

Quantitative Baseline Employer Survey

Research Summary

This report presents results from a national telephone survey of employers, undertaken as a key part of the evaluation of the modernisation programme, known as “Modernising the Employment Service” or MES. It was conducted by the Policy Research Institute, at Leeds Metropolitan University, on behalf of the ES Research Partnership for Performance. The aim of the survey was to obtain up to date information about the role of employers as customers of the Employment Service – about their views on, and levels of satisfaction with, the services provided by the ES and views on new or planned MES related products and services. The 2001 survey constitutes a baseline survey in the context of the MES evaluation and, together with a subsequent follow-up survey, will provide the basis for identifying changes in employers’ perception, use and satisfaction with the ES attributable to the MES programme.

- There is a relatively high level of awareness of ES services amongst employers, with 81% aware of at least one service. Awareness of recruitment services is higher than more specialist advice and information services.
- Some 45% of employers had used the ES during the past year and 54% had used it at some time in the past.
- Just under a third of vacancies are notified to the ES nationally

and the ES is the most widely used channel for recruitment, used by nearly half of all employers. However, employers are significantly more likely to use the ES for semi-skilled and unskilled manual vacancies and clerical and sales jobs than for managerial and professional positions.

- Overall, 59% of employers were satisfied with the service they had received. Larger employers and those in production tended to be more satisfied but there were ‘pockets’ of dissatisfaction amongst smaller employers and those in sales and repair and hotels, restaurants and recreation.
- Employers’ views on Jobcentre services and their staff were generally positive but some employers expressed concerns about the quality of candidates submitted and the extent to which ES staff understand the needs of their business. Many employers wanted to see better screening of applicants for vacancies.

Awareness and use of the Employment Service

Four out of every five employers who had recruited or attempted to recruit during the past year were aware of at least one service provided by the ES. However, around one in ten of ‘recruiting’ employers were unaware of the range of available services, suggesting some scope for improved promotion activity, particularly among smaller employers and those in the

transport, communication, business and financial services sectors.

Around 45 per cent of employers had used at least one ES service during the previous 12 months. In the vast majority of cases, this involved the use of recruitment services. There are considerable variations by sector and size in the extent to which ES services are used. Usage rates are highest among employers in the sales/repair sectors and among larger employers.

Employer awareness of recruitment-related ES services has remained broadly steady, or increased slightly, since 1995, but there is some evidence of a fall in the use of these services between 1999 and 2001. There has been a steady decline in employer awareness of ES information and advice services since 1995, but use of such services has remained broadly constant.

Use of the Employment Service for recruitment

Just under one third of vacancies are notified to the Employment Service.

Employers with managerial and/or professional vacancies are much less likely than average to notify these job opportunities to the ES. Conversely, employers are more likely to notify manual, clerical and, to a lesser extent, craft jobs to the ES.

The ES has a comparative advantage over methods such as press advertising in relation to the fact that costs are low and the ES

produces the greatest volume of applicants. However, employers are less likely to feel that the ES produces the highest quality of applicants and the findings indicate a need for continued focus on this issue.

Contact with the Employment Service

Over 40 per cent of employers obtain information about the ES through personal contact with ES staff or with Jobcentres. One in five employers stated that they did not receive any information at all about the ES and its services.

Telephone is by far the most used method by which employers advise the ES of vacancies, used by some 88 per cent. In most cases this involves telephone contact with a local Jobcentre. Over 70 per cent of ES users feel that it is important to have a regular named contact person for vacancies, and to have a contact based in the local Jobcentre. Fieldwork took place prior to the full roll out and marketing of Employer Direct.

Opinions of services provided by the Employment Service

Some 59 per cent of employers that had used ES services in the previous 12 months stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the service that they had received. Employers in the production sector expressed the highest levels of satisfaction while higher than average rates of dissatisfaction were recorded for smaller employers and for those

operating in sales, repair, hotels, restaurants and recreation.

Satisfaction levels are higher for ES advisory and information services than for recruitment services, although there is a relatively high level of dissatisfaction with advice and information on workforce training.

Improved screening of applicants is the single most important change that would encourage employers currently using ES to make more use of ES services, and non-users to become ES customers. A significant proportion of employers would welcome regular contact by the local Jobcentre, especially larger organisations and those in the public sector.

It is difficult to make accurate comparisons over time, but the evidence suggests that there may have been a slight decline in the satisfaction of users with ES services between 1999 and 2001. However, the longer term picture is relatively stable, with employers feeling that the knowledge levels of ES staff have improved since 1995.

Employers and the modernisation programme

Only about one in ten of employers are aware of the 'Modernising ES' programme, and even fewer are familiar with specific initiatives under this programme. However, most employers that expressed an opinion feel that the MES changes are likely to lead to improved service from the ES, although of all the changes Employer Direct currently receives the least positive endorsement. The research took

place prior to full roll out of Employer Direct and before any marketing had taken place.

For over half of employers publicising of vacancies beyond the local labour market area is not very important although larger employers and those in the production sector are more likely to feel that it is important to them.

Most employers feel that the use of technology by the ES is at least on a par with, and in many cases compares favourably with, other organisations that they deal with.