents suggesting that advisers' views of the tool are negative. Many reported that the impact of the AAT was demotivating. The benchmarks in the AAT are widely interpreted as targets that have to be achieved:

*'The issue is that as an organisation...if we set benchmarks and say "we expect you to do this", people gear up and they do that. But if we say we want you to have some flexibility as the way to help these people is to be more flexible, we are not so good – that's where we become a little bit unsafe if you like. The AAT, its right that we have something which measures our productivity as there were advisers...whose productivity was extremely poor...but the problem is that our advisers are still driven by that, and our managers to some extent...so that does affect our flexibility to help customers in the way we might best help them...'*

(Regional Performance Manager)

Reflecting this, aspects of the AAT that are thought to be particularly important in driving behaviour are the benchmarked areas of numbers of interviews, submissions and Better Off Calculations (BOCs).



# 7 Managing performance

## 7.1 Relationship between Job Outcome Target and other targets

When asked to identify the potential impact of Job Outcome Target (JOT) on other Jobcentre Plus targets, respondents suggested that the impact on the Employer Outcome Target (EOT) was likely to have been positive because of the reduction of follow-up. However, respondents were also concerned about the impact of a range of measures on the matching element of the target, though it was difficult to see how JOT (rather than the Adviser Achievement Tool (AAT), the quality of 'self-submissions' through Apply Direct or the impact of working more intensively with 'harder to help' customer groups) was responsible for this. Other concerns related to the employer relationship revolved around a limited perception of the withdrawal of services such as recruitment events or services.

Respondents struggled to identify a discernible impact of JOT on the Customer Service Target and some suggested that reduced follow-up of submissions and thus, less data collection about Refusal of Employment, might have a negative impact on the Monetary Value of Fraud and Error target.

## 7.2 Tools and information used to manage performance

Managers and advisers were asked about how performance is managed and more specifically about the tools and information used to do this.

Key Management Indicators (KMIs) were mentioned as an important tool for managing performance under JOT. However, these tended to be highlighted more by managers, especially at District level, rather than advisers. Where advisers mentioned KMIs this was most often either in relation to one or other indicator perceived to be relevant to the adviser's role, such as those related to the specific customer group that the adviser works with. In some cases advisers understood this simply as a requirement of their job, while others understood this as a KMI.

AAT was much more frequently mentioned as the predominant tool for measuring and managing adviser performance. A range of views were expressed about the usefulness of AAT. Advisers were typically negative about the role and impact of AAT. They were critical of the rigidity of the AAT and its failure to be flexible to suit different types of adviser with different customer caseloads. They were also critical of the drive to book a set number of interviews per day (including the practice of routine 'over-booking' in some Districts), feeling that this constrained their autonomy and limited the time available for customers. Advisers also worried that AAT was driving, and would drive, inappropriate behaviour such as poor quality submissions and repetitive and needless Better of Calculations (BOCs). Despite this, few advisers admitted that they themselves had made inappropriate submissions as a result of the AAT, some did report that they had done BOCs where these were not needed and they viewed this as a waste of their and the customers' time.

Both advisers and Adviser Managers tended to view the AAT as a replacement for individual Job Entry Targets (JETs) and many were confused by this, viewing it as a backwards step or in tension with JOT principles of using time more effectively, making quality rather than volume submissions and working with the 'hardest to help' to gradually remove barriers to work rather than being under pressure to submit them to jobs in the short-term.

Despite concerns regarding the AAT being widely held within and between Districts, it was clear that the emphasis given to the AAT and its different components differed between Districts. Some Districts, and some advisers in other Districts, were relaxed in their attitudes to the AAT and were relatively unconcerned about meeting particular benchmark targets within it. In these Districts, there was some suggestion, though no direct evidence, that Adviser Managers might collude with advisers to ensure that highly performing advisers did not receive a negative AAT score where they failed to meet one or other benchmark target. In other Districts, however, there was a strong emphasis on one or other aspect of the AAT. For instance, in one District BOCs were given a high priority and District Managers reported that this resulted from pressure from the regional tier. In these Districts advisers were certainly aware of the emphasis on BOCs but viewed it as driving inappropriate and ineffective behaviour as they faced pressure to conduct BOCs where there was little or no benefit to the customer. Examples of where a BOC was inappropriate were in cases where they had received a BOC in the previous week, were very familiar with the labour market and in-work benefits system or where they faced considerable barriers to work and were some distance from the labour market.

Managers' views were more mixed: Some managers clearly support advisers' criticisms of the AAT and many worried that it would drive inappropriate advice and coaching from Adviser Managers, even where managers at a District level did not interpret the AAT strictly. Against this, many managers thought that AAT was a useful tool if used flexibly and in combination with the range of other management tools available. In particular, managers reported that the AAT offered a useful emphasis on productivity.

Other staff respondents were relatively unaware of the AAT, though some members of frontline staff were aware of the introduction of a similar tool for Fortnightly Job Review (FJR) staff which occurred around the same time as the fieldwork was undertaken. A common concern across all groups that were aware of the AAT, was ambiguity over the linkages between AAT measured inputs and JOT outcomes, given the difficulties of disaggregating JOT data geographically and the time delays involved. This reflects a general unease about the ways in which the introduction of JOT had disrupted pre-existing understandings of the relationship between inputs and outcomes.

Use of qualitative approaches to management was much less pronounced, principally as a result of the emphasis given to the AAT. Use of the Quality Assurance Framework to undertake structured observations of adviser performance in Work Focused Interviews was much less common, despite it being widely recognised as a valuable tool. Common reasons for not performing structured observations were given as a lack of time, with this being constrained by the time taken to complete administrative tasks associated with the AAT. Other reasons for not undertaking BOCs included a lack of confidence or capacity among new Advisory Services Managers (ASMs) without an Advisory background. Some advisers and ASMs were unconcerned about not performing the required level of observations, reporting that ASMs that were co-located with their advisers could informally observe their performance and that this was much more effective as a means of collecting information that might be useful in coaching and supporting advisers.

### 7.3 Coaching and supporting advisers

Coaching and informal support were being offered by ASMs but the utility of this was mitigated by low confidence among many ASMs who had only recently adopted this role and did not have an adviser background. This was compounded in some cases by the impact of staff reductions and resource constraints as Districts adopted peripatetic management to cope with these factors.

There was some evidence that the use of the 'RAG' (Red – Amber – Green) approach was being replaced by more qualitative and supportive approaches to supporting improvements in adviser performance through new Performance Management Support Boards. The intention was to be less disciplinary in the approach and more focused on sharing good practice and collective problem solving to support ASMs. While this was welcomed in the Districts in which it was being implemented, it

was too early for District Managers and ASMs to reach firm conclusions on the impact.

Advisory Services Managers and Advisers also mentioned the introduction of more informal measures to support adviser performance such as team-based case conferencing. In some Districts this was being augmented by the establishment of adviser networks on a wider (e.g. District) basis. These mechanisms for peer support and information sharing were widely welcomed and thought, by advisers, to be effective.

## Part Three – Evidence from employers, providers and customers



## 8 Evidence from employers

### 8.1 Use of Jobcentre Plus services

Employers were asked which Jobcentre Plus services they had used since April 2006 and which of these services they had used prior to this date. The most frequently used services were Jobcentre Plus' Internet service for employers – Employer Direct online (EDon), the Employer Direct telephone service, Jobcentre Plus offices to conduct interviews and Jobcentre Plus resources to help organise large-scale recruitment exercises. The majority of employers noted no variation in their use of Jobcentre Plus services before and after April 2006, although a small number said they now used EDon and that they had not done so in the past. A minority of employers had not used Jobcentre Plus services in the past but had recently started to do so. Some employers routinely notified Jobcentre Plus of all vacant positions within certain job categories or grades, either by telephone or online.

A small number of employers said they no longer used Jobcentre Plus to organise large-scale events, although one of these was keen to point out that this was due to changes in their own business needs and not anything to do with Jobcentre Plus.

Some employers had used Jobcentre Plus offices to conduct interviews or to help organise large-scale recruitment events, mainly to coincide with store openings or to attract candidates to positions that were proving hard to fill. A small number had also been involved in specific projects to attract candidates from harder to reach groups such as the long-term unemployed, lone parents or people with disabilities. Interestingly, one employer had commissioned Jobcentre Plus to carry out market research about wages in the hospitality industry. This same employer was planning to work in partnership with a regional inclusion project on the recruitment of candidates with disabilities and those claiming Incapacity Benefit (IB).

## 8.2 Differences in service received

### 8.2.1 Contact with Jobcentre Plus

A small number of employers stated that they had not noticed any differences in the Jobcentre Plus services they had received before and after April 2006. Some respondents felt unable to comment on the service because they were not in post before April or because they were in centrally located positions which meant they did not come into contact with many of the services offered by Jobcentre Plus.

Of those employers that did note differences in the Jobcentre Plus service before and after April 2006, there were few comments on contact with Jobcentre Plus sales staff, local office staff, call centres or the labour market knowledge of staff. However, one respondent had noticed a decrease in Jobcentre Plus resources available to assist employers.

*'...there's limited resources now...at one time you used to have a hotline number for every new store...they would contact the applicants and book them in for interviews and quite often would come to the recruitment event and help meet and greet...stand at the front and tick people off as they come in for their interviews...now it's a rarity...'*

A small number of employers felt that relationships with Jobcentre Plus staff had improved and one respondent noted that the service seemed keener to work with recruitment agencies than it had previously. However, another employer felt that call centre staff at Employer Direct did not have the right knowledge to be able to serve the needs of their business. This was in contrast to another respondent who felt that it was quicker and more efficient to use the telephone service to notify vacancies than it was to upload them using EDon.

### 8.2.2 Dealing with vacancies

Those employers that were able to offer a comparison of Jobcentre Plus services before and after April 2006 and that commented on the quality and quantity of job applicants were largely agreed that this had improved since April 2006.

Employers were either happy that the number of applicants that had applied for positions since April 2006 had increased, or felt that advertising with Jobcentre Plus had always led to a reasonable number of applicants. The quality of applicants was also said to have improved. In the past:

*'Not all the Jobcentre Plus candidates put forward specifically matched the criteria for what we were looking for. On some occasions we did believe that the relationship locally meant individuals were coming to interviews with ourselves purely to satisfy a requirement that they have to be seen as job seekers, and didn't necessarily actually want a job.'*

It was felt that *'there is a lot more consistency now and the response from Jobcentre Plus in terms of applicants is better'*. However, one employer did note that there is still *'no national standard of service'*, so experiences with regards to the quality

of Jobcentre Plus services and that applicants found through the service can vary across the country. This had led to reluctance to use Jobcentre Plus services from some regional offices of the organisation.

A small number of employers offered comments on the time taken to fill vacancies. One respondent felt that positions were now taking longer to fill because of the fewer Jobcentre Plus resources they perceived to be available for this. In contrast, another employer felt that a more proactive approach to filling vacancies was being taken.

The few employers who commented on the level of bureaucracy involved in dealing with Jobcentre Plus felt that their experiences were dependent on the relationship they had with local Jobcentre Plus offices. In areas where the relationship was said to be strong or well established, bureaucracy had not been an issue. However, in areas where working relationships were weaker or less established, it had been more difficult to work with Jobcentre Plus. Levels of bureaucracy were also found to have reduced where National Account Managers were now in place. In the case of a large national recruitment agency it was felt that there was a perception in the past that Jobcentre Plus staff in some areas of the country had viewed the employer as local competition, and that this had hindered collaborative working between the two organisations.

*'Where we didn't have an ongoing relationship or an established relationship then on occasions, we felt that maybe the Jobcentre Plus staff felt that we were competition, rather than people they could work with collaboratively.'*

Employers who commented on the level of telephone follow-up since April 2006 were agreed that levels had reduced and that this was a positive change. According to one employer this had a 'big impact on working life'.

### **8.2.3 Promotion of priority customer groups and recruitment events**

Some employers had noticed an increased promotion of Jobcentre Plus work with priority customer groups:

*'...there's been much more focus on it in the past year.'*

*'I think there appears to be much more emphasis on getting the long-term unemployed back into the workplace. That's the big focus that I've spotted more than anything...which is a good thing...I think they're offering much more help to those people rather than just leaving them sitting there.'*

This work with priority groups was generally viewed positively by employers and a small number had been working closely with Jobcentre Plus and other organisations to access these groups, either through discreet projects or work trails or placements.

*'We've got a national scheme running with the Mencap charity at the moment and some of the feedback from that is fantastic, both from the point of view of how good workers they are but also in the personal development in the individuals.'*

However, there was some concern from a small group of employers who feared that the push to promote employment of those 'hardest to help' might impact negatively on their businesses because they might not be the most suitable candidates to fill vacant positions.

*'The service has improved but there are downsides to pushing the hardest to help groups.'*

Some employers had also worked on large recruitment events in the past, particularly for recruiting for new store openings. One employer commented that they had just worked with Jobcentre Plus on a big recruitment event and were impressed by the level and standard of support which their organisation had received.

#### **8.2.4 Changes to working relationships with Jobcentre Plus**

Employers that had noticed differences in Jobcentre Plus services since April 2006 did not generally feel that these differences had led to any significant changes in their working relationship with Jobcentre Plus. One employer did feel that the changes had strengthened the relationship and that it was now improved and more tailored to the business. Around half of participating employers felt that the quality of service received from Jobcentre Plus had improved in recent times, with the remaining respondents either noting that the quality of service had remained the same or feeling that they were unable to comment on the quality of service.

Improvements in the quality of services were generally linked to better online facilities and a more professional service. Several respondents also felt that quality had been improved by less telephone follow-up from Jobcentre Plus staff. Employers had found this to be burdensome in the past and the majority who commented on this were happy that these routine phone calls were no longer taking place. Only one employer felt that this change might lead employers to being less likely to advertise, although this had not influenced their own decision.

A small group of employers did have concerns that applicants who did not submit applications or turn up for interviews would not be appropriately sanctioned as a result of reduced follow-up. However, reducing telephone follow-up was felt to be more important.

#### **8.2.5 Additional comments on Jobcentre Plus service**

Respondents were asked if they would like to comment on any other aspects of recent service they had received from Jobcentre Plus. Most respondents chose to take up this opportunity, with over half reiterating that they were happy with the service that they had received and that they appreciated recent improvements in the service.

*'Even though the resources aren't what they used to be...it's still invaluable... really great to have their support...99% of the time its fantastic the other 1%...I think its just this kind of disheartened kind of attitude really because of the fact that probably colleagues have lost their jobs and their resources have been slashed and they can't do the support they used to give...'*

*'There has been a definite change in their attitude about engaging with employers.'*

Other positive comments were given in support of the work of National Account Managers. However, several shortcomings of the service were also noted, particularly in terms of the standard of technology of the online service which some felt needed improvement. Respondents voiced their frustration at not being able to copy and paste advertisements into the system, as well as the system not allowing applicants to apply for vacancies online.

### 8.3 Jobcentre Plus target system

Employers were asked if they were aware that Jobcentre Plus operates a target system and if so to briefly outline their understanding of how this system works. Just under half of the respondents were not aware. However, just over half of the employers said they were aware and most of these were able to give a general explanation of how the system works. Those respondents that were able to give an explanation were generally aware of the points system and that this was based on different priority customer groups such as the long-term unemployed or the disabled. Some employers were actively engaged in recruitment activities to specifically target candidates from these groups. Activities with priority groups were viewed generally positively by respondents, although one employer did note how this recent push to work with such customers did need to be managed by the employer.

*'You scratch our back...we'll scratch yours more than ever now...which never used to be the case but its very much the case now that they don't do anything for us anymore unless we can guarantee that we'll interview people off the priority list, but I do not interview anyone off the priority list unless they meet the criteria of our jobs because its a waste of their time, waste of our time and the jobcentre are very happy with that.'*

There was some confusion about how the target system works. One respondent thought that the current target system was going to be phased out and another felt it was based on getting a percentage of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants a month into jobs. One employer, a national recruitment agency, said they were aware of the target system because of a feeling that their organisation was sometimes perceived to be in competition with Jobcentre Plus, in terms of advertising and filling vacancies.

Respondents were also asked if there were aware that a new target system (Job Outcome Target (JOT)) had been implemented by Jobcentre Plus nationally in April 2006 and if so, to briefly outline their understanding. They were also asked to comment on if the new system had impacted on their relationship with Jobcentre Plus. Only a small number of employers were aware of JOT. For one respondent their awareness stemmed from them knowing that the system had been piloted in their region, for another it was from a conversation with a National Accounts Manager and for another it was as a result of a visit from a Jobcentre Plus representative. Only one of the employers had noted any impact on their relationship with Jobcentre Plus. In this case, JOT was said to have resulted in a renewed interest from Jobcentre Plus in speaking and working with employers.

## 9 Evidence from providers

### 9.1 Contact with Jobcentre Plus

Providers were asked about the dealings they had had with Jobcentre Plus since April 2006 as well as the types of contact they had had in the year preceding this date. A number of the Providers felt that the types of contact had largely remained the same but the majority had noticed changes in their dealing with Jobcentre Plus.

The majority of Providers still had regular contact with Jobcentre Plus to discuss and negotiate contracts, although the frequency of these meetings was said by most respondents to have dropped since the implementation of the Job Outcome Target (JOT). An associated change, mentioned by several providers, was the loss of regular District Programme Quality Management Team (DPQMT) meetings. These were now said to have been replaced by third party provision management. The loss of the DPQMT meant that providers now have less contact with District Managers and several providers noted the move from dealing with Jobcentre Plus at District level to regional level.

A minority of Providers noted that there were now more discussions with, or reporting to, Jobcentre Plus staff to inform advisers of progress with customers. However, most Providers explained that the monitoring of customer progress had largely been left to the provider since April 2006.

### 9.2 Differences in contact with Jobcentre Plus

The majority of providers had noticed differences in the nature of their contact with Jobcentre Plus in the year preceding and following April 2006. These are discussed in detail under the following sub-sections.

#### **9.2.1 Contact with Jobcentre Plus staff and advisers**

Most providers felt that the contact that they now had with Jobcentre Plus staff was less than it was in the past. Several respondents attributed this to the recent organisational restructure of Jobcentre Plus. It was felt that this had impacted

on the level of support they received from local staff and that in the past more ownership was given to staff at local level. Some providers commented on how changing Jobcentre Plus roles and the redeployment of experienced staff meant there had been a loss of the personal touch and that the resulting staff changes had been hard to deal with.

Several respondents commented on the loss of the DPQMT and that they no longer had a named contact at District level. Some felt that this resulted in matters being discussed less and that there was a less collaborative style of working than there had been in the past. It was also noted by a minority of providers that there was now more email correspondence between the provider and Jobcentre Plus staff, whereas in the past there would have been more face-to-face or telephone contact. There were several observations that Jobcentre Plus staff don't seem to have so much time any more and there was a sense that providers were feeling pushed away.

*'At one time the advisers used to spend more time going out to actual providers. Now they have less time to do that, so at local level it's more telephone contact than face-to-face contact.'*

*'In the main the advisers were much more visible in coming out to the offices to visit clients, speak to clients, see how things were going.'*

A more positive outcome of this change was explained by one respondent who detailed how the Third Party Manager is now his main contact *'who then takes my information and disseminates it to advisers and adviser managers. Adviser Managers, conversely then, will speak to him, who then comes back to me with their views'*.

Another Provider commented on the good contact that they had with advisers and how they were looking for more involvement from Advisory Services Managers (ASMs).

### **9.2.2 Quality assurance and customer tracking**

Few providers commented on any changes to quality assurance. Those that did felt that support in this area was less because of the loss of the regular DPQMT or the contrary; that they were now receiving more support. A minority of the providers had their own quality assurance managers in place.

Respondents had far more to say on differences in the methods of customer tracking. The majority of providers felt that the onus on monitoring and tracking customer progress was now firmly on them, something which fits in with the JOT model, as Jobcentre Plus staff do not track individual outcomes to claim points;

*'Since April 2006 and the introduction of JOT, now we see it's entirely our responsibility.'*

Pre-April 2006 it was felt that there was more of a partnership approach to tracking customers where providers were responsible with support from Jobcentre Plus.

*'Under the old regime...local jobcentres were very co-operative and would always advise us if people had moved into jobs to help us to achieve our targets, which in turn helped them to achieve theirs. But that has now gone. Jobcentres are no longer able to give us information about what has happened to our clients and that's partly to do with the fact that their computer system has been combined with the Inland Revenue – and they actually don't have names anymore, they're dealing with data rather than actual personal records.'*

Providers felt that Jobcentre Plus staff were either unwilling or unable to supply the data, which in the past would have helped them to prove that customers had moved into employment. There was also some evidence to suggest that providers had to make additional efforts to carry out customer tracking and monitoring. One Provider explained how they met with Jobcentre Plus every month to go through all the customers attending their provision to ensure that the information held by Jobcentre Plus was accurate. Another respondent explained how they were now offering payments to customers of provision who found jobs so as to incentivise the notifying of a job outcome and to assist with customer tracking. A minority of Providers also mentioned that they regularly produced monitoring reports for Jobcentre in order feedback on customer progress.

There was also a sense that Jobcentre Plus was now more focused on customer tracking and provider performance. One respondent felt that Jobcentre Plus were now more rigorous in terms of their interpretation of rules in order to claim money. This meant that they sometimes experienced difficulties in claiming job outcomes, particularly with regards to what was acceptable evidence of a job outcome.

*'We can only claim our job outputs if a client goes into work...first of all we have to get the evidence in place from the employer...the employer has to sign a declaration saying that client is going to be in work...or the intention is that that job is going to last more than 13 weeks...it has to be a job that lasts more than 13 weeks it has to be a job that is more than 16 hours a week and we only have six weeks to claim it from the end of our provision... so if they leave our provision then we've only got a six week window.'*

The reduction in the tracking period of customers from 13 weeks to six weeks was mentioned by the majority of providers, mainly in the context of explaining Jobcentre Plus statistics that suggest that provider performance has dropped since April 2006. The impact of the reduction in the tracking period is discussed further in Section 9.2.6.

### **9.2.3 Quantity and quality of referrals**

On the whole Providers felt that the quantity and quality of referrals had dropped since April 2006. Providers commented on customers becoming 'harder to help' with more barriers to work. The quality of referrals was also felt to be more

'unpredictable' and a significant minority felt that they had received inappropriate referrals. Examples given included: a customer who was soon to emigrate; one who was heavily pregnant and not planning on returning to work once they had given birth and another who was awaiting a prison sentence. Another provider noted that they had had an increase in the referral of violent customers.

With the exception of a small number of providers who felt that some of their provision was over-subscribed, most providers felt that the flow of direct referrals from the jobcentre had slowed in the past year. Some providers told of how they now had to do more marketing to capture customers of their own. A small number of providers also felt that the knowledge of Jobcentre Plus staff could affect the level or quality of referrals.

*'I think the jobcentre staff are very often confused about the range of provision that is available, and that is a problem for us, in that we are continually having to market our own contracts to jobcentre staff, whereas they're contracts that jobcentre have awarded – that's a bit of an issue.'*

#### **9.2.4 Levels of bureaucracy**

Providers that commented on any change in the level of bureaucracy were generally agreed that this had increased or that previously high levels had remained the same.

*'It's got worse, much much worse, there are now so many forms that staff are swamped with.'*

*'Certainly there's not an improvement. There have been changes, but I wouldn't say they were changes for the better. There's always bureaucracy with any government department and I don't think it's any different now to the way it's always been.'*

One particular area in which providers felt bureaucracy had increased was in relation to claiming job outcomes and the need to provide evidence to secure job outcomes. Concern was also expressed at levels of bureaucracy and paperwork for employers which was felt to be unnecessarily high and which providers felt was burdensome for an employer who ultimately would get nothing from completing and returning any associated documentation.

*'Employers are going to get fed up of people consistently running up to them for getting bits of paper signed.'*

#### **9.2.5 Reasons for changes in contact with Jobcentre Plus**

Providers were asked to give their thoughts on why they felt that the changes they described had come about. Only one provider put the changes directly down to the implementation of JOT. The most popular response was the recent reorganisation of Jobcentre Plus, which providers felt had led to the streamlining of services, cost efficiency saving and the rationalisation of Jobcentre Plus staff.

Several respondents also felt that this organisational change had not had the necessary buy-in of Jobcentre Plus staff. There was a feeling that change had been 'done to them'. It was felt this was affecting various aspects of the Jobcentre Plus service.

*'They seem to be under pressure, staff in offices seem very despondent and unhappy, they're going through a huge amount of change and their internal communications don't seem to be that effective.'*

A small number of providers also felt that communication had suffered as a result of the Prime Contractor Model which was now in place. It was felt that this relationship needed more support and for sub-contractors the lines of communication with Jobcentre Plus had suffered. One sub-contractor also felt that the reasons for change in their relationship with Jobcentre Plus were due to the prime contractor trying to edge competition out of the market by giving the sub-contractor the worst referrals.

Changes in customer demographics were also mentioned as factors that may have affected the changes as it was felt by a number of providers that the customer group was getting 'harder to help'.

### **9.2.6 Reasons for changes in provider performance**

Providers were asked to offer their thoughts on recent Jobcentre Plus statistics that suggest provider performance has dropped since April 2006. The majority of providers were clear that this was as a result of changes in the methods of recording job outcomes and not an actual reflection of a drop in provider performance.

*'My own personal opinion is that real performance probably hasn't changed as significantly as the statistics are showing. I think the statistical processes and data collection have fallen off – the methodology for collection statistics and data collection has caused the major impact on the reduction in performance.'*

*'They have changed the goalposts in the way job outcome performance is classified. They have changed the criteria in that you only have six weeks instead of 13 weeks to claim a job outcome...in addition to that, they are now working on the basis of 'actual' leavers to work out the job entry rate as opposed to 'statistical' leavers – that changed and their data was all wrong.'*

The reduction in the tracking period from 13 weeks to six weeks was felt to have had a significant influence on the figures as well as the changes that were made to the definition of a job and whether 'statistical jobs' could be included. One respondent also noted how the time lag in the data coming through the HMRC System may also have impacted negatively on the figures.

A number of providers also felt that the data that was recorded and the systems for doing so could not be relied upon and several said that they kept their own records. One respondent had given several pieces of evidence of inaccurate data recording to their contracts team to investigate. In addition, a number of providers also pointed out a flaw in how the system records starters and leavers on programmes. It was explained how every SL2 Leaver Form triggers a Leaver Record but that one customer could participate in several programmes. On any one of these programmes the customers could be dismissed or could leave and then be re-referred. However, the customer can only be recorded as entering work once but can be recorded as having left a programme several times, this affects and skews the statistics.

In addition to problems in the way that provider performance data is being recorded a number of other reasons were given by respondents for the apparent drop in provider performance. One provider did feel that perhaps providers and Jobcentre Plus had 'taken their eye off the ball' for a while and another felt that performance had been on a downward trend for years and that in such uncertain times staff retention had been difficult. It was also suggested that performance may have been affected by the introduction of prime contractors which meant that new relationships had to be set up with sub-contractors, which had taken longer to embed and develop. One provider also had a feeling that contracts had been awarded on promises rather than performance or a track record and that this was not helpful in terms of performance.

Other operational reasons were also suggested. These included providers no longer being sent referral information on customers in advance of them starting on programmes and the fact that Jobcentre Plus can no longer reduce customers' hours on a programmes unless they are disabled. This could result in customers being dismissed because of poor attendance, only to be re-referred. They would then be counted again as a leaver and not as a new starter. Another provider also felt there may be gaps in provider programmes which might prevent customers from taking the necessary steps to the labour market. It was also noted that there were not always facilities available to carry out the compulsory one-to-one interviews for customers on programmes such as the Gateway to Work and that this might impact negatively on their progress.

### 9.3 Jobcentre Plus target system

Providers were asked about their awareness of the Jobcentre Plus target system, their understanding of this and their awareness and understanding of JOT. All but one of the providers understood that Jobcentre Plus operates a target system and most were able to articulate how this worked. However, it was clear that a number of the respondents understood the system in terms of how the targets related to them as providers rather than necessarily being able to offer a more general overview. The vast majority were also aware of JOT and many were able to give a detailed explanation of how the system operated. The providers who were

not aware of JOT either did not have direct contact with Jobcentre Plus, because they were a subcontractor, or were not measured by job outcomes.

Several providers explained how data is now collected through HMRC system and that there is now a time lag in terms of recording job outcomes. They also commented on how the Labour Market System (LMS) no longer supports information regarding job entries and that the result of this is that providers are now responsible for providing evidence of their own job outcomes and the importance of job validation information was noted.

*'Obviously now the imperative for them to do that is gone because their own measurement criteria is by the JOT system so I think it has perhaps affected how many outcomes that we can get credit for.'*

When asked to comment on how the implementation of JOT had impacted upon their relationship with Jobcentre Plus, a small number felt it had not impacted at all, that they had always had good relationships with Jobcentre Plus or that any changes were not attributed to JOT. One prime contractor had had to redevelop and repackage their provision for the harder to help and they had found Jobcentre Plus to have been very supportive in this. In contrast, another provider felt that lots of changes in contracting had been unhelpful in terms of finding customers work in the new time frame available.

There were respondents who felt that JOT had resulted in providers now being entirely responsible for the tracking of customers on provision. An impact of this was an end to the sharing of jobs in order to secure job outcomes. It was also felt that there were now increased conversations with Jobcentre Plus about performance. One respondent explained how communication with Jobcentre Plus was previously good but that this was not the case anymore, another how the relationship had become *'more distant, strained and totally pressurised'*.

Although most providers had awareness that Jobcentre Plus operates a target system, providers were generally unaware of the changes JOT has brought to operations for Jobcentre Plus. This limited understanding reveals a need for improved direct communications with providers to make them aware of new processes under JOT and any changes to their responsibilities under the new target and contracting regime.



# 10 Evidence from customers

## 10.1 Evidence from current Priority Groups 1 and 2 customers

### 10.1.1 Interaction with Jobcentre Plus and level of staff contact

Priority Groups 1 and 2 customers had a variety of experiences of interacting with Jobcentre Plus. They contacted the organisation for a variety of reasons and with different degrees of regularity. The three main reasons for contacting Jobcentre Plus were making or renewing benefit claims, being asked to attend the Jobcentre Plus office to undertake an adviser interview and finally to look for work independently. The frequency and regularity of contact, therefore, depended on a combination of the reasons for contact and the length of the respondent's claim. Where a respondent was looking for work, contact could be relatively frequent on the basis of once or twice a month. Where respondents contacted Jobcentre Plus in relation to their benefit claim this was much less regular and tended to be sporadic, with some not having contacted Jobcentre Plus for a long time. Where contact was for interviews at the request of Jobcentre Plus, contact was regular but infrequent; on an annual or biannual basis.

These factors also affected the mode of interaction, with those contacting Jobcentre Plus for benefit-related information being much more likely to use the telephone, rather than visiting the local office. Those who were looking for work or were asked to attend an interview were most likely to do so by visiting in person. The length of time that respondents had been in contact with Jobcentre Plus also varied widely, with some reporting that they had been in contact with the organisation for many years and others for as little as one month.

Among these focus groups, several were mainly made up of people describing themselves as looking for work, with others saying that they were not looking for work as a result of ill-health or incapacity. The focus groups in Districts in the 'good' Key Management Indicator (KMI) performance band were made up mainly of people looking for work, whereas this was more mixed for the other groups, potentially undermining analysis of differences in customer experiences which might help to explain performance variation.

### 10.1.2 Overall view of the service

Overall views of the service offered were quite negative, though the specifics of this were unsurprisingly related to the principal reason for the interaction. Where contact was principally related to benefit claims, negative perspectives on the quality of service were related to difficulties associated with making and renewing a claim. These included negative experiences of delays, the quality of benefit entitlement information available, being passed between different departments or documents being lost. Some also commented that some staff occasionally lacked empathy for health- or disability-related issues or that they perceived staff to be suspicious about customers being 'lazy' or fraudulent.

Where the primary reason for interaction was mandatory or related to finding work, there was some degree of consternation about encouragement from Jobcentre Plus staff to apply for job vacancies which respondents perceived to be poor quality:

*'They push you into jobs when you are not ready. They are rubbishy jobs. They just put you in any, they'll give you any job that's there, it doesn't matter if you have experience or not.'*

*'I find that they only cater for jobs in a certain job market – they don't cater for social workers – that kind of job – senior management – even the skilled jobs they only cater for what's needed at the time in the market. I had a lot of problems – if they can't find a job in the area I want, they push you towards something else which is ridiculous, I know they are not going to employ me in a shop with my qualifications.'*

Other criticisms revolved around a lack of continuity in service from Jobcentre Plus staff.

The level of commitment and consistency of advice offered by Jobcentre Plus advisers was also questioned by some customers. One respondent stated:

*'If you see them at the end of the day, they're like a machine, they don't listen to you...you're just a number.'*

A number of respondents also perceived that they had experienced barriers to assistance when requesting support to move into self-employment. The indication was that negative attitudes toward self-employment had been experienced:

*'If you mention self-employment in the jobcentre, it's a very stuck up attitude, they don't want to know.'*

However, at the same time, some particular positive comment was received about both face-to-face provision and self-help channels:

*'I go down there on a weekly basis...in fact I'm down there this afternoon... at 2pm...I find them very helpful.'*

*'When I have gone there I've found them really helpful...what I tend to do is go on the computer [at home] and put in Jobcentre Plus so any sales jobs you can get on screen and you can do it that way...it's a lot easier...so I don't tend to go down to the actual jobcentre...its easier that way.'*

Where people were positive about their interaction, this often related to the 'kindness' or understanding of staff or having received practical help with finding training courses or financial assistance, for instance in applying for a passport.

### **10.1.3 Behaviour of staff in in-depth interviews**

Where customers had experience of having an interview with an adviser, they were asked a series of questions about the quality of the interaction. Opinions on whether they had held discussions about their employment aspirations and how these might be realised were very mixed. Some did report having these conversations and that they had been positive or led to the identification of training needs. However, a large number were unspecific about having such conversations with an adviser. Others reported that they had not been able to have such conversations or that identified training opportunities were inappropriate:

*'The person I saw – she come up with a course on typing – I did a course on that, But I couldn't do that as a job because of holding my hands in a certain position.'*

Responses were also mixed about whether customers had been given assistance with job search activity. Some reported that they had received help, while the majority reported that they had not. Equally, some respondents said that they had received encouragement to apply for jobs, though others had not and specifically reported that they had not faced pressure to find employment. In one focus group, several respondents interpreted the lack of pressure to look for work from Jobcentre Plus advisers as resulting from their age. Where participants had applied for jobs they had, for the most part, done this for themselves, though one or two did report having received assistance. Several respondents reported that they had received help with preparing for interviews and applications, such as with CV preparation.

When asked if they had been referred to external assistance, most reported that they had not been referred to recruitment agencies. Several participants had been referred to other external help with job search and interview preparation but the majority reported that they had not. Similarly, only a few participants had been referred to external training providers and where this was the case, opinion was mixed about whether the experience had been helpful.

One indication of the extent to which advice may be being offered to accord with quantitative targets is contained in the following comment:

*'There's no encouragement – they tell you to go for anything as they just want you off the books.'*

Respondents also commented on the level of experience and knowledge which different advisers were able to offer. There was a clear perception that less experienced advisers offered both less overall support and information on training providers and potential employers. One client focus group agreed unanimously that in cases where advisers were more experienced they seemed more willing to help and offer advice on a more knowledgeable platform.

The attitude of adviser staff toward customers was also a frequently cited issue. Some customer focus groups felt that all unemployed claimants were perceived as problematic:

*'[They]...need to treat people with respect and not tar everyone with the same brush – most people genuinely want a job.'*

In relation to the provision of financial advice relating to Better Off Calculations (BOCs) and the tax credits available to employed people, the experience was again evenly split. Around one half of the customer focus group respondents reported that they had undertaken a BOC with an adviser and, also, that they had been offered useful advice on the tax credit position that they would encounter in the context of employment which had been beneficial.

Respondents were also asked about whether they had received advice or information from Jobcentre Plus staff on the availability of in-work benefits and specifically, whether their adviser had undertaken a BOC to demonstrate how much better off they might be in work. Again, responses about this were mixed. Where participants had received this advice and specifically where they had had experienced a BOC, this was thought to be helpful:

*'The last time I went in she did a whole format thing...she printed it out on the system and said if you went back to work and did 20 hours or 25 hours or whatever then how it would benefit and whether...how it would work out...she did a whole lot of calculations for me. It was good.'*

Customers were also asked, where possible, to compare their experiences of using the jobcentre over the last 12 months with any experiences they had had previously. Most were either unable to do this or could not identify any differences. However, in one District, staff were very positive, noting improvements in the quality of personal service:

*'Oh yes definitely...well in my case they've got...I'm not too sure what they call the particular officer but she's in charge of single parents with children... in [the Jobcentre Office] you now go upstairs so you're not downstairs with all the jobcentre applying for jobs...you then go upstairs and they've got a separate section...you sit down...the biggest thing is they listen to you... my biggest grievance was the fact that they didn't give a damn before... they didn't listen...[now] they're very helpful...I mean in my case they're not encouraging me to go back to work but should I want to it's there.'*

### **10.1.4 Experience and use of other Jobcentre Plus services**

When asked whether they had been contacted at home about vacancies, customers reported mixed experiences. While most had not received such contact, some had. Those that had been contacted seemed to have received little or sporadic contact. One respondent reported monthly contact from staff at the jobcentre but was dissatisfied at the quality of the vacancies communicated to him.

Respondents were also asked to comment on their use of self-service channels. Most were aware of, or had used, Warm Phones in Jobcentre Plus offices to contact employers or to make enquiries about their benefit claim. For most this had been unproblematic, though a small number of respondents reported queues to use Warm Phones or that they had been passed around to different staff during their call about their benefit claim. One respondent suggested that they lacked confidence in speaking to employers or undertaking a telephone interview while on the phone in the office.

Most were also aware of the Jobpoints in local offices and where respondents were looking for work they had used these. For the most part they found these easy to use and there were no confidence or skills-related barriers to their use. Where there were problems reported was in relation to the geographical search function which they perceived to often not filter out vacancies outside the area in which they had defined their search. However, this may relate to not reading the information on the screen correctly. Use of the website to look for jobs was lower. Where it was used, most people were confident and positive about the experience. A small number, however, complained about technical features such as layout or the search capacity.

Generally, customers had not noticed any changes in the use or operation of self-service channels over the last year that might be attributed to the introduction of Job Outcome Target (JOT).

### **10.1.5 Vacancies**

Customers were asked to comment on the quality and quantity of vacancies available through Jobcentre Plus. The majority of respondents had little to say about this. Those that did make comments tended to be critical, either demanding more part-time and flexible employment suited to lone parents or people with health problems wanting to enter work slowly without being penalised in terms of benefit entitlement. On the other hand, others complained of the relatively low status and pay of vacancies placed with Jobcentre Plus, suggesting that they were over-qualified for these. Several respondents suggested that they felt there was some pressure to apply for unsuitable jobs which are not matched to their skills or aspirations. No respondents from this customer group had noticed any change in the nature of vacancies or how they are communicated to customers.

Several respondents had used employment agencies. Views on their effectiveness were mixed. Where these were negative it tended to relate to employment agencies

advertising general or generic temporary jobs and being unable to locate long-term or permanent employment. Where comments were positive, this tended to be related to more specialised agencies, including those working under contract to Jobcentre Plus who are able to provide help with CV or interview preparation. It was not possible, in this regard, to differentiate whether customer's comments referred to agencies or to providers.

Where customers who had used employment agencies had positive views on their effectiveness, this typically related to the quality of the jobs available and the focus of the staff in matching suitable people to these vacancies. This was reflected in the following feedback:

*'the agencies have better jobs which are far more suitable and the staff identify exactly what you want and only send you for those jobs.'*

## 10.2 Evidence from current Priority Group 3 customers

### 10.2.1 Interaction with Jobcentre Plus and level of staff contact

Priority Group 3 customers include those who have claimed Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) for less than six months.

As with Priority Groups 1 and 2, Priority Group 3 customers had a variety of experiences of interacting with Jobcentre Plus. They contacted the organisation for a variety of reasons and in different degrees of regularity. The main reasons for contacting Jobcentre Plus were to 'sign on' fortnightly or to carry out job search activity. Job search activity was usually undertaken through the use of Jobpoints. Most Priority Group 3 customers reported that they were actively looking for work and some had already found employment.

Priority Group 3 customers were equally likely to try and maintain contact with Jobcentre Plus through the organisation's website to search for jobs (some on a daily basis) or by 'phone contact (usually to check on the progress of benefit claims). However, some Priority Group 3 customers commented that it could prove difficult to speak with advisers by telephone as there were availability problems. The frequency of all forms of contact varied from once or twice per week to fortnightly. The duration of contact with Jobcentre Plus amongst Priority Group 3 customers varied from two weeks up to six months, in line with the nature of this priority group.

### 10.2.2 Overall view of the service

Overall views of the service were negative. In cases where contact was mainly related to benefit claims, perspectives on the quality of service were related to difficulties associated with making a claim. These included negative experiences of delays, the quality of benefit entitlement information available and being passed between different departments within Jobcentre Plus. Problems with the claims process were also reported with the ongoing claim process when renewing a claim.

Specific issues were encountered with advisers in terms of the level and extent of contact which they were able to offer to customers and, also in relation to the continuity of advice which was available from the same adviser. The discontinuity of advice caused by a customer seeing a number of different advisers, with associated issues being raised by caseload information not being fully passed between advisers or advisers not being up to speed with a customer's circumstances prior to meetings, was also raised as an issue. However, the experience of appointments with advisers is clearly highly variable and one customer focus group commented that staff are helpful and generally keen to do things for them. This positive aspect of customer service is also contained in the following comment containing veiled positive feedback:

*'Some people in the jobcentre go out of their way to help but then you get another that is just a complete waste of time.'*

Where people were positive about their interaction this often related to the empathy or understanding of advisers in the practical help offered to deal with them on a more personal basis.

Customers at one focus group also commented on the quality and source of job vacancies which were made available to them through Jobcentre Plus. Two customers stated that many of the vacancies advertised within Jobcentre Plus originated in agencies which required them to register with the agency prior to being considered for an interview. The source of consternation in these circumstances related to a distrust of the motivation for recruitment consultants to register clients at some agencies:

*'One big problem is that you have got a lot of agencies and all they are doing is putting on the same jobs time and time again. It's well over half of them – you phone them up and they want you to come down just to get you on their books. After a couple of times you realise that the recruitment consultancy gets money for getting you on the books.'*

### **10.2.3 Behaviour of staff at Fortnightly Job Review**

Where customers had experience of having a Fortnightly Job Review (FJR) interview with an adviser, they were asked a series of questions about the quality of the intervention. Once again opinions on whether these appointments about their employment aspirations and how these might be realised, were very mixed. Some customers did report having these conversations and that they had been positive or motivational:

*'When they say well done or smile at you – that happened on one occasion – it makes you feel good – you think "good, I'll do it again".'*

*'They are patient with me – if I say I haven't had a good week of job searching, they say "that's OK – at least you have been doing something".'*

*'He tried – he went on the internet and got me lots of information.'*

Some customers also commented on the benefit of consistent appointments with the same adviser and were sympathetic to the time pressures and workload which advisers handled. This was seen as being a determining factor in the relatively short length of appointments offered to this group, which was typically around ten minutes.

Less positively, some customers felt that their experience of signing on during the initial three-month period yielded a perfunctory interaction with Jobcentre Plus advisers. Some customers felt that they didn't receive any support at their fortnightly review in relation to job search activity or signposting to vacancies. One participant explained how during a recent visit to the Jobcentre they had been encouraged to 'sign and go':

*'I was in there [the Jobcentre] for 9.10 and out at quarter past. There was a sense of being in and out.'*

A number of Priority Group 3 customers had also detected that there was limited pressure placed upon them to apply for vacancies during the first three months of unemployment. After the initial three-month period (at the 13-week review) customers commented that advisers started to consider job vacancies in a more focused way and to encourage them to identify and pursue available vacancies. At this stage the pressure to submit to vacancies also became stronger and the observation was made in a number of cases that these were unsuitable in terms of customer expectations, skill level and experience. Many vacancies were observed to offer the minimum wage and some customers reported being encouraged to apply for jobs for which they were clearly unqualified. For example, one customer without a driving licence claimed to have been encouraged to apply for a job which involved driving. At the lower end of Priority Group 3 customer experience the following statements were made:

*'They just go through the motions...it's not friendly...you don't expect a party hat or anything but...when you go into a place like that you don't want someone giving you that...it's stressful...you resent being there...you resent them for like having the pen and the bit of paper you've got to sign... it shouldn't be like that...you feel like a scrounger...and why should you have to feel like that.'*

*'I tried phoning up for jobs...and a lot of them won't take me because I'm pregnant...I go to the jobcentre and explain this to them and they are like "well if you don't write down here that you've been actively looking for jobs then we'll stop your claim"...but I have and they can't employ me...and I'll explain that to them...and they are like they should employ you and they force and force me.'*

In some cases customers felt pressured to apply for jobs they felt were not suitable for them:

*'Even if you need certain qualifications...like computer skills or computer qualifications...they said to me..."look at this there's a receptionist's job here...do you know how to do databases?" And I'm like "no"...but they'll still force me to phone them up and see if they'll take me on even though I haven't got the qualifications...which is good but not good if I don't know what I'm doing and I go in a job and I haven't got a clue what I'm doing and it's their fault because they put me in the job.'*

#### **10.2.4 Behaviour of staff at in-depth interviews**

Where customers had experience of having an interview with an adviser, they were asked a series of questions about the quality of this type of interaction. Again, opinions on whether they had held discussions about their training and employment options and how these might be realised were very mixed. Most customers had had a Work Focused Interview (WFI) which they reported as being anything up to one hour in duration. Some did report that this interaction had been positive and that their aspirations were discussed in terms of potential training opportunities after their initial six-month period of unemployment. Others stated that they had received constructive assistance with the development of a CV. However, a significant number viewed the WFI less positively in relation to the quality of work suggested and the cost of training opportunities which were suggested.

The overriding feedback from customers was that they felt that it was inappropriate to have to wait for a six-month period to elapse before they could become eligible to apply for training opportunities. Priority Group 3 customers also observed that they were not being actively encouraged to apply for jobs and that they were not actively encouraged toward employment agencies. These customers noted that their aspirations should be discussed before six months as they were likely to be more motivated during their initial experience of unemployment. The feedback received was along the following lines:

*'They're not interested if you've not been unemployed for less than six months.'*

A significant number of Priority Group 3 customers had received BOCs and in these cases most had found them to be helpful in terms of assessing their options for different employment scenarios. The BOC for one respondent opened up an awareness of the potential to undertake part-time employment as their eligibility for Working Tax Credit resulted in a higher personal income level overall.

Where referral to agencies was suggested, the customer experience of dealing with agencies was somewhat negative in terms of the impact of undertaking temporary work on the continuity of the claim process:

*'The problem with agency work is one week you can get some work and the next week you might have two days and the week after that you might have another three days and the week after nothing...if you're claiming housing benefit as well on top of that...the housing benefit people sort it out for that month...they need your wage slips and they average out between them...well say...that's quite a lot of money...whether I'm working I'm not getting any benefits...so have to pay £138 for a place like a box without any help from the council.'*

Priority Group 3 customers also felt that they were treated as an homogenous grouping without close consideration of their individual circumstances.

### **10.2.5 Experience and use of other Jobcentre Plus services**

When asked whether they had been contacted at home about vacancies, customers reported mixed experiences. The vast majority had not received contact in this way, though a small minority had.

Priority Group 3 customers were also asked to comment on their use of self-service channels. Most were aware of, or had used, Warm Phones in Jobcentre Plus offices to contact employers or to make enquiries about their benefit claim. For most this had been straightforward, though a small number of respondents reported that they had been passed around different staff during their call or that they felt that the privacy of their 'phone conversation was compromised by the public context in which the Warm Phone was located. In particular, delays were reported when trying to access Jobseeker Direct services by telephone.

Most customers were also aware of the Jobpoints in local offices and had used these. In most cases Priority Group 3 customers found these accessible and easy to use and there were no confidence or skills-related barriers to their use. This search method was noted to be workable though the grouping and classification of jobs was felt to be capable of improvement. When searching within the context of generic job categories a long list of unsuitable vacancies was often revealed and where suitable vacancies were not identified in the local area then vacancies in many other parts of the country were also identified. As with Priority Groups 1 and 2 customers, this experience may relate to a failure on the part of customers to filter out non-relevant areas from their search.

Some Priority Group 3 customers preferred to use the Jobcentre Plus website from home rather than to access Jobpoints within the Jobcentre Plus office. The website was thought to be reasonably well constructed and navigable in most cases. Some criticism was levelled at the design of the website though most customers were confident and positive about their experience. A small number complained about the design and layout of the website and suggested that vacancy content did not appear to be updated on a daily basis. Further, the geographic search for vacancies was felt to take customers beyond the boundaries of their intended spatial search on occasions. The definition of a local search was noted to yield vacancy information relating to jobs outwith the perception of the local area. In some cases regional searches had produced nationwide vacancy listings.

Most Priority Group 3 customers expressed a clear preference for face-to-face contact within the context of the jobcentre office relative to being pointed in the direction of self-help channels within the office.

### 10.2.6 Vacancies

Customers were asked to comment about the quality and quantity of vacancies available through Jobcentre Plus. In general terms, Priority Group 3 customers commented that there was generally a good selection of job vacancies to review. However, some customers also noted that a number of potential jobs fell into a low level category with low rates of pay or the minimum wage applying to them. For those seeking higher level management positions or specialist types of employment, the vacancies advertised were not felt to be suitable.

Several customers commented that they would prefer to contact employers direct to enquire about vacancies to demonstrate personal initiative and to avoid the stigma of association with the jobcentre when contacting employers. Some customers reported that they had not experienced direct pressure to be submitted to vacancies whilst others in different regions felt that they had been pressured to apply for unsuitable jobs which were not matched to their skills or previous trade:

*'I'm a plasterer so when I go to the Jobcentre I've said I'm a plasterer...I want a plastering job but then because there's no plastering jobs there they say you have to have a labouring job...why don't you take this labouring job for half the money and instead of using tools and doing the trade that you've learnt pick a shovel up and dig a hole...basically...I'm a tradesman and why are you saying I should get a job as a labourer because I can't get a job as a plasterer...that's what I learnt a trade for.'*

Several respondents had used employment agencies. Views on their effectiveness were mixed. Where these were positive this tended to relate to employment agencies being more proactive in terms of alerting clients to job vacancies by text or 'phone. Where experiences were less positive, this tended to be related to employment agencies being unable to locate longer-term or permanent employment. This was noted to be unsustainable for customers in terms of enhancing their ability to exit from benefit dependency on an ongoing basis.

## 10.3 Evidence from current Priority Groups 4 and 5 customers

### 10.3.1 Visiting the Jobcentre Plus office

Qualitative interviews were undertaken in Jobcentre Plus offices with 114 Priority Group 4 (not in work and not claiming benefits) and 119 Priority Group 5 (currently in work) customers. Respondents were simply requested to participate in the survey during their visit to the Jobcentre Plus office. No attempt was made to purposively sample customers on any criteria and no weighting has been applied to responses

to make them in any way representative of the customer groups. These results are included as indicative of these customer groups, rather than being statistically significant.

These interviews suggested that the vast majority of such customers visit Jobcentre Plus offices in order to look for vacancies. A small number customers had visited the office in order to make a benefit claim or to enquire about making a claim and respondents mentioned a range of other reasons for their visit including attendance at job interviews, using the warm phones, enquiring about National Insurance (NI) numbers, collecting or delivering forms and accompanying friends or relatives.

The vast majority of respondents from both Priority Groups stated that they were currently looking for work, or for alternative employment in the case of Priority Group 5 customers.

Priority Group 4 customers are more likely than their employed counterparts to visit a Jobcentre Plus office on a regular basis, with over two-thirds stating that they make such visits at least once a week. One in six respondents from both Priority Groups had 'just started visiting' Jobcentre Plus offices, indicating a degree of turnover in relation to non-claimant customers. A substantial group of Priority Group 5 customers could be described as irregular or occasional visitors to Jobcentre Plus offices; nonetheless, just under half of respondents in this group stated that they made visits at least weekly.

### **10.3.2 Job search**

The survey of Priority Group 4 and 5 customers revealed small but interesting differences in the methods used to undertake job search activities. It is clear that customers use a range of methods, with Jobpoints being used almost universally and almost half of all respondents having used the Jobcentre Plus internet site to look for vacancies. Small differences<sup>3</sup> between Priority Groups are evident in relation to the methods that are most often used to undertake job search and those methods that are preferred by respondents. The results suggest a slight preference (in relative terms) among Priority Group 4 customers for Jobpoints as the main job search method. Employed (Priority Group 5) customers appear to be more likely than their non-employed counterparts to use the Jobcentre Plus internet site or Jobcentre Plus vacancy lists as their main job search method. This is reflected in the findings in relation to preferred job search method. Very few respondents mentioned Jobseeker Direct as their main or preferred job search method.

Two-thirds of respondents indicated that they got enough help from Jobcentre Plus in relation to looking for vacancies. The 37 respondents who indicated that they

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<sup>3</sup> Note that the survey was not designed to be statistically representative; therefore, we have avoided using terms such as 'significant' to describe differences between sub-groups.

would like more help with job search were asked to suggest what type of additional help they felt would be useful. The sub-sample is too small to enable meaningful comparisons between Priority Groups; however, the responses suggest that more opportunities for face-to-face contact with staff (17 responses), more time to carry out face-to-face job search with staff (nine) and more support/instruction to use self-help channels (five) would be helpful to some Priority Groups 4 and 5 customers. Other desired support includes:

- more information on Jobpoints about the vacancies;
- career advice;
- a more 'proactive' approach, including Jobcentre Plus getting in touch when suitable vacancies arise.

Fifty-seven per cent of respondents had found at least one vacancy in a Jobcentre Plus office that they wanted to follow up, with a larger percentage of Priority Group 4 (65 per cent) than Priority Group 5 customers (50 per cent) having been in that position. The 128 respondents who had followed up a vacancy were asked to state what types of follow-up action they had undertaken. The results suggest some differences between Priority Groups in this regard. Just over one in six of these respondents reported having a face-to-face discussion with a member of staff, with no apparent difference between the two priority groups. However, it does appear that employed (Priority Group 5) job seekers are more likely than others to follow up vacancy information by telephone, using either the warm phones or (particularly) their own telephone. Priority Group 5 respondents also appear to be slightly more likely than others to use the Jobcentre Plus website to follow up vacancies. It is clear, however, that there is not a strong latent demand on the part of Priority Groups 4 and 5 customers for face-to-face contact with advisers. Less than five per cent of respondents expressed a preference for face-to-face discussions with staff, with most respondents preferring telephone contact, either with Jobseeker Direct or directly with the employer.

When asked to elaborate on the reasons for preferring particular ways of following up vacancies, respondents mentioned the following:

- those who preferred to discuss a vacancy with staff emphasised the potential to ask further questions and to get support with completing application forms and interview skills;
- respondents expressing a preference for contacting Jobseeker Direct mentioned convenience, ease of access and the potential to receive more information before deciding to apply. Some respondents preferred to contact Jobseeker direct from home, emphasising their desire for privacy and/or the fact that the phones in Jobcentre Plus offices can be busy. On the other hand, some noted the fact that

calls from the warm phones are free;

- some respondents felt that it was better to contact the employer direct in order to 'cut out the middle man' to get more information and/or to convince employers of their interest in the job. Comments regarding the use of warm phones as opposed to phoning from home were similar to those presented above in relation to Jobseeker Direct;
- finally, a small number of respondents talked about the accessibility and flexibility afforded by following up vacancies using the website.

The majority of of respondents who had followed up vacancy information felt that they had received sufficient help or support from Jobcentre Plus. Only 14 respondents said that they had not received enough support, with eight feeling that they would like more opportunity to talk face-to-face with Jobcentre Plus staff and five feeling that more time spent in such discussions would be helpful. Other suggested forms of help or support include:

- more detailed vacancy information on the Jobpoints;
- advice and 'tips' on getting employed;
- staff members 'taking more interest in you'.

Thirty-seven per cent of respondents used employment agencies, in addition to Jobcentre Plus, to seek work, with no difference between the Priority Groups in this regard. Two-thirds of those who used employment agencies stated that the job search service differed from that provided by Jobcentre Plus. Further probing revealed the following perceived differences:

- agencies tend to be more enthusiastic and proactive about contacting customers with job vacancy information;
- some respondents felt that the service from agencies is more personal than that provided by Jobcentre Plus;
- agencies are more driven by bonuses and less discriminating about the types of jobs offered to customers;
- agencies are useful if customers need a job quickly and/or a temporary job;
- there may be more opportunity for face-to-face contact with agencies and for customers to get their qualities across to agency staff;
- some respondents felt that the quality of jobs found through agencies is inferior to those found through Jobcentre Plus, with agencies being more likely to offer temporary and/or low paid jobs.

### **10.3.3 Changes in service**

Customers that had been visiting Jobcentre Plus offices for longer than 12 months (81 respondents, around one-third of the sample) were asked whether they had noticed any differences over the previous 12 months in the service provided. Thirty-six per cent of these respondents had noticed some difference. Small sample sizes

preclude comparisons between Priority Groups, however, it is interesting to note that 11 respondents felt that there had been an increase in the number of staff available while five noticed a trend towards increased encouragement to use self-service channels. Most respondents mentioned 'other' changes, such as:

- staff are friendlier and/or more understanding when you talk to them;
- less access to speak to people: *'they seem to be doing away with face-to-face contact'*;
- busier offices; more queues;
- office is more organised; improved environment.

Most respondents (52 per cent of those who had been visiting Jobcentre Plus offices for a year or more) felt that the quality of the service provided had remained the same and 31 per cent felt that the service had got better. Only four respondents perceived a decline in service quality over the previous 12 months.

Respondents felt that the service had improved in relation to:

- more helpful/available/enthusiastic/supportive/efficient staff;
- more accessible phones and/or Jobpoints; fewer queues;
- better quality of information on Jobpoints and/or website;
- quicker, more 'joined up' service.

Areas for which customers felt that the quality of service had declined include:

- more impersonal service; difficult to find the right person to talk to;
- *'Can't speak face-to-face...pushed towards the Jobpoints and office phones'* (Priority Group 5 customer).

In response to a final question inviting respondents to comment further on the service they receive from Jobcentre Plus, the following points were made:

- a wide range of positive comments were made about the helpfulness of staff and improvements in the office environment;
- a need for more/specialised services for particular groups, e.g. young people, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups, graduates, professionals, migrant workers;
- better awareness among staff of the services available would be helpful;
- some customers would like more intensive help from staff with using the Jobpoints;
- a need for improvements in the quality/accuracy/currency of Jobpoint information;
- a desire for a more proactive approach to contacting customers with vacancy information;

- some feeling that Jobcentre Plus should not be advertising employment agency jobs, or at least should make it clear to customers where a vacancy is with an agency;
- two respondents expressed dissatisfaction that, in their experience, it is not possible to speak to an adviser if you are not claiming benefit.

## 10.4 Evidence from past customers

Telephone interviews were undertaken with 311 former customers of Jobcentre Plus who had ceased to claim benefits after November 2006. The achieved sample was split broadly equally between Priority Groups 1, 2 and 3 customers. The main aim of this survey was to examine these customers' perceptions of the service they received from Jobcentre Plus and the ways in which they felt that Jobcentre Plus had helped them to find employment or other suitable opportunities. Again, no effort was made to either purposively sample or to weight responses to make them representative in relation to the wider customer groups and results presented here should be regarded as **indicative** rather than statistically robust.

### 10.4.1 Current circumstances

The vast majority of respondents had left the benefit register in order to start a new job. The types of jobs entered by these former customers vary considerably in their nature, with concentrations in clerical/administrative roles, driving, construction, warehouse or factory operatives, retail sales, call centres, social care, cleaning and catering. A small number of respondents had entered managerial or professional jobs.

Around two-thirds of all respondents left the benefit register to take up a full-time job (16 hours a week or more). Interestingly, 45 per cent of former Priority Group 1 customers had taken up a part-time job.

Just over half of surveyed customers were still in the same job at the time of the survey. Temporary contracts account for around half of these respondents, particularly Priority Groups 2 and 3 customers. A range of other reasons, including resigning, dismissal, offers of other employment, illness or disability, account for the remaining half of this group.

Forty of the 151 respondents who had moved on from the job they had taken up on leaving benefits had taken up another employment opportunity. Fifty-six (around a quarter of all former JSA customers) were claiming JSA at the time of the survey, illustrating the presence of a 'revolving door' effect for some groups. Three former JSA customers were claiming Income Support (IS) or Incapacity Benefit (IB) at the time of the survey and 14 former IS/IB customers had returned to the benefit register. Other destinations include: not in work and not claiming benefits (16), in education or training (seven).

### 10.4.2 Finding out about jobs

Respondents were asked to state how they found out about the job that they took up on leaving the benefit register. The responses indicate that Jobcentre Plus customers find jobs through a wide variety of channels, with some small variations between customer groups. It is clear that **word-of-mouth** is an important means by which customers, particularly those in Priority Group 1, find out about job opportunities. Employment agencies appear to be particularly significant for Priority Group 3 customers, while job adverts in newspapers account for around one in six of all jobs found by respondents.

In terms of Jobcentre Plus services, ten per cent stated that they found their job through the Jobpoint, with the Jobcentre Plus website; Jobseeker Direct and Jobcentre Plus advisers cited as the primary source of job information by a relatively small number of respondents. Among the 'other' ways of finding out about jobs are customers returning to previous employers and attendance at recruitment events or jobs fairs.

Twenty-nine per cent of respondents said that Jobcentre Plus had helped them in some way to get the job that they moved into immediately after leaving the benefit register. Priority Group 1 customers are the most likely (32 per cent) to state that they had found a job with Jobcentre Plus help. Twenty-five respondents felt that Jobcentre Plus had 'found a job for me', while others mentioned indirect forms of help such as job submission (six respondents), help with completing the application form (five), help with interview skills (five), help with confidence building (eight), financial support (seven) and training (ten). Thirty-seven mentioned 'other' forms of support including:

- advice, moral support and encouragement;
- back to work and benefit information;
- referral to agencies or training providers.

### 10.4.3 Contact with Jobcentre Plus

Respondents were asked to describe the frequency and nature of their contact with Jobcentre Plus prior to leaving the benefit register. For most respondents, and particularly for Priority Groups 2 and 3 customers, contact was fairly frequent, at least fortnightly in most cases. Priority Group 1 customers tended to visit Jobcentre Plus offices less regularly on average, in many cases once a month or less frequently. Indeed, 14 Priority Group 1 respondents said that they had never visited a Jobcentre Plus office.

The nature of the interaction between customers and Jobcentre Plus varies considerably. Two-thirds of former Priority Group 1 customers had at some time met with an adviser to discuss getting back to work and the vast majority of former Priority Groups 2 and 3 customers recalled being asked by Jobcentre Plus about their job search activities and in most cases (particularly for Priority Group 2 customers) had been told about or submitted to vacancies by advisers. However,

less than half of these former customers said that they had been shown how to use the Jobpoints.

While most respondents felt that they had been submitted to suitable vacancies, a sizeable group (particularly among former Priority Group 2 customers) felt that they were being submitted to unsuitable vacancies. A further 61 respondents stated that they had been submitted to vacancies following an in-depth discussion with an adviser and, while the sample sizes are too small for robust statistical analysis, it appears that the advisory process leads to the submission of customers to more suitable vacancies than is the case with FJR. The small number of former Priority Group 1 customers in this sub-sample appear to feel that advisers submitted them to suitable vacancies.

Former customers had used a wide range of Jobcentre Plus services in addition to FJR meetings and/or in-depth discussions with advisers. As is the case with current customers, Jobpoints were widely used by Priority Groups 2 and 3 customers, but less so by those in Priority Group 1. Former Priority Group 1 customers are also less likely than other customer groups to have used the Jobcentre Plus website, vacancy lists or Jobseeker Direct in order to search for vacancies. Relatively few former customers stated that they had been contacted by Jobcentre Plus regarding vacancies.

Just under two-thirds of former customers felt that they had received enough help and support while looking for jobs in the Jobcentre Plus office. The least satisfied group in this regard are former Priority Group 2 customers, around two in five of whom felt that they had not received sufficient help and support. Those former customers who felt that they would have liked more support mentioned guidance from staff in following up vacancies (41 per cent), support/instruction in the use of self-help channels (35 per cent), more face-to-face job search with advisers (24 per cent) and more time for face-to-face job search with advisers (22 per cent). A range of other possible types of help or support were mentioned, including:

- help with CVs and/or interviews;
- help from specialist advisers (e.g. disability, older people);
- more 'encouragement'; a more positive attitude among staff;
- advice and assistance regarding training, qualifications, etc.

## Part Four – Overall summary and conclusions



# 11 Summary and conclusions

This report presents a considerable amount of evidence derived from interviews with Jobcentre Plus managers and staff, employers, providers and customers across all Priority Groups.

## 11.1 Communication and knowledge of the Job Outcome Target

- With the exception of a small number of employers and providers, Jobcentre Plus staff and managers were the only group that were aware in any detail about the transition from Job Entry Target (JET) to Job Outcome Target (JOT). Even among this latter group the extent of awareness was varied, with most managers, in particular, expressing fairly detailed awareness of JOT, while considerable numbers of advisers and frontline staff were less aware than their managers of the details of JOT.
- The research uncovered a degree of misunderstanding and confusion among all groups of staff about the process of target-setting for JOT, resulting in a reasonably widespread feeling that the JOT targets for some areas were in some sense 'unfair'.
- While early communication about the transition from JET to JOT appears to have been reasonably successful in informing managers and staff about the technical aspects of JOT, it has been less successful in spreading messages about changes in behaviour and culture that are required by JOT. JOT 'relaunch' communications appear not yet to have achieved this objective; indeed, most staff interviewed during this research were unaware that such a relaunch had taken place.
- One possible explanation for the mixed success of internal communications relating to JOT lies in the wide range of other changes that occurred concurrently with the introduction and early operation of JOT.

- Organisational changes within Jobcentre Plus, notably the consequences of the Organisational Design Review (ODR) exercise, mergers and closures of offices and general reductions in headcount and the introduction of several new staff groups, most notably the Advisory Services Manager (ASM) but also Customer Engagement Team Leader (CETL) and Diary and Admin Support Officer (DASO), also affected staff and management perception of the impact of JOT. Also, the introduction of the Adviser Achievement Tool (AAT) played an important role in shaping the experiences and perceptions of advisers in particular.

## 11.2 Behavioural and working practice change under Job Outcome Target

- The evaluation research revealed widespread appreciation among Jobcentre Plus managers and staff that JOT is part of a wider process of change within the organisation and in particular relates to changes in the service that are provided to customers.
- The vast majority of respondents noted the trend towards encouraging the use of self-help channels among those who were able and concentrating resources more intensively on providing assistance to 'harder to help' groups. To a large extent JOT is seen as supporting and reflecting this trend rather than driving it. Wider policy changes and pressures to reduce headcount and use resources more effectively are seen as more important drivers than JOT, per se.
- Managers and staff noted a number of changes in working practices that had occurred over the time period since the introduction of JOT; some of these were seen as being a direct consequence of JOT, others were felt to be driven primarily by the wider changes noted above. In general, managers felt that JOT had led to more efficient working practices in some areas, for example, the more effective use of the Adviser Discretionary Fund (ADF), fewer resources devoted to verifying job entries and a reduction in the generation of spurious interventions to 'thumb-print' job entry points.
- Other changes in working practice felt by managers and staff to be linked to the introduction of JOT, and deemed to be broadly beneficial, include an increased willingness among some staff to refer customers to provision, improved team working within and between staff groups and less unproductive competition between individual staff members. Frontline staff, including those undertaking Fortnightly Job Reviews (FJR), noted an ongoing trend towards encouraging 'job-ready' customers to use self-help channels, although many attributed this to reductions in staffing resources rather than JOT.
- In the case of advisers, there was a strong feeling that the AAT played a more important role than JOT in bringing about changes in their working practices, with many feeling that some elements of AAT were in fact contradictory to the underlying ethos of JOT. In particular, AAT appears to encourage advisers to undertake large volumes of submissions, whereas JOT implies the need for fewer, but better quality, submissions.

- Key aspects of working practice had been affected by other contextual changes over the period since the introduction of JOT. This makes it difficult to isolate the impact of JOT; for example, in the case of referrals to providers a general feeling was expressed that JOT encouraged more appropriate referrals due to reduced fears of 'losing' job entry points. However, interruptions in and uncertainties over contracts with providers affected the degree to which advisers could make appropriate referrals. Providers interviewed for this study supported the view that uncertainties over contracts had been crucial in affecting referral flows and also noted that providers were putting more resources into tracking customers as Jobcentre Plus no longer needs this information for performance measurement purposes.
- The shift from JET to JOT has important potential implications for the motivation and behaviour of different groups of Jobcentre Plus staff, as indicated by evaluation reports on the JOT pilots. In particular, many respondents highlighted the important role under JET of the Daily Placing List (DPL) in motivating advisers and some other staff groups. This research confirmed that sizeable numbers of advisers felt that the loss of DPL was demotivating and that JOT did not provide an adequate substitute, primarily because of delays in reporting and the fact that it is not possible to link job outcomes to individual advisers. However, many other advisers and other respondents felt that JOT had made little difference to their motivation or that its introduction had increased their motivation to provide a quality service to customers without being too concerned about achieving individual points targets.

### 11.3 Managing performance

- Managers identified a number of issues concerning the management of performance under JOT, principally relating to delays in reporting and the difficulties of attributing performance to specific individuals or groups. It was acknowledged that JOT implied a shift from quantitative to qualitative-based approaches to management and some felt that they needed more help and support to implement the new system effectively. In particular, a number of ASM's were relatively new in post and were unfamiliar with key aspects of the performance management system such as Quality Assurance Framework (QAF). One consequence of this is that AAT was seen by many managers and advisers as the main tool for measuring and managing adviser performance. Given the potential inconsistencies between JOT and AAT, the possibility was recognised that a focus on AAT may not lead to the most desirable outcomes in terms of JOT.
- Overall, there was considerable evidence that the introduction of JOT had disrupted widely held assumptions about the impact of individual and group behaviour (inputs) on the behaviour of customers (outputs) and the achievement of off-flows from benefits into work (outcomes).

## 11.4 Relationships with employers

- Managers and staff members felt that, in general, JOT was beneficial to relations between Jobcentre Plus and employers, primarily through reductions in bureaucracy associated with follow-up of submissions and job entries. This feeling was corroborated by discussions with employers, although some were concerned about reductions in customer service due to reduced emphasis on activities such as jobs fairs and large-scale recruitment exercises. Some staff respondents were also concerned about the impact of not routinely collecting information about customers who fail to apply for jobs or fail to attend interviews with employers on the discipline and sanctions that might be applied to customers. Another key factor complicating assessment of the impact of JOT is the fact that employers are increasingly placing vacancies direct, meaning that Jobcentre Plus has limited influence over the 'self-submission' decisions of customers. However, employers reported few differences since JOT in the quantity or quality of applicants or the service provided by Jobcentre Plus.

## 11.5 Customer views

- Customer responses to focus group discussions and surveys largely support the view that 'job-ready' customers are increasingly being encouraged to use self-service channels. Very few Priority Group 4 or 5 customers reported having more than very brief face-to-face discussions with advisers and indeed, most expressed a preference for job search via Jobpoints, telephone and internet. A few felt that they would like more help and support with using these channels, but the vast majority were happy to use the channels available with minimal intervention from Jobcentre Plus staff. It is clear from discussions with customers that Jobcentre Plus is only one element of their job search strategies, but one that is particularly important for those in the higher priority groups. It is also clear that many customers appreciate that Jobcentre Plus contributes to their job search activities in a range of ways, even if, in most cases, Jobcentre Plus is not directly responsible for their finding work.
- Current Jobcentre Plus customers identified a number of ways in which they felt that the service provided to them could be improved; however, only a small proportion expressed an explicit desire for more intensive or extensive face-to-face contact with advisers. Customers would like to have more guidance in how to follow up job vacancies, how to use self-service channels and support/encouragement in relation to wider issues such as career planning, training and qualifications. The issue of information about and access to training and retraining opportunities was particularly notable.

- The survey of former customers who had left the benefit register and moved into work was particularly instructive in this regard. Around a third felt that Jobcentre Plus had helped them to find a job, but a wide range of methods were used in order to search for work. For many, particularly Priority Group 1 customers, 'word-of-mouth' was important; others valued the flexibility and privacy afforded by the ability to follow up Jobpoint or internet opportunities by telephone from their own homes. In most such cases, JET points would not have been credited to the Jobcentre Plus office, although it is clear that the organisation has contributed to the customer's success in finding work.
- The survey of former customers did highlight some issues that might impact on measured JOT performance. Around a third of former Priority Group 1 customers went into part-time work, some of whom may not show up on Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) databases. In other cases, customers had found temporary jobs and/or moved on quite quickly from the job that they took up on leaving the benefit system. This illustrates the complexities involved in tracking customers through the tax system and may affect measured performance, particularly among 'high points' groups of customers.
- Customer responses largely reinforce the case for JOT in that customer job search behaviour broadly follows the expected pattern with more intensive support for those in higher Priority Groups and a wide range of job search methods used by all types of customer. While Jobcentre Plus has a direct influence on job off-flows in a minority of cases, customers indicated that Jobcentre Plus intervention had helped and influenced them in a number of less direct ways.
- While customers suggested a number of areas for improvement, there is little evidence that customers feel that the service has got worse and only a relatively small latent demand among lower priority groups for more face-to-face contact with Jobcentre Plus staff.
- However, there are indications that customers in the higher Priority Groups are less satisfied than others with the service, suggesting a need to consider further how improvements can be made in the context of a more intense policy focus on this group and continuing pressures on available resources. Evidence regarding the destinations of Priority Group 1 customers – notably a high proportion of part-time and/or short-term positions – also raises questions about whether all off-flows by these customers are fully reported under the JOT system.

## 11.6 Employer views

- As demonstrated in the pilot evaluations, there is minimal awareness among employers and limited awareness among providers of JOT and its potential implications for them. For the most part, employers perceived very limited changes in the service they receive and providers noted differences in terms of the follow-up process but felt that changes in contracts had a far more important influence than JOT on their relations with Jobcentre Plus.

## 11.7 Is the Job Outcome Target working as intended?

At this relatively early stage of the national roll-out of JOT, which represents a significant operational and cultural change for Jobcentre Plus, the research findings are broadly in line with what might have been expected following the evaluation of the JOT pilots. Some aspects of behaviour in the organisation have changed dramatically, while others are in the process of change and it is likely that behavioural change will continue for some time to come. Areas where dramatic and positive changes have already taken place include:

- the eradication of inappropriate behaviour designed to gain attribution for customers who find work independently. This includes costly use of the ADF which is now being used much less frequently and for more appropriate purposes;
- the removal of unhealthy levels of competition between staff that occasionally led to conflict over the attribution of individual points. This has also facilitated some positive team working in relation to sharing information between advisers and offering mutual support;
- a greater willingness among staff to refer job-ready or able customers to use self-help channels;
- a greater willingness on the part of advisers to make appropriate referrals to both contracted and not contracted provision;
- much less time and resource is now devoted to tracking the destinations of customers who leave benefits;
- advisers feel under less pressure to make inappropriate submissions to jobs for customers who are not yet job ready or are not appropriately matched to the vacancy;
- employers face less bureaucracy in relation to Jobcentre Plus submissions and there is evidence that reduced follow-up work may be leading to resources being put into more appropriate and effective long-term relationship building with employers.

However, against this, there are continuing concerns about the ability of managers to motivate and manage performance. This was expected, given the pilot evaluation findings and may not have been helped in the initial period by the introduction of a new band of Adviser Managers. However, this group of staff is gaining confidence. With more support and development it is likely that the positive impact of their introduction will increase.

A key issue in this regard is the planned redesign of the AAT. The impact of the introduction of the AAT has been significant in behavioural terms, as the review of the AAT makes clear. The AAT provides a simple motivational tool for ASMs to use. However, aspects of its design and implementation clearly have implications in terms of desired JOT-influenced behaviour, particularly at the

management interface between advisers and ASMs. This was expected to be the key performance-driving management relationship under JOT and also the largest potential weakness. However, with an appropriately redesigned AAT and appropriate levels of guidance and support for its implementation, there is no present reason why ASMs should not be able to rely on this and other sources (principally more qualitative information arising from formal and informal observation) to manage adviser performance effectively.

Current perceptions of JOT within the organisation, particularly at management level, are, in the main, driven by uncertainty about outcome performance data. This is, in part a natural process in the context of such a significant organisational change. The introduction of JOT has significantly disrupted embedded assumptions about the linkages between inputs and outcomes and these will need time to reform. This process of reforming performance-related management assumptions has been delayed by the time taken under JOT to capture performance data, which is again unavoidable given the nature of the data capture process. However, the impact of these delays has been compounded by a general lack of confidence in the quality of outcome of JOT performance data. Some concerns raised by managers with the evaluation team have been confirmed while others are misplaced. However, the impact of uncertainty, whether warranted or not, is to constrain the confidence of managers in responding to JOT data. While this issue will need to be addressed, as the confidence of managers in the data increases, new assumptions will begin to form about the relationships between inputs and outcomes and also interim indicators which will enhance the capacity of managers to respond to actual and predicted performance data. This process will be crucial to more effective working under JOT.

Concerns regarding overall performance under JOT need to be thoroughly contextualised. Wider labour market changes and organisational developments across Jobcentre Plus have interacted with JOT, making it difficult to isolate a 'JOT effect' on behaviour which might cause apparent changes in measured outcome performance. In particular, concerns over the overall impact of JOT on performance need to take into account longer-term secular trends in JOT data (as these emerge) at a national level, and local variations in labour market demand and supply. It is likely that these are at least as important as Jobcentre Plus management and working practices. It needs also to be noted that the shift to JOT means that the impact of Jobcentre Plus interventions on overall outcome performance figures will have weakened considerably in comparison with JET.

The changes in behaviour and working practices driven by JOT are broadly in line with other initiatives and the general strategic direction of the organisation, as expressed in the Channels Strategy and Employer Engagement Strategy. However, changes to the nature of the overall approach to Welfare to Work may have implications for JOT in the future, depending on how Jobcentre Plus is tasked to deliver aspects of Welfare to Work 'Plus' provision. This is because the emphasis under JOT on working only with the those with the greatest need may not sit

comfortably with potential future roles such as providing support to those in work to help them to sustain work in, and progress in, the labour market. Should Jobcentre Plus be tasked with this sort of service provision, then the role of JOT, and performance management within the organisation generally, will need to be carefully considered.

# Appendix A

## Jobcentre Plus staff topic guide

**Note to interviewers:** *The guide covers a wide range of topics and it is **not** expected that every topic will be covered in depth in every interview. Judgement should be used in ensuring that the most appropriate questions are asked of each respondent/group and that interviews should last **no more than one hour**.*

*Questions most relevant to managers are marked **M**. Questions that should be asked of staff respondents are marked **S**.*

**NB:** *where reference is made to priority groups, please take specific note of which priority group is being discussed.*

### 1 BACKGROUND, TARGET SETTING, COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF JOT

1.1	<b>M</b>	What <b>issues specific to this District</b> (local labour market, organisational or otherwise) do you believe to have had an impact on JOT performance and delivery? In what ways?
1.2	<b>M</b>	To what extent and in what ways have <b>national issues</b> such as ODR and changes in resource level affected performance and delivery under JOT?
1.3	<b>M</b>	Please describe the way in which the <b>JOT targets</b> for 2006-07 were established?
1.4	<b>M</b>	What has been the impact of the way that the <b>national targets have been allocated to your District</b> ?

1.5	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Describe how JOT and the specific targets were <b>communicated</b> to staff and how any issues arising were addressed.
1.6	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	In particular, to what extent have <b>recent publicity and information events around JOT</b> helped to improve understanding among staff of appropriate behaviour and good performance?

## 2 CHANGES IN WORKING PRACTICES

Ask as open question and probe/prompt as appropriate to role of respondent

Focus as closely as possible on the specific impact on working practices of **JOT**

<b>Open questions</b>		
2.1	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	What <b>changes in working practices</b> have occurred since the national roll-out of JOT in April 2006?
<b>Prompts (as appropriate to respondent)</b>		
<b>Follow up with employers and customers</b>		
2.2	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	To what extent are staff <b>'chasing destinations'</b> despite the fact that this is no longer necessary? If they are, why is this?
2.3	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Have there been any changes in the <b>process</b> for dealing with people who advise Jobcentre Plus that they have got a job (e.g. <i>spec subs</i> , <i>'end of week' rush</i> , <i>ADF</i> )?
2.4	<b>M</b>	Are staff still following up submissions with employers? If so why?
2.5	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	In particular (how) has the use of the adviser Discretion Fund ( <b>ADF</b> ) been affected by JOT?
2.6	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Have there been any changes in the way that <b>teams</b> within the District are working together?
2.7	<b>M</b>	In particular, has there been any change in the working relationship between <b>job-broking and benefit-processing staff</b> ?
2.8	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Has there been any change in the working relationship between <b>advisers and frontline staff</b> ? (e.g. re referral of customers)?

Customer service		
2.9	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	What changes have there been in relation to the treatment of <b>non-claimants</b> and/or <b>job-ready customers</b> ? (e.g. <i>increased direction to self-help channels</i> )? How are these groups identified? What role is played by floorwalkers, frontline staff etc? Any changes in help provided to customers re using self-help channels? ( <b>Focus on JSA Refresh</b> )
2.10	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	What changes have there been in the way in which <b>'harder to help'</b> groups are being treated? In particular, has there been an increase in 'work focus' as a result of JOT?
2.11		What has been the impact of the <b>revisions to the JSA regime</b> ? Have <b>FJR</b> interviews become <b>more work focused</b> ?
2.12	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Specifically, are advisers spending more time with harder to help customers?
2.13	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Do staff feel that there is an increase in the <b>quality of service</b> to harder to help customers (and what evidence can they cite to support this)?
2.14	<b>M</b>	Overall, what has been the impact of JOT on <b>customer service</b> for the different groups? Any evidence to back up statements?
Submissions		
2.15	<b>M</b>	Has there been any noticeable change in the practice of <b>submissions</b> for vacancies (e.g. <i>fewer spec/ordinary submissions; more targeted submissions than existed under JET</i> )?
2.16	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Any change in the <b>type of jobs</b> for which customers have been submitted (e.g. <i>part time, low paid</i> ) <b>as a result of JOT</b> ?
2.17	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	What has been the <b>impact of the AAT and KMLs on submissions</b> ? <b>Has this changed</b> since publicity and information on JOT was circulated in December 06 and January 07?
2.18	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Any feedback from <b>employers</b> re quantity and/or quality of submissions?
Referrals to providers		
2.19	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Has the frequency of referrals to providers changed? If so why/how?
2.20	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Has the type of customers being referred changed? If so, why/how?

2.21	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Is there any evidence of staff referring clients to a broader range of <b>provision</b> than that currently formally contracted? Is there any evidence of change in the way in which the District is <b>working with providers</b> ?
2.22	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	What is the motivation for using non-contracted provision? Is non-contracted provision seen as a 'nice thing to do' for customers?
2.23	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Is <b>non-contracted provision effective</b> in moving people closer to or into the labour market? <b>What evidence</b> can you identify <b>of the effectiveness</b> of non-contracted provision?
2.24	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	<b>Do staff follow-up individuals</b> that they refer to provision?
2.25	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Is the <b>message regarding recording</b> of provision widely understood? Do advisers understand the impact of recording provision on points? Do advisers think that recording referrals to provision is irrelevant?
2.26	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	<b>Do advisers have sufficient training</b> on the use, availability and recording of provision?
<b>Relations with employers</b>		
2.27	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	How has JOT affected the way in which the District works with <b>employers</b> ?
2.28	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Has there been any changes in relation to <b>recruitment events</b> , job fairs etc?
2.29	<b>M</b>	Has there been any feedback from employers about <b>reduced follow-up</b> ? Is this positive/negative/neutral?
<b>Overall</b>		
2.23	<b>S</b>	Do staff believe that they are now <b>working more effectively</b> under JOT, than JET?
2.24	<b>S</b>	What <b>unexpected consequences</b> have arisen as a result of JOT?

### 3 MOTIVATION, BEHAVIOUR AND SKILLS

<b>Note: questions should relate to the Adviser Achievement Tool and other changes in JSA interventions since April 2006. Try to pick up differences in perspectives between managers and staff.</b>		
3.1	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	In what ways has the move away from <b>individual targets</b> affected staff motivation? Does this vary between staff groups?
3.2	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Do <b>advisers</b> use their <b>time</b> differently as a result of changes to the target system? If so, how?
3.3	<b>S</b>	To what extent are <b>advisers motivated by KMLs or the AAT</b> ? Which?  What has been the <b>impact</b> of this?
3.4	<b>S</b>	<b>Which parts of the KMLs or AAT</b> are particularly important in motivating and shaping the behaviour of advisers?
3.5	<b>S</b>	Has the way in which staff respond to KMLs or AAT changed since Xmas 06/07?
3.6	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Do staff feel that the introduction of <b>JOT provides sufficient incentives</b> for them to prioritise harder to help customers?
3.7	<b>S</b>	Do <b>advisers receive sufficient feedback or coaching</b> from managers regarding their individual performance under JOT?
3.8	<b>M</b>	Is there any evidence so far of more effective <b>team working</b> as a result of JOT?
3.9	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Are there any noticeable differences in the way that staff <b>relate to customers? Employers? Providers? Partners?</b>
3.10	<b>M</b>	Has JOT had any other noticeable impact so far on <b>staff motivation or behaviour?</b>
3.11	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Specifically, are staff more willing to refer job-ready customers to self help channels? If not, why?
3.12	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	In particular, are there still queues at warm phones or do customers directed to self-help channels still return to the Jobcentre Plus office for face-to-face help? If so why?
3.13	<b>S</b>	How are staff <b>monitoring</b> their own performance?
3.14	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	How do staff perceive that their individual performance <b>contributes</b> to the overall achievement of the JOT target?
3.15	<b>M</b>	To what extent and in what ways do <b>efficiency and productivity</b> issues impinge on the ability of individuals and teams to contribute towards the achievement of the JOT target?

#### 4 MANAGEMENT ISSUES

4.1	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	To what extent and in what ways has JOT affected the delivery of <b>other Jobcentre Plus targets</b> (CST, MVFE, BDT)
4.2	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Please describe the <b>tools and processes</b> that you use to manage under JOT (e.g. KMIs, AAT)?
4.3	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Are the <b>KMIs or AAT</b> thought to be more useful? Is one used more than the other?
4.4	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Are particular <b>parts of the AAT or KMIs felt to be more relevant</b> than others? In particular, to what extent are submissions targets used alone as a measure of appropriate behaviour?
4.5	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	<b>Does the emphasis</b> on the KMIs or AAT or the different indicators within them <b>differ at different levels of management?</b>
4.6	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	<b>How useful</b> are these tools? What issues have arisen in using them to manage JOT? (How) have these been resolved?
4.7	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	To what extent have <b>KMIs and AAT</b> been <b>used to replace individual level job entry points</b> as an indicator of individual performance?
4.8	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	To what extent is <b>other more qualitative data used</b> to manage individual performance (such as from observations or informal feedback in one-to-ones or case conferences)?
4.9	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	What has been the reaction of managers and staff to the <b>early performance data</b> coming through under JOT? How have you responded to apparent <b>under or over performance?</b>
4.10	<b>M</b>	What support have you received from the <b>national tier</b> in relation to managing JOT? How effective has this support been? Any suggestions for adjustments or further support?
4.11	<b>M</b>	Do you have any other suggestions as to tools, processes or national level support that might help you to <b>manage JOT more effectively?</b>

**5 OVERALL OPINIONS OF JOT**

5.1	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Overall, what are the <b>benefits</b> of the JOT system?
5.2	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Overall, what are the <b>drawbacks</b> of the system?
5.3	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Are there any <b>improvements</b> that could be suggested to the operation of JOT?
5.4	<b>M</b> <b>S</b>	Are there any <b>other issues</b> that you would like to raise regarding JOT that we have not covered during this discussion?



# Appendix B

## Employer topic guide

**Note to interviewers:** *In order to minimise the burden on employers, it is important that the interview is kept to a maximum of **20 minutes** unless it is clear that the respondent is happy to talk for longer than this.*

*As a filter, all employers should be asked if they have used Jobcentre Plus services in the last twelve months prior to arranging an interview.*

### 1 USE OF JOBCENTRE PLUS SERVICES

- 1.1 Which Jobcentre Plus services have you used **since April 2006** (PROMPT IF NECESSARY)
- 1.1.1 *Placed vacancies in Jobcentre Plus office-how many?*
  - 1.1.2 *Placed vacancies through Apply Direct- how many?*
  - 1.1.3 *Attended job fair or other recruitment event*
  - 1.1.4 *Conducted large-scale recruitment exercise*
  - 1.1.5 *Used Jobcentre Plus office to conduct interviews*
  - 1.1.6 *Other*
- 1.2 Which of these services did you use **prior to April 2006** or earlier? (PROMPT AS ABOVE)
- 1.3 Did you notice any **difference in the service that you received** before and after April 2006? (PROMPT IF NECESSARY)
- 1.3.1 *Contact with Jobcentre Plus sales staff*
  - 1.3.2 *Contact with Jobcentre Plus local office staff*
  - 1.3.3 *Contact with Jobcentre Plus call centres*
  - 1.3.4 *Quality of labour market knowledge of Jobcentre Plus staff (and does this match their needs)?*
  - 1.3.5 *Quantity of job applicants submitted by Jobcentre Plus*  
**(PROBE FULLY)**

- 1.3.6 *Quality of job applicants submitted by Jobcentre Plus*  
**(PROBE FULLY)**
  - 1.3.7 *Time taken to fill vacancy*
  - 1.3.8 *Level of bureaucracy involved*
  - 1.3.9 *Telephone follow-up* **(PROBE FULLY)**
  - 1.3.10 *Promotion of long-term unemployed people, lone parents or people with health problems as potential employees?*
  - 1.3.11 *Promotion schemes such as worktrials or subsidised employment?*
  - 1.3.12 *Organising and promotion of recruitment events or jobs fairs?*
- 1.4 Have any of these changes affected your working relationship with Jobcentre Plus? If so, how and why?
- 1.5 In general, would you say that the quality of the service that you have received from Jobcentre Plus has improved, declined or remained about the same recently? What are the reasons for your response?
- 1.6 **If you have noticed reduced follow-up** from Jobcentre Plus to check on applicants that they submit to you, has this?
- 1.6.1 Made you more or less likely to advertise vacancies with Jobcentre Plus?
  - 1.6.2 Led to concerns that applicants who are submitted by Jobcentre Plus but who do not actually submit an application or attend an interview will not be appropriately sanctioned?
- 2 AWARENESS/UNDERSTANDING OF JOBCENTRE PLUS TARGET SYSTEM**
- 2.1 Are you aware that Jobcentre Plus operates a target system?
- 2.2 If, so please outline briefly your understanding of how this system works
- 2.3 Are you aware that a new target system (JOT) was implemented by Jobcentre Plus nationally in April 2006? If so, when and how did you become aware?
- 2.4 If, so please outline briefly your understanding of how this system works
- 2.5 (If aware of JOT) do you feel that the new system has impacted on your relationship with Jobcentre Plus? If so, how?

### **3 OTHER COMMENTS ABOUT RECENT SERVICE RECEIVED FROM JOBCENTRE PLUS**

#### **4 BASIC DETAILS**

4.1 Name of respondent

4.2 Position of respondent

4.3 Sector

4.4 Size of establishment (no. of employees) at the site and across the whole organisation. Note here whether interaction with Jobcentre Plus is managed at this site or by another office within the organisation?

4.5 Independent or part of group?



# Appendix C

## Provider topic guide

**Note to interviewers:** *In order to minimise the burden on respondents, it is important that the interview is kept to a maximum of 30 minutes unless it is clear that the respondent is happy to talk for longer than this.*

### 1 CONTACT WITH JOBCENTRE PLUS

- 1.1 What dealings have you had with Jobcentre Plus **since April 2006** (PROMPT IF NECESSARY)
- 1.1.1 *Discussion/negotiation of contracts*
  - 1.1.2 *Referral of Jobcentre Plus customers to programmes*
  - 1.1.3 *Contact re quality assurance*
  - 1.1.4 *Contact re monitoring of customer progress*
  - 1.1.5 *Placement of customers into jobs*
  - 1.1.6 *Other*
- 1.1 What types of contact did you have with Jobcentre Plus **in the year up to April 2006** (i.e. between approximately April 2005 and March 2006)? (PROMPT AS ABOVE)
- 1.1 Did you notice any **difference in the nature of your contact with Jobcentre Plus** between the year up to April 2006 and the period since April 2006? (PROMPT IF NECESSARY)
- 1.1.1 *Contact with Jobcentre Plus local office staff*
  - 1.1.2 *Contact with Jobcentre Plus advisers (please also give some details on relationships with individual advisers)*
  - 1.1.3 *Contact regarding quality assurance*
  - 1.1.4 *Quantity and methods of customer tracking (including who is responsible for this).*

- 1.1.5 *Quantity and quality of referrals*
- 1.1.6 *Level of bureaucracy involved e.g. form-filling, telephone follow-up etc.*
- 1.1.7 *Level of bureaucracy in particular in relation to claiming jobs*
- 1.1.8 *Frequency of contact with Jobcentre Plus*
- 1.1.9 *Interest of Jobcentre Plus staff in the type and range of provision available and relative success rates*

2.2 What do you think has caused any of the changes (from question 1.31-1.3.9)?

1.2.1 To what extent have changes in contracts or the labour market been responsible for these changes?

3.3 Jobcentre Plus statistics suggest that provider performance has plummeted since April 2006 – why do you think this is? (prompts – is it real performance or a recording issues?)

## **2 AWARENESS/UNDERSTANDING OF JOBCENTRE PLUS TARGET SYSTEM**

4.4 Are you aware that Jobcentre Plus operates a target system?

5.5 If, so please outline briefly your understanding of how this system works

6.6 Are you aware that anew target system (JOT) was rolled out in nationally in April 2006?

7.7 If, so please outline briefly your understanding of how this system works

8.8 (If aware of JOT) do you feel that the new system has impacted on your relationship with Jobcentre Plus? If so, how?

## **3 OTHER COMMENTS ABOUT RECENT CONTACT WITH JOBCENTRE PLUS**

### **4 BASIC DETAILS**

9.9 Name of respondent

10.10 Position of respondent

11.11 Service provided

12.12 Type of organisation e.g. private, voluntary, community, college etc.

13.13 Independent or part of group?

14.14 Contracted or non-contracted?

# Appendix D

## Customer focus group topic guides

### 1) **Introductions**

- Introduce team members
- Outline research aims
- Ask participants to introduce themselves

### 2) **Interaction with Jobcentre Plus**

- 2.1 How often do you usually contact Jobcentre Plus
- 2.2 How do you usually contact Jobcentre Plus
- 2.3 Why do you usually contact Jobcentre Plus
- 2.4 How long have you been attending your usual Jobcentre Plus site
- 2.5 Are you currently looking for work

### 3) **Overall view of service**

- 3.1 For those of you that are looking for work, what is your general view of the way in which Jobcentre Plus provides assistance to help you move into work?

### 4) **Level of Staff Contact**

- 4.1 How much contact do you have with Jobcentre Plus Staff?
- 4.2 Who is your main point of contact?

**5) In Depth/Work Focused Interviews**

- 5.1 In the last 12 months, how many interviews have you had with your personal adviser?
  - 5.1.1 In the last 12 months, has your adviser discussed your employment aspirations and how you might realise them with you?
  - 5.1.2 Has your adviser identified any skills or training needs you might have?
  - 5.1.3 During your interview(s) with your adviser, have you been helped with job search activities?
  - 5.1.4 Does your adviser encourage you to apply for jobs?
  - 5.1.5 Does your adviser help you to apply for jobs?
  - 5.1.6 Does your adviser help you prepare for interviews?
  - 5.1.7 Has your adviser referred you to any job agencies?
  - 5.1.8 Has your adviser referred you to any external help for job search or interview preparation?
  - 5.1.9 Has your adviser referred you to any external training provider?
  - 5.1.10 Has your adviser spoken to you about what in-work benefits you might be entitled to?
  - 5.1.11 Has your adviser done a Better Off in work Calculation?
- 5.2 What is good about the help, support or advice do you receive from your adviser?
- 5.3 What is good about the help, support or advice do you receive from your adviser?
- 5.4 How could the help, support or advice you receive from your adviser be improved?
- 5.5 Over the last 12 months (or since you first signed on if less than 12 months ago), have you noticed any changes in the support you receive from your adviser?

**6) Other services in the Job Centre**

- 6.1 Does anyone at the Jobcentre contact you at home about vacancies?
- 6.2 Do you use the warm phones in Jobcentre Plus offices?
  - 6.2.1 What do you use them for?
  - 6.2.2 Are they useful?
  - 6.2.3 Are you confident and able to use the warm phones?
- 6.3 Do you use the Jobpoints in Jobcentre Plus offices?
  - 6.3.1 What do you use them for?
  - 6.3.2 Are they useful?
  - 6.3.3 Are you confident and able to use the Jobpoints?
- 6.4 Have you used the jobcentre plus website to search for vacancies?
  - 6.4.1 Is it useful?
  - 6.4.2 Are you confident and able to use the website?
- 6.5 Would you prefer to deal with a staff member face-to-face than use these channels?
  - 6.5.1 If yes: Why do you prefer to deal with a staff member face-to-face than use these channels?
  - 6.5.2 If no: Why do you prefer to use these channels than deal with a staff member face-to-face?
- 6.6 Have you noticed any other changes related to using the self service channels?
- 6.7 Over the last 12 months (or since you first signed on if less than 12 months ago), have you noticed any changes in any of these services?
- 6.8 In general do you feel you get enough support about non work focused issues

**7) Vacancies**

- 7.1 Please give use your views of...
  - 7.1.1 The types/quantity/quality of vacancies available in the Jobcentre
  - 7.1.2 The types/quantity/quality of vacancies you are submitted for by the Jobcentre
  - 7.1.3 The amount of time Jobcentre Plus staff spend with you discussing vacancies
  - 7.1.4 The way you apply for vacancies ie do you use employer direct or do staff do this for you
- 7.2 Over the last 12 months (or since you first signed on if less than 12 months ago), have you noticed any changes in the way you are told about vacancies/the vacancies you are submitted for?
- 7.3 In addition to using Jobcentre Plus to look for work, are you also registered with any employment agencies? Why?
  - 7.3.1 How does the job search service provided by Jobcentre Plus differ to that provided by the employment agency(ies) you use?

**8) Satisfaction with the Service**

- 8.1 Overall how satisfied are you with the service you currently receive from Jobcentre Plus?
- 8.2 Over the last 12 months, do you think the service you receive from Jobcentre Plus has got better, worse or stayed the same?

**9) Any other comments about the Service**

# Appendix E

## Customer exit survey questionnaire

### Screening Questions

1 Are you currently in work? **CODE ONE ONLY**

1 YES **(Go to Question 3)** 2 NO

**How long have you been out of work? (in months)**

*PROMPT FOR AN APPROXIMATION*

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Are you currently claiming any benefits?

*CODE ONE ONLY*

1 YES **(Go to Question 4)** 2 NO

Which benefits are you currently claiming?

**CODE ALL THAT APPLY**

- 1 Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)**
- 2 Income Support (IS)**
- 3 Incapacity Benefit (IB)**
- 4 Severe Disablement Allowance
- 5 Maternity Allowance
- 6 Bereavement Benefits
- 7 Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit
- 8 Carer's Allowance
- 9 Tax Credits
- 10 Training Allowance

- 11 Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- 12 Housing Benefit
- 13 Council Tax Benefit
- 14 Other **(Please Specify)**.....
- 15 None
- 16 Don't know/Can't remember
- 17 Prefer Not To Say

If the respondent is IN WORK and NOT CLAIMING JSA, IB or IS continue (PG5)

If the respondent is IN WORK and is CLAIMING JSA, IB or IS terminate the interview

If the respondent is NOT IN WORK and NOT CLAIMING JSA, IB or IS continue (PG4)

If the respondent is NOT IN WORK and is CLAIMING JSA, IB or IS terminate the interview

### Section A: Your use of the Jobcentre Plus Office

Could you tell me the main reason why you visited this Jobcentre Plus office today?

**DO NOT PROMPT, CODE ONE ONLY**

<b>1</b>	<b>TO LOOK FOR JOB VACANCIES</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>TO ASK ABOUT JOB VACANCIES</b>
<b>3</b>	TO ATTEND AN INTERVIEW WITH AN ADVISER
<b>4</b>	TO REGISTER AS UNEMPLOYED/MAKE NEW CLAIM FOR BENEFIT
<b>5</b>	TO ENQUIRE HOW TO QUALIFY FOR/CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT AND/OR OTHER BENEFITS (SUCH AS INCAPACITY BENEFIT, DISABILITY BENEFIT ETC)
<b>6</b>	TO ASK ABOUT EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING SCHEMES
<b>7</b>	TO ASK ABOUT A JOB RELATED MATTER (NOT A VACANCY ENQUIRY)
<b>8</b>	TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT/ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW WITH STAFF
<b>9</b>	TO MAKE A COMPLAINT
<b>10</b>	<b>OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)</b> ..... .....

And did you do anything else whilst here today?

**DO NOT PROMPT AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY**

<b>1</b>	<b>I LOOKED FOR JOB VACANCIES</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>I ASKED ABOUT JOB VACANCIES</b>
<b>3</b>	I ATTENDED AN INTERVIEW WITH AN ADVISER
<b>4</b>	I REGISTERED AS UNEMPLOYED/MADE NEW CLAIM FOR BENEFIT
<b>5</b>	I ENQUIRED HOW TO QUALIFY FOR/CLAIM FOR UNEMPLOYMENT AND/OR OTHER BENEFITS (SUCH AS INCAPACITY BENEFIT, DISABILITY BENEFIT ETC)
<b>6</b>	I ASKED ABOUT EMPLOYMENT OR TRAINING SCHEMES
<b>7</b>	I ASKED ABOUT A JOB RELATED MATTER (NOT A VACANCY ENQUIRY)
<b>8</b>	I MADE AN APPOINTMENT/ARRANGE AN INTERVIEW WITH STAFF
<b>9</b>	I MADE A COMPLAINT
<b>10</b>	<b>OTHER</b> (PLEASE SPECIFY) ..... .....
<b>11</b>	<b>NOTHING ELSE</b>

*If you have not established in Questions 5 and 6 whether the person is looking for a job or not ask: Are you currently looking for work/a new job?*

**CODE ONE OPTION ONLY**

- 1 YES
- 2 NO (**Go to Question 20**)

How often do you visit this, or other local Jobcentre Plus offices in the area, to look for vacancies?

**PROMPT FOR AN APPROXIMATION AND CODE ONE ONLY**

- DAILY
- MORE THAN ONCE A WEEK
- ONCE A WEEK
- ONCE A FORTNIGHT
- ONCE A MONTH
- THREE OR FOUR TIMES A YEAR
- TWICE A YEAR
- ONCE A YEAR
- OCCASIONALLY (**LESS THAN ONCE A YEAR**)
- JUST STARTED VISITING (*FIRST OR SECOND VISIT*)

### Section B: Use of Jobcentre Plus Jobsearch Services

A) In the last 12 months, which of the following have you used when looking for vacancies in the Jobcentre, have you.....? **CODE EITHER YES OR NO FOR EACH IN COLUMN A**

**If more than one used ask: And which of these do you use most often when looking for vacancies in the jobcentre, is it.....? READ OUT THOSE USED AND CODE WHICH ONE IS USED MOST OFTEN IN COLUMN B**

**If more than one used ask: And which of these do you prefer to use when looking for vacancies in the jobcentre, is it.....? READ OUT THOSE USED AND CODE WHICH ONE IS PREFERRED IN COLUMN C**

JOBSEARCH METHOD	A		B	C
	YES	NO	OFTEN	PREFER
1. <b>USED THE JOBPOINTS</b>	1	2	1	1
2. <b>LOOKED AT THE JOBCENTRE PLUS INTERNET SITE</b>	1	2	2	2
3. <b>LOOKED AT THE JOBCENTRE PLUS VACANCY LISTS/BOOKS/NEWSPAPERS</b>	1	2	3	3
4. SEARCHED FOR VACANCIES WITH A JOBCENTRE PLUS ADVISER	1	2	4	4
5. PHONED JOBSEEKER DIRECT AND ASKED THEM TO DO THE INITIAL SEARCH FOR VACANCIES FOR YOU	1	2	5	5
6. OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) .....	1	2	6	6
7. <b>MORE THAN ONE/CAN'T DECIDE</b>			7	7
8. <b>DON'T KNOW</b>			8	8

**If preference was given in Q9C ask: Why do you prefer to look for vacancies this way?**

When looking for vacancies in the Jobcentre, do you think you get enough help and support?

**CODE ONE OPTION ONLY**

- 1 YES (GO TO Q13)
- 2 NO (GO TO Q12)
- 3 DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER (GO TO Q13)
- 4 NOT APPLICABLE (EG IF FIRST VISIT) (GO TO Q13)

**If no ask: What additional help and support would you like to receive?**

*PROMPT AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY*

1	<b>MORE OPPORTUNITY TO CARRY OUT Face-to-face JOBSEARCH WITH STAFF</b>
2	<b>MORE TIME TO CARRY OUT Face-to-face JOBSEARCH WITH STAFF</b>
3	<b>MORE SUPPORT/INSTRUCTION WHEN USING THE SELF HELP CHANNELS</b>
4	<b>MORE GUIDANCE FROM STAFF ABOUT HOW TO FOLLOW UP VACANCIES</b>
5	<b>OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)</b> ..... ..... ..... .....
6	DON'T KNOW

In the last 12 months, have you found a vacancy in the Jobcentre that you've wanted to follow up (ie find out more about/apply for)?

**CODE ONE OPTION ONLY**

- 1 YES (GO TO Q14)
- 2 NO (GO TO Q18)
- 3 DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER (GO TO Q18)
- 4 NOT APPLICABLE (EG IF FIRST VISIT) (GO TO Q18)

A) In the last 12 months, which of the following methods have you used when following up a jobcentre vacancy that you were interested in, have you.....?

**CODE EITHER YES OR NO FOR EACH IN COLUMN A**

B) **If more than one used ask: And which of these methods do you use most often when following up a vacancy, is it.....?** READ OUT THOSE USED AND CODE WHICH ONE IS USED MOST OFTEN IN COLUMN B

**If more than one used ask: And which of these do you prefer to use when following up a vacancy, is it.....?** READ OUT THOSE USED AND CODE WHICH ONE IS PREFERRED IN COLUMN C

JOBSEARCH METHOD	A		B	C
	YES	NO	OFTEN	PREFER
1. <b>DISCUSSED A VACANCY FACE-TO-FACE WITH AN ADVISER IN THE OFFICE</b>	1	2	1	1
2. <b>RUNG JOBSEEKER DIRECT USING THE JOBCENTRE PLUS PHONES</b>	1	2	2	2
3. <b>RUNG JOBSEEKER DIRECT BUT NOT USED THE JOBCENTRE PLUS PHONES EG FROM HOME</b>	1	2	3	3
4. <b>RUNG AN EMPLOYER DIRECT USING THE JOBCENTRE PLUS PHONES</b>	1	2	4	4
5. <b>RUNG AN EMPLOYER DIRECT BUT NOT USED THE JOBCENTRE PLUS PHONES EG FROM HOME</b>	1	2	5	5
6. <b>LOOKED FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE VACANCY USING THE JOBCENTRE PLUS WEBSITE</b>	1	2	6	6
7. <b>OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)</b> .....	1	2	7	7
8. <b>MORE THAN ONE/CAN'T DECIDE</b>			8	8
9. <b>DON'T KNOW</b>			9	9

**If preference was given in Q14C ask: Why do you prefer to follow up vacancies this way?**

When following up vacancies, do you think you get enough help and support from Jobcentre Plus?

**CODE ONE OPTION ONLY**

- 1 YES (GO TO Q18)
- 2 NO (GO TO Q17)
- 3 DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER (GO TO Q18)
- 4 NOT APPLICABLE (EG IF FIRST VISIT) (GO TO Q18)

**If no ask: What additional help and support would you like to receive?**

*PROMPT AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY*

1	MORE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK Face-to-face WITH THE STAFF ABOUT VACANCIES YOU ARE INTERESTED IN
2	MORE TIME TO TALK TO THE STAFF ABOUT VACANCIES YOU ARE INTERESTED IN
3	MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO FOLLOW UP A VACANCY
4	<b>OTHER</b> (PLEASE SPECIFY) ..... ..... ..... .....
5	<b>DON'T KNOW</b>

Overall, how satisfied are you with the Jobsearch services provided by Jobcentre Plus?

**CODE ONE OPTION ONLY**

- 1 VERY SATISFIED (**GO TO Q20**)
- 2 SATISFIED (**GO TO Q20**)
- 3 NEITHER SATISFIED NOR DISSATISFIED (**GO TO Q20**)
- 4 DISSATISFIED (**GO TO Q19**)
- 5 VERY DISSATISFIED (GO TO Q19)
- 6 DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER (**GO TO Q20**)

**Why are you dissatisfied with the Jobsearch services provided by Jobcentre Plus?**

### Section C: Changes in Service

How long have you been visiting this or other local Jobcentre Plus offices in the area?

CODE ONE OPTION ONLY

- 1 LESS THAN 1 MONTH **(Go to Q26)**
- 2 BETWEEN 1 AND 3 MONTHS **(Go to Q26)**
- 3 BETWEEN 3 AND 6 MONTHS **(Go to Q26)**
- 4 BETWEEN 6 AND 12 MONTHS **(Go to Q26)**
- 5 BETWEEN 1 AND 2 YEARS **(Go to Q21)**
- 6 BETWEEN 2 AND 5 YEARS **(Go to Q21)**
- 7 MORE THAN 5 YEARS **(Go to Q21)**
- 8 DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER **(Go to Q21)**

Over the last 12 months, have you noticed any differences or changes in the service provided by Jobcentre Plus?

CODE ONE OPTION ONLY

- 1 YES **(GO TO Q22)**
- 2 NO **(GO TO Q23)**
- 3 DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER **(GO TO Q23)**

What differences have you noticed?

DO NOT PROMPT and CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1	<b>THERE ARE MORE STAFF AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU THAN BEFORE</b>
2	<b>THERE ARE LESS STAFF AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU THAN BEFORE</b>
3	<b>IT'S HARDER TO GET TO TALK TO STAFF ABOUT VACANCIES</b>
4	IT'S EASIER TO GET TO TALK TO STAFF ABOUT VACANCIES
5	<b>YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO USE THE SELF SERVICE CHANNELS MORE</b>
6	<b>YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO USE THE SELF SERVICE CHANNELS LESS</b>
7	<b>OTHER</b> (PLEASE SPECIFY) ..... ..... .....
8	DON'T KNOW

Over the last 12 months, do you think that the service you received from Jobcentre Plus got better, worse or stayed the same?

CODE ONE OPTION ONLY

- 1 BETTER **(GO TO Q24)**
- 2 WORSE **(GO TO Q25)**
- 3 STAYED THE SAME **(GO TO Q26)**
- 4 DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER **(GO TO Q26)**

In what ways is it better?

In what ways is it worse?

In addition to using Jobcentre Plus to look for work, are you also registered with any employment agencies?

CODE ONE OPTION ONLY

- 1 YES **(GO TO Q27)**
- 2 NO **(GO TO Q29)**
- 3 DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER **(GO TO Q29)**

Is the job search service provided by Jobcentre Plus different to that provided by the employment agency (ies) you use?

CODE ONE OPTION ONLY

- 1 YES **(GO TO Q28)**
- 2 NO **(GO TO Q29)**
- 3 DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER **(GO TO Q29)**

In what ways is it different?

**Finally do you have any other comments you'd like to make about the service you receive from Jobcentre Plus?**

## Section D: Respondent Details

I'd now like to ask you a few details about yourself for classification purposes only.

Record Gender DO NOT ASK:

- 1 MALE
- 2 FEMALE

Do you have any long term illness, health problem or disability which limits your daily activities or the work you can do?

CODE ONE OPTION ONLY

- 1 YES
- 2 NO
- 3 PREFER NOT TO SAY

Are you a single/lone parent (with children up to 16 years of age)?

CODE ONE OPTION ONLY

1 YES                      2 NO                      3 PREFER NOT TO SAY

Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?

CODE ONE OPTION ONLY

<b>White</b>		<b>Black</b>	
White – British	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>12</sub>
White – Irish	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	African	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>13</sub>
Other White background <i>(Please specify)</i> .....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	Other Black background <i>(Please specify)</i> .....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>14</sub>
<b>Mixed</b>		<b>Chinese or other ethnic group</b>	
White and Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>15</sub>
White and Black African	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	Other <i>(Please specify)</i> .....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>16</sub>
White and Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	<b>No response</b>	
Other Mixed background <i>(Please specify)</i> .....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>7</sub>	I do not wish to say	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>17</sub>
<b>Asian or Asian British</b>		Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>18</sub>
Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>8</sub>		
Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>9</sub>		
Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>10</sub>		
Any other Asian background <i>(Please specify)</i> .....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>11</sub>		

THANK RESPONDENT AND CLOSE

# Appendix F

## Customer telephone survey topic guide

### Screening Questions

Jobcentre Plus has informed us that you recently (since November 2006) signed off benefits and *started a new job*, is that correct?

#### **CODE ONE ONLY**

1	YES	<i>Go to Question 3</i>
2	NO	<i>Go to Question 2</i>
3	DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER	<i>Go to Question 2</i>

**Have you undertaken any type of paid work in the last 6 months for which you stopped claiming benefits?**

#### **CODE ONE ONLY**

1	YES	<i>Go to Question 3</i>
2	NO	<i>Terminate interview</i>
3	DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER	<i>Terminate interview</i>

## Section A – Current Circumstances

Before you started your new job which benefit(s) were you were claiming?

### **PROMPT and CODE ALL THAT APPLY**

- 1**        **Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)**
- 2**        **Income Support (IS)**
- 3**        **Incapacity Benefit (IB)**
- 4         Severe Disablement Allowance
- 5         Maternity Allowance
- 6         Bereavement Benefits
- 7         Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit
- 8         Carers Allowance
- 9         Tax Credits
- 10        Training Allowance
- 11        Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- 12        Housing Benefit
- 13        Council Tax Benefit
- 14        Other (**Please Specify**).....
- 15        None
- 16        Don't know/Can't remember
- 17        Prefer Not To Say

**According to the Jobcentre Plus records, you started the job on (insert the date from contact sheet) is that correct?**

*CODE ONE ONLY*

<b>1</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>Go to Question 6</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Go to Question 5</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER</b>	<b>Go to Question 5</b>

**When did you start the job?**

Date: .....        Month: .....        Year: .....        4 D/K

**What type of job is/was it? (Record response)**

**Is/Was the job.....?**

*READ OUT and CODE ONE ONLY*

<b>1</b>	<b>FULL TIME (MORE THAN 16 HOURS PER WEEK)</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>PART TIME (LESS THAN 16 HOURS PER WEEK)</b>
<b>3</b>	VARIES/VARIED
<b>4</b>	DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER

**How did you first find out about the vacancy for this job?**

PROMPT CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1	NEWSPAPER ADVERT
2	JOBCENTRE PLUS JOBPOINT
3	ADVISER IN A JOBCENTRE PLUS OFFICE
4	<b>JOBSEEKER DIRECT/JOBCENTRE PLUS CALL CENTRE</b>
5	<b>JOBCENTRE PLUS WEBSITE</b>
6	WEBSITE (NOT JOBCENTRE PLUS)
7	WORD OF MOUTH EG FROM A FRIEND/FAMILY MEMBER
8	CONTACTING EMPLOYER DIRECTLY
9	ADVERT IN SHOP WINDOW ETC
10	EMPLOYMENT AGENCY
11	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)
12	DON'T KNOW

**Do you think Jobcentre Plus helped you in any way to get the job?**

CODE ONE ONLY

1	<b>YES</b>	<i>Go to Question 10</i>
2	<b>NO</b>	<i>Go to Question 11</i>
3	DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER	<i>Go to Question 11</i>

**If yes, how did they help you?**

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

1	<b>FOUND THE JOB FOR ME</b>
2	SUBMITTED ME FOR THE JOB
3	<b>HELPED ME COMPLETE THE APPLICATION</b>
4	<b>INTERVIEW SKILLS</b>
5	<b>BUILT MY CONFIDENCE</b>
6	PROVIDED FINANCIAL SUPPORT EG BUS FARES/MONEY FOR CLOTHING
7	PROVIDED TRAINING
8	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) ..... .....
9	DON'T KNOW

**Are you still doing this job?**

CODE ONE ONLY

<b>1</b>	<b>YES</b>	<i>Go to Question 15</i>
<b>2</b>	<b>NO</b>	<i>Go to Question 12</i>
<b>3</b>	DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER	<i>Go to Question 12</i>

**Why are you no longer in the job?**

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

<b>1</b>	<b>TEMPORARY CONTRACT THAT CAME TO AN END</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>DISMISSED/SACKED</b>
<b>3</b>	I CHOSE TO LEAVE
<b>4</b>	<b>GOT ANOTHER JOB</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>BECAME ILL/INCAPACITATED</b>
<b>6</b>	MOVED AWAY
<b>7</b>	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) ..... .....
<b>8</b>	DON'T KNOW

**How long were you in the job?**

Days: ..... Months: ..... 3 D/K

**What are you doing now?**

CODE ALL THAT APPLY

<b>1</b>	<b>EMPLOYED IN ANOTHER JOB</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>NOT IN WORK and CLAIMING JSA</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>NOT IN WORK and CLAIMING IB/IS</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>NOT IN WORK and CLAIMING ANOTHER BENEFIT</b>
<b>5</b>	NOT IN WORK NOT CLAIMING ANY BENEFITS
<b>6</b>	IN EDUCATION/TRAINING
<b>7</b>	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) ..... .....
<b>8</b>	DON'T KNOW

## Section B: Your use of Jobcentre Plus Services

Before you started the (*insert job title from Q6*) job, how long had you been out of work and claiming benefits?

*PROMPT FOR AN APPROXIMATION*

Days: ..... Months: ..... Years: ..... 4 D/K

During this time, on average how often were you in contact with or did you visit Jobcentre Plus?

### **CODE ONE ONLY**

<b>1</b>	DAILY
<b>2</b>	A COUPLE OF TIMES A WEEK
<b>3</b>	ONCE A WEEK
<b>4</b>	ONCE A FORTNIGHT
<b>5</b>	ONCE A MONTH
<b>6</b>	THREE OR FOUR TIMES A YEAR
<b>7</b>	TWICE A YEAR
<b>8</b>	ONCE A YEAR
<b>9</b>	LESS THAN ONCE A YEAR
<b>10</b>	NEVER CONTACTED JOBCENTRE PLUS
<b>11</b>	DON'T KNOW CAN'T REMEMBER

ONLY ASK Q17 to PG1 customers, ie those who were claiming IS or IB

PG2 and 3 customers, ie those who claimed JSA, go straight to Q18

During this time, did you ever meet with a Jobcentre Plus adviser to have a discussion about your progress and about getting back to work?

### **CODE ONE ONLY**

<b>1</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>Go to Question 23</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Go to Question 28</b>
<b>3</b>	DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER	<b>Go to Question 28</b>

Ask Q18 to 20 to PG 2 and 3 customers ie those who claimed JSA

As part of your Jobseekers Agreement you were required to attend the Jobcentre every two weeks to sign on and meet with an adviser to discuss your progress. During these meetings did the adviser....?

**READ OUT OPTIONS AND CODE ONE PER ROW**

	YES	NO	D/K	N/A
1. ASK YOU QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW YOU WERE LOOKING FOR WORK	1	2	3	4
2. ASK YOU QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NUMBER OF VACANCIES YOU'D APPLIED FOR IN THE LAST 2 WEEKS	1	2	3	4
3. ASK YOU QUESTIONS ABOUT THE TYPES OF VACANCIES YOU'D APPLIED FOR IN THE LAST 2 WEEKS	1	2	3	4
4. ASK YOU QUESTIONS ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF YOUR JOBSEARCH AND APPLICATIONS	1	2	3	4
5. SHOW YOU HOW TO USE THE JOBPOINTS	1	2	3	4
6. SUGGEST SUITABLE VACANCIES TO YOU	1	2	3	4
7. SUBMIT YOU FOR ANY VACANCIES	1	2	3	4
8. PROVIDE ANY OTHER TYPE OF SUPPORT (PLEASE SPECIFY) .....	1	2	3	4

***If the respondent answers YES to Q18 Part 7 ask Question 19, if respondent answers NO, DON'T KNOW or NOT APPLICABLE go to Q21***

Do you think the vacancies that these advisers submitted you for were, in general.....?

**READ OUT OPTIONS AND CODE ONE ONLY**

<b>1</b>	VERY SUITABLE	<b><i>Go to Question 21</i></b>
<b>2</b>	QUITE SUITABLE	<b><i>Go to Question 21</i></b>
<b>3</b>	NEITHER SUITABLE NOR NOT SUITABLE	<b><i>Go to Question 21</i></b>
<b>4</b>	NOT VERY SUITABLE	<b><i>Go to Question 20</i></b>
<b>5</b>	NOT AT ALL SUITABLE	<b><i>Go to Question 20</i></b>
<b>6</b>	DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER	<b><i>Go to Question 21</i></b>

Why weren't they suitable?

On average how long did your (signing on) meetings with the adviser last?

**CODE ONE ONLY**

<b>1</b>	LESS THAN 5 MINUTES
<b>2</b>	5 TO 10 MINUTES
<b>3</b>	11 TO 20 MINUTES
<b>4</b>	21 TO 30 MINUTES
<b>5</b>	31 TO 60 MINUTES
<b>6</b>	MORE THAN AN HOUR
<b>7</b>	DON'T KNOW CAN'T REMEMBER

During the time you were looking for work, other than your fortnightly job review (signing on) meetings, did you ever meet with a Jobcentre Plus personal adviser for a more in-depth discussion about your progress in getting back to work?

**CODE ONE ONLY**

<b>1</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b><i>Go to Question 23</i></b>
<b>2</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b><i>Go to Question 28</i></b>
<b>3</b>	DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER	<b><i>Go to Question 28</i></b>

Approximately how often did these meetings take place?

**CODE ONE ONLY**

<b>1</b>	MORE THAN ONCE A WEEK	<b><i>Go to Question 24</i></b>
<b>2</b>	ONCE A WEEK	<b><i>Go to Question 24</i></b>
<b>3</b>	ONCE A FORTNIGHT	<b><i>Go to Question 24</i></b>
<b>4</b>	ONCE A MONTH	<b><i>Go to Question 24</i></b>
<b>5</b>	EVERY 3 MONTHS (13 WEEKS)	<b><i>Go to Question 24</i></b>
<b>6</b>	EVERY 6 MONTHS (26 WEEKS)	<b><i>Go to Question 24</i></b>
<b>7</b>	EVERY 12 MONTHS	<b><i>Go to Question 24</i></b>
<b>8</b>	LESS THAN ONCE A YEAR	<b><i>Go to Question 24</i></b>
<b>9</b>	NEVER MET WITH A JOBCENTRE PLUS ADVISOR	<b><i>Go to Question 28</i></b>
<b>10</b>	DON'T KNOW CAN'T REMEMBER	<b><i>Go to Question 24</i></b>

On average how long did these meetings last?

**CODE ONE ONLY**

1	LESS THAN 5 MINUTES
2	5 TO 10 MINUTES
3	11 TO 20 MINUTES
4	21 TO 30 MINUTES
5	31 TO 60 MINUTES
6	MORE THAN AN HOUR
7	DON'T KNOW CAN'T REMEMBER

During your meeting(s) with your personal adviser did they.....?

**READ OUT OPTIONS AND CODE ONE PER ROW**

	YES	NO	D/K	N/A
1. DISCUSS WITH YOU THE TYPE OF WORK YOU WANTED TO DO	1	2	3	4
<b>2. IDENTIFY ANY SKILLS OR TRAINING NEEDS YOU MIGHT HAVE HAD</b>	1	2	3	4
3. REFER YOU TO ANY EXTERNAL TRAINING PROVIDERS	1	2	3	4
4. REFER YOU TO ANY EXTERNAL HELP FOR JOBSSEARCH OR INTERVIEW PREPARATION	1	2	3	4
5. REFER YOU TO ANY JOB AGENCIES	1	2	3	4
6. CARRY OUT ANY BETTER OFF IN WORK CALCULATIONS	1	2	3	4
7. DISCUSS IN WORK BENEFITS WITH YOU	1	2	3	4
8. CARRY OUT ANY IN WORK BENEFITS CALCULATIONS	1	2	3	4
9. <b>HELP YOU SEARCH FOR SUITABLE VACANCIES</b>	1	2	3	4
<b>10. SUBMIT YOU FOR ANY VACANCIES</b>	1	2	3	4
11. HELP YOU PREPARE FOR INTERVIEWS	1	2	3	4
12. <b>PROVIDE ANY OTHER TYPE OF SUPPORT</b> (PLEASE SPECIFY) .....	1	2	3	4

***If the respondent answers YES to Q25 Part 10 ask Question 26, if respondent answers NO, DON'T KNOW or NOT APPLICABLE go to Q28***

Do you think the vacancies that your personal adviser submitted you for were, in general.....?

**READ OUT OPTIONS AND CODE ONE ONLY**

<b>1</b>	VERY SUITABLE	<b>Go to Question 28</b>
<b>2</b>	QUITE SUITABLE	<b>Go to Question 28</b>
<b>3</b>	NEITHER SUITABLE NOR NOT SUITABLE	<b>Go to Question 28</b>
<b>4</b>	NOT VERY SUITABLE	<b>Go to Question 27</b>
<b>5</b>	NOT AT ALL SUITABLE	<b>Go to Question 27</b>
<b>6</b>	DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER	<b>Go to Question 28</b>

Why weren't they suitable?

During the time you were out of work, which of the following Jobcentre Plus services did you use when looking for job vacancies. Did you.....?

**READ OUT OPTIONS AND CODE ONE PER ROW**

JOBSEARCH METHOD	YES	NO	D/K	N/A
1. USE THE JOBPOINTS	1	2	3	4
2. USE THE JOBCENTRE PLUS WEBSITE	1	2	3	4
3. LOOK AT ANY VACANCY LISTS/BOOKS/ NEWSPAPERS PROVIDED BY JOBCENTRE	1	2	3	4
4. PHONE JOBSEEKER DIRECT AND ASK THEM TO DO AN INITIAL SEARCH FOR VACANCIES FOR YOU	1	2	3	4
5. PHONE JOBSEEKER DIRECT TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT A VACANCY YOU WERE INTERESTED IN	1	2	3	4
6. WERE YOU EVER PHONED BY JOBCENTRE PLUS AND TOLD ABOUT A VACANCY THEY THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN	1	2	3	4
7. ANY OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) .....	1	2	3	4

If NO Jobcentre Plus services used ie **ALL** parts of Q28 answered NO, Go To Q33

When looking for vacancies in the Jobcentre, do you think you get enough help and support?

*CODE ONE ONLY*

<b>1</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>Go to Question 31</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Go to Question 30</b>
<b>3</b>	DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER	<b>Go to Question 30</b>
<b>4</b>	N/A – NOT LOOKED FOR VACANCIES IN THE JOBCENTRE	<b>Go to Question 33</b>

If no ask: What additional help and support would you like to receive?

*PROMPT AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY*

1	MORE OPPORTUNITY TO CARRY OUT Face-to-face JOBSEARCH WITH STAFF
2	MORE TIME TO CARRY OUT Face-to-face JOBSEARCH WITH STAFF
3	MORE SUPPORT/INSTRUCTION WHEN USING THE SELF HELP CHANNELS
4	MORE GUIDANCE FROM STAFF ABOUT HOW TO FOLLOW UP VACANCIES
5	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY) ..... .....
6	DON'T KNOW

In general, were you able to find the types of job vacancies you wanted using Jobcentre Plus sources?

*CODE ONE ONLY*

<b>1</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>Go to Question 33</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>Go to Question 32</b>
<b>3</b>	DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER	<b>Go to Question 33</b>

Overall, how satisfied were you with the Jobsearch services provided by Jobcentre Plus?

**CODE ONE OPTION ONLY**

- 1 VERY SATISFIED (**GO TO Q35**)
- 2 SATISFIED (**GO TO Q35**)
- 3 NEITHER SATISFIED NOR DISSATISFIED (**GO TO Q35**)
- 4 DISSATISFIED (**GO TO Q34**)
- 5 VERY DISSATISFIED (**GO TO Q34**)
- 6 DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER (**GO TO Q35**)

Why were you dissatisfied with the Jobsearch services provided by Jobcentre Plus?

In addition to using Jobcentre Plus to look for work, were you also registered with any employment agencies?

CODE ONE OPTION ONLY

- 1 YES **(GO TO Q36)**
- 2 NO **(GO TO Q38)**
- 3 DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER **(GO TO Q38)**

Was the job search service provided by Jobcentre Plus different to that provided by the employment agency/ies you use?

CODE ONE OPTION ONLY

- 1 YES **(GO TO Q37)**
- 2 NO **(GO TO Q38)**
- 3 DON'T KNOW/CAN'T REMEMBER **(GO TO Q38)**

In what ways was it different?

Finally do you have any other comments you'd like to make about the service you received from Jobcentre Plus?

### Section C: Respondent Details

I'd now like to ask you a few details about yourself for classification purposes only.

Record Gender DO NOT ASK:

- 1 MALE
- 2 FEMALE

How old are you?

<b>1</b>	16 TO 18
2	19 TO 24
3	25 TO 34
4	35 TO 49
5	50 TO 64
6	65 OR OVER
7	PREFER NOT TO SAY

Do you have any long term illness, health problem or disability which limits your daily activities or the work you can do?

1 YES                      2 NO                      3 PREFER NOT TO SAY

Are you a single/lone parent (with children up to 16 years of age)?

1 YES                      2 NO                      3 PREFER NOT TO SAY

Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?

White		Black	
White – British	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>1</sub>	Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>12</sub>
White – Irish	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>2</sub>	African	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>13</sub>
Other White background (Please specify) .....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>3</sub>	Other Black background (Please specify) .....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>14</sub>
Mixed		Chinese or other ethnic group	
White and Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>4</sub>	Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>15</sub>
White and Black African	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>5</sub>	Other (Please specify) .....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>16</sub>
White and Asian	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>6</sub>	No response	
Other Mixed background (Please specify) .....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>7</sub>	I do not wish to say	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>17</sub>
Asian or Asian British		Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>18</sub>
Indian	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>8</sub>		
Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>9</sub>		
Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>10</sub>		
Any other Asian background (Please specify) .....	<input type="checkbox"/> <sub>11</sub>		

# References

Frankham, J., Payne, L., Smith, P., Sturman, D. and Willis, R. (2006), *Evaluation of the Job Outcome Target Pilots: quantitative study: Final report*, DWP Research Report No. 316, Leeds: CDS.

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