

Research report

# Jobcentre Plus Equality Legislative Requirements Review

by Rosie Gloster, Joy Oakley, Maria Sigala  
and Annette Cox

Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 700

# **Jobcentre Plus equality legislative requirements review**

Rosie Gloster, Joy Oakley, Maria Sigala and Annette Cox

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# Contents

Acknowledgements.....	vii
Abbreviations .....	ix
Glossary.....	xi
1 Introduction and background .....	5
1.1 Background to the research.....	5
1.2 Research aims and objectives .....	7
1.3 Methodology.....	7
1.4 Report structure.....	10
2 Staff awareness and understanding of equality and diversity .....	11
2.1 ‘It should be in everything that we do’: A commitment to equality and diversity.....	11
2.2 ‘We have a responsibility not to discriminate’: Understandings of eliminating discrimination.....	13
2.3 ‘We have to be slightly more active than that...don’t we?’: Understandings of promoting equality of opportunity and treating people differently.....	14
2.4 ‘We’ve got a set of rules, we’ve got policies and we’ve got procedures, and we should follow them’: Understandings of compliance with legislative duties.....	17
2.5 Chapter summary .....	19
3 Training and support for handling equality and diversity.....	21
3.1 Designing and delivering equality and diversity training.....	21
3.2 The training and support used by staff.....	22
3.2.1 <i>Workshops and seminars</i> .....	23
3.2.2 <i>Written materials and discussion with colleagues</i> .....	25
3.2.3 <i>Diversity events and awareness raising activities</i> .....	29
3.2.4 <i>E-learning</i> .....	31
3.2.5 <i>Staff Diversity Network Groups</i> .....	32
3.2.6 <i>Diversity Challenge</i> .....	34
3.2.7 <i>The effectiveness of equality and diversity training and awareness activities</i> .....	35
3.2.8 <i>Future training</i> .....	37
3.3 Summary.....	37

4	Implementing equality and diversity policies.....	39
4.1	How equality and diversity fits with staff roles.....	39
4.1.1	<i>Directorate staff</i> .....	39
4.1.2	<i>Operational staff</i> .....	41
4.2	Staff confidence in implementing equality and diversity.....	42
4.2.1	<i>Confidence founded in processes, procedures and colleagues</i> .....	43
4.2.2	<i>Confidence founded in a belief that equality and diversity is embedded..</i>	43
4.3	Experience of working with employers on equality and diversity.....	44
4.3.1	<i>Taking employer vacancies</i> .....	44
4.3.2	<i>Tailoring positions to customers</i> .....	45
4.3.3	<i>Two Ticks: the disability symbol</i> .....	45
4.3.4	<i>Diversity events</i> .....	45
4.4	Experience of working with customers.....	45
4.5	Experience of working with partners.....	47
4.6	Experience of working with and supporting Jobcentre Plus colleagues.....	47
4.7	Information and communications technology .....	49
4.8	Equality Impact Assessments .....	50
4.9	Sources of support.....	51
4.10	Chapter summary .....	53
5	Recording and monitoring diversity data.....	55
5.1	Recording and monitoring customer diversity data .....	55
5.2	Recording and monitoring staff diversity data .....	58
5.3	Chapter summary .....	60
6	Conclusions and recommendations.....	61
6.1	Staff awareness of the legislation and understanding of their collective and individual responsibilities in implementing it .....	61
6.2	Staff views on the levels and content of support.....	62
6.3	Staff views on diversity monitoring and their willingness to participate in it and encourage others to do so .....	62
6.4	Recommendations.....	63

Appendix A Diversity characteristics of interviewees .....	65
Appendix B Discussion guide for operational staff.....	67
Appendix C Analysis framework.....	75
References .....	79

## List of tables

Table 1.1	Interviews by directorate and operations.....	8
Table 6.1	Suggested improvements in relation to the public sector duties .....	63
Table A.1	Age profile of interviewees .....	65
Table A.2	Gender profile of interviewees .....	65
Table A.3	Sexual orientation profile of interviewees.....	65
Table A.4	Ethnic profile of interviewees.....	66
Table A.5	Health profile of interviewees .....	66

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# Abbreviations

DDA	Disability Discrimination Act
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission
EIA	Equality Impact Assessment
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology
SDNG	Staff Diversity Network Group

# Glossary

Count me in	<b>Count me in</b> is an internal Jobcentre Plus initiative to encourage staff to record their diversity data onto Resource Management.
Diversity Challenge	The <b>Diversity Challenge</b> is Jobcentre Plus internal guidance about how to comply with diversity and equality legal responsibilities, by fulfilling what has been committed to in the Equality Schemes.
Assurance check	A <b>Scorecard</b> of indicators and business measures to enable effective monitoring of Jobcentre Plus' legal obligation under the equality duties.
Employment support allowance	<b>ESA</b> was introduced on 27 October 2008. It replaced a range of incapacity benefits with immediate effect for customers making a new claim for financial support on the grounds of illness or incapacity. From October 2010, those customers who are currently still receiving the older style incapacity benefits will be reassessed and moved to ESA or other benefits more appropriate to their circumstances.
Equality impact assessment	An <b>equality impact assessment</b> involves assessing the likely or actual effects of policies or services on people in respect of disability, gender and racial equality.
Positive action	<b>Positive action</b> (allowed by all discrimination legislation) involves training, or encouraging job applications from groups who are under represented in that particular area of work. The final choice for employment must always be based on merit/suitability.
Positive discrimination	<b>Positive discrimination</b> (prohibited by other legislation but allowed by the DDA) allows an employer to recruit a disabled person, even though there may have been more suitable candidates. They can do this provided they do not unlawfully discriminate against another disabled person or on grounds of other areas of discrimination legislation.
Public Sector Equality Duties	The <b>Equality Duties</b> , a key part of the Equality Bill introduced in April 2009, will build on the existing gender, race, and disability duties, and extend it to also cover age, sexual orientation, gender reassignment in full, and religion or belief. The Duties require public bodies to consider how their spending decisions, employment practices, and services they provide affect people from these groups.
Staff Diversity Network Groups	<b>Staff Diversity Network Groups</b> work in furthering the Diversity and Equality agenda within Jobcentre Plus.

Reach programme

**Reach** is a 'positive action'. The Reach initiative provides development opportunities aimed at disabled and ethnic minority staff in Jobcentre Plus who have the potential to progress. Reach was created to help address the under-representation of staff from these groups at senior levels within the organisation.

Resource management

**Resource management** is the Jobcentre Plus database that stores staff diversity information.

# Summary

## Introduction and background

Like all public sector organisations, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Jobcentre Plus are obliged to eliminate discrimination and promote equality within their workforce, amongst their customers and the wider stakeholders with whom they interact. Revised equality duties which will cover seven equality strands will come into force in 2011. However, at present the duties cover race, gender and disability.

Jobcentre Plus commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies to undertake research to identify diversity and equality issues within key job roles. The research aimed to establish whether staff understood and were adequately supported in meeting equality legislative requirements. A qualitative methodology was chosen to enable an in-depth exploration of staff understanding of the equality duties, of the training and support staff had received about the equality duties and to capture their experiences of working with customers, employers, other partners and colleagues in upholding this legislation. The qualitative results presented in this study are illustrative of understanding and views of the staff interviewed for this research and they should not be generalised.

In total, 97 Jobcentre Plus staff were interviewed using a combination of face-to-face and telephone interviewing. This included staff from a range of directorate and operational roles, a mixture of staff working with customers, employers, partners and those with internal roles, such as finance.

## Staff awareness and understanding of equality and diversity legislation

Most interviewees viewed equality and diversity legislation as important and something that they perceived Jobcentre Plus was committed to and they generally recognised a collective responsibility for implementing it. Several staff could name some elements of the equality duties, whereas others talked more broadly about the facets of equality and diversity and focused on flexible working, for example. Interviewees were not typically able to make the distinction between the strands covered by the duties and other aspects. Seemingly related to this understanding many staff appeared to make sense of diversity in the context of individuality and applied the principles of the duties, such as equality of opportunity, to everybody and not just particular groups.

Many staff were unsure of the concept of treating people differently to achieve equal opportunity and some discussed how the legislation meant they had to treat everyone the same. However, in practice it was evident that staff make changes and amendments to meet customer needs.

Interviewees were confident that they would meet the legislative requirements of the equality duties by following the organisation's processes and procedures. Where staff noticed gaps in their knowledge or were uncertain how to implement equality and diversity legislation in practice, then they frequently used the guidance as a source of reference.

### Training and support about equality and diversity legislation and practice

Tutor-led training and workshops were felt by interviewees to work well as they promoted discussion and enabled staff to share good practice with colleagues from other offices and job roles. Discussions with colleagues were also seen as an important source of information, and could help with interpreting what the written guidance meant in practice. Diversity champions, where they exist, were also seen as an effective source of information and advice.

Diversity events were felt to be good for team-building and general awareness-raising but less effective at developing understanding of equality and diversity legislation or practice.

The outputs from staff diversity network groups were felt to be useful where interviewees had seen these, but other staff had neither heard of these groups nor seen their outputs.

Younger members of staff were more likely to be positive about e-learning than older staff. The effectiveness of e-learning was felt to be limited by a lack of structured interaction and opportunity for discussion with colleagues. This interaction was felt to be particularly valuable to aid understanding about complex issues such as equality and diversity legislation and implementation.

It was reported to be difficult to find time to participate in training, to read Jobcentre Plus internal guidance and to read updates on the intranet, as staff were working in a target driven environment. Operational staff were particularly likely to report this as a constraint.

Very few staff had plans to do any learning and development in the future about equality and diversity legislation or practice. Interviewees who demonstrated an understanding of the concept of treating people differently and had a good grasp of the groups covered by the equality duties were more likely to want training in the future than those interviewees who were unable to articulate the equality duties and the groups covered by it.

### Implementing equality and diversity policies

Some directorate staff were clear about what the equality duties meant for their job role and them individually, whereas others were less so, particularly those whose job roles were internally focused. Operational staff tended to give more examples than directorate staff about how equality and diversity fitted into their role, although this seemed also to be influenced by whether they were working in a rural or urban office. Staff in rural offices tended to discuss how their customer base was not diverse, although this seemed to be a reflection on the ethnic diversity of the area rather than other diversity aspects.

Staff working in the contact centre taking employer vacancies were confident in doing so. They were confident in working with employers, challenging them if necessary, to ensure that the vacancies on the Jobcentre plus system complied with equality and diversity legislation.

Partners of Jobcentre Plus were generally seen as being on board with the equality and diversity agenda and supportive and easy to work with in upholding the public sector duties.

Interviewees recalled several sources of support they had used to help them to implement equality and diversity in practice. The nature and source of support used depended on the issue. Interviewees had used colleagues and line managers, occupational health providers and staff in human resources as sources of support.

## Collecting and monitoring diversity data

Many staff were able to describe in broad terms why Jobcentre Plus collects customer diversity information. However, the reasons given by operational staff tended to focus on the use of these data in an operational sense, for example for customers to access job support services. Directorate staff were more likely than operational staff to discuss the use of these data in relation to outcomes, for example to see who Jobcentre Plus supported and their relative use of services, and which groups of customers were more or less likely to achieve job outcomes.

Given that the understanding of many operational staff about the purpose of collecting customer data focused on service delivery, many said they would be reluctant to ask customers about other aspects of diversity, such as sexual orientation, that they could not readily relate to service provision.

Most of the staff we interviewed said they had uploaded their diversity data onto the Jobcentre Plus system. However, some staff who used these data to carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) reported there were gaps in the data and that this could make them challenging to carry out.

Staff tended to understand why staff diversity data are collected, and explain, for example, that they were used to examine the extent to which Jobcentre Plus staff reflected their customers and to monitor promotion and representation of specific groups, such as women, at senior grades.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Some job roles, such as those working with customers, partners or employers are more likely to raise equality and diversity issues. However, all staff may need to draw on the equality duties when they work with colleagues and if they have management responsibilities.

Interviewees displayed a high level of confidence in Jobcentre Plus' guidance and processes and felt that by following and implementing these that the duties would be met. There tended to be less clarity among interviewees about what the duties meant for their own job role, and particularly how best to deal with some of the grey areas that might arise in putting the legislation into practice. For example, the extent to which services could be tailored and adjusted to meet customer needs.

Many staff did not articulate the concept of treating people differently when asked about the coverage of equality and diversity legislation. There was some uncertainty about whether treating people differently was appropriate, and if so in what circumstances. On a day-to-day basis it was clear from the examples staff gave of how they worked in practice that they take into account equality and diversity when working with customers, employers and partners. However, they do not necessarily connect this practice to any legal responsibility or the public sector duties.

To try to increase staff awareness and understanding of equality and diversity legislation and practice Jobcentre Plus could consider whether it is feasible to:

- expand the network of diversity champions, particularly in rural areas, and explore the possibilities for virtual groups;
- develop material, such as case-studies, that are focused on aspects of job roles, such as working with customers, or working with colleagues and alongside these develop questions to facilitate and structure discussion;
- further investigate perceptions of diversity being based on visible aspects.

To try to increase the level and content of support for staff implementing the equality and diversity legislation Jobcentre Plus could consider whether it is feasible to:

## 4 Summary

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- when the business climate allows, consider increasing the frequency of team meetings to give a regular forum for staff to discuss equality and diversity legislation and good practice;
- make e-learning about equality and diversity legislation more interactive, for example by completing it in a group setting with a moderator, or requiring follow-up with line managers;
- increase the coverage of Staff Diversity Network Group (SDNGs) in rural areas and increase the information flows from SDNG and to the rest of the organisation;
- create 'virtual diversity champions' accessed via the internet, as an immediate source of support for staff queries about equality and diversity legislation and practice, including case-study examples;
- extend participation in equality and diversity training and support to all staff, including those that perceive equality and diversity not as a development area.

To try to improve the implementation of equality and diversity Jobcentre Plus could:

- continue to ensure that all written guidance is up-to-date and easy to interpret.

To try to improve the monitoring and collection of diversity data and staff understanding of its purpose Jobcentre Plus could consider whether it is feasible to use:

- the assurance check to explain and demonstrate to staff the practical application of both staff and customer diversity data;
- an EIA to demonstrate to staff how the data are used in practice.

# 1 Introduction and background

## 1.1 Background to the research

Like all public sector organisations, Jobcentre Plus and wider Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as an organisation are obliged to eliminate discrimination and promote equality within their workforce, amongst their customers and the wider stakeholders with whom they interact.

The race equality duty was introduced into legislation in the Race Relations (amendment) Act 2000. It means that Jobcentre Plus must have 'due regard' to the need to: eliminate unlawful racial discrimination; promote equality of opportunity; and promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

The disability equality duty was introduced into legislation in the Disability Discrimination Act (amended 2005). It means that Jobcentre Plus must have 'due regard' to the need to: promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons; eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act; eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities; promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons; encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than others.

The gender equality duty was introduced into legislation in the Equality Act 2006, amending the Sex Discrimination Act. It means that Jobcentre Plus must have 'due regard' to the need to: eliminate unlawful sex discrimination and harassment (including for transsexual people); and promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

Revised equality duties which will cover seven equality strands, namely race, disability, gender, gender identity, religion/belief, age, and sexual orientation will come into force in 2011. However, at present, the legislation covers race, gender and disability.

A DWP policy statement<sup>1</sup> sets out a commitment to equality and valuing diversity within the department's workforce and in working practices with customers, colleagues and partners. It is much broader than the equality duties and specifies that discrimination will not be tolerated on a range of grounds. These grounds include gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, race, colour, nationality, religion, age, disability, HIV status, working pattern, caring responsibilities, and trade union activity or political beliefs.

The equality and diversity duties cover all Jobcentre Plus staff, including delivery of customer services provided by the Customer Services Directorate, Contact Centre Directorate, Benefit Delivery Centres, and Fraud Investigation Service. The duties also affect the work of Directorate staff that develop the policy/strategy for service delivery, Human Resources, and also affects how Jobcentre Plus operates as an employer and in its delivery of services to employers. Staff have both an individual responsibility to comply with the equality duties and a collective one to ensure that the organisation as a whole meets the legislation.

In order to assess how Jobcentre Plus and its staff were complying with the public sector duties, a recent Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) assessment examined four key policy areas and the associated equality impact assessments (EIAs) developed and implemented between 2003 and 2008. It raised some areas for improvement relating to the collection and use of data,

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<sup>1</sup> [www.dwp.gov.uk/about-dwp/diversity-and-equality/diversity-and-equality-policy/](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/about-dwp/diversity-and-equality/diversity-and-equality-policy/)



the ongoing review of EIAs, the two-stage process for conducting EIAs, and opportunities for going beyond equal treatment to include the consideration of lawful measures to further equality outcomes (EHRC, 2009).

In response to the EHRC's recommendations, the DWP wrote an Improvement Plan. This set out the steps Jobcentre Plus and wider DWP as an organisation intended to take to improve Jobcentre Plus' equality policies, systems and procedures (DWP, 2009). These included: a review of how the message about treating people differently is delivered; looking for ways in which how to promote equality of outcomes might be communicated to staff; reviewing the equality evidence base; and developing and integrating Jobcentre Plus and wider DWP EIA processes.

Becoming more responsive to Jobcentre Plus' diverse customer and staff populations will help Jobcentre Plus to meet its internal 2009-2010 business targets, including its Job Outcome Target (Jobcentre Plus, 2009). This headline performance measure includes an explicit weighting which is intended to prioritise service delivery for specific 'priority' customer groups, such as people with health problems and disabilities, younger people, older people and various other groups who are generally thought to be disadvantaged or at risk of disadvantage in the labour market (Nunn *et al.*, 2009).

Jobcentre Plus has several ways in which the organisation raises awareness of, and promotes understanding about, equality and diversity legislation and provides support to staff. These include Staff Diversity Network Groups and Diversity Champions.

Jobcentre Plus Staff Diversity Network Groups (SDNGs) are a source of support and information on equality and diversity issues. These groups work to further the diversity and equality agenda within Jobcentre Plus and embed the principles of diversity and equality into all aspects of the business.

The purpose of SDNGs is to:

- deliver outcomes that contribute to Jobcentre Plus' goals for customers and staff;
- offer support, advice and guidance by, for example, acting as a consultative forum;
- actively seek views on diversity issues from staff;
- communicate key messages from SDNG meetings back through the business;
- promote and share best practice;
- be an ambassador for diversity and equality;
- provide a forum for staff to share ideas, information and learning.

There are local, regional and national SDNGs. The regional and national groups reflect six diversity strands (Race, Religion and Belief, Disability, Gender, Age, Sexual Orientation, and Work Life Balance).

Local groups identify issues and escalate them up to the regional group, and act on issues delegated to them by the national and regional groups. The local groups also feed representatives to the regional group. The regional group acts as a conduit between the local and national groups and provides direction to local groups or escalates issues to the national group.

Each national group comprises members from local groups, links with the other groups and provides direction and resolves issues from the other groups. The regional and national groups agree a work programme with their champion from the senior management team. The champion provides support to their SDNG and focuses on Jobcentre Plus' strategy and direction.

Diversity Champions cover both directorate and operational staff and are members of staff who have taken on an additional aspect to their role relating to the promotion of awareness and understanding about equality and diversity amongst other Jobcentre Plus colleagues. They may also be part of an SDNG.

## 1.2 Research aims and objectives

Jobcentre Plus commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies to undertake research to identify diversity and equality issues within key job roles. The research aimed to establish whether staff understood and were adequately supported in meeting equality legislative requirements. More specifically, the objectives of this research were to:

- understand staff levels of awareness of the legislation and their collective and individual responsibilities in implementing it;
- understand staff views on the levels and content of support (from line management and other colleagues) and resources, including training, provided to help them carry out their responsibilities;
- understand staff views on diversity monitoring and their willingness to participate in it and encourage others (and particularly customers) to do so;
- identify any gaps in provision and support and recommend how these could be improved and overcome.

## 1.3 Methodology

A qualitative methodology was chosen to enable an in-depth exploration of staff understanding of equality and diversity legislation, of the support they had received to help them to implement their duties, and to capture their individual experiences of working with customers, employers, other partners and Jobcentre Plus staff in upholding the legislation. Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility for the respondents to discuss their understanding of the duties, how it related to them and their role, and for them to relate freely their experiences.

The qualitative results presented in this study are illustrative of the understanding and views of the staff interviewed for this research. As a qualitative study it is not statistically representative of the views of all staff in Jobcentre Plus and the findings should not be read as such. While a diverse range of staff, with a variety of views and experiences, have been interviewed for this research, qualitative research can only highlight some of the views held, and explore reasons why that might be the case. It is not able to quantify and make generalisations about the extent to which these levels of awareness or understanding are held by staff across Jobcentre Plus.

The research set out to interview between 85 and 95 staff and to include staff working in customer-facing operational roles, as well as directorate staff working in non-customer facing positions. Seven operational sites were selected at which to conduct interviews. These included one benefit delivery centre, one contact centre, and five Jobcentre Plus offices. These covered England, Scotland and Wales, and both rural and urban locations. This was with the intention of covering locations that would have differing degrees of ethnic diversity, both within their staff and customers.

The number of staff we sought to interview from the operational side of Jobcentre Plus was roughly the same as the number from the directorate side. Directorate staff have quite different roles and responsibility for developing and using many of the policies, systems and procedures for meeting the duties, including carrying out EIAs. It is for these reasons that they were over-sampled in this research relative to the proportion in the Jobcentre Plus workforce overall.

## 8 Introduction and background

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Staff were sent an information sheet detailing the purpose of the research and the anticipated time commitment. They were then asked to opt-in to take part, should they wish. Staff with any level of understanding or awareness of equality and diversity were encouraged to opt in to participate in the research. Interviewees were not experts in equality and diversity. Following this process, a random selection of these staff was approached to take part in a confidential interview. While the opt-in nature of this research obviously has limitations, the interviewees displayed a wide range of understandings, views and experiences.

Due to operational constraints the interviews were undertaken using a mixed method approach. Operational staff (other than those in the Fraud Investigation Service), were interviewed at their offices, face-to-face. Directorate staff were interviewed over the telephone, although they were offered a face-to-face appointment should this better meet their requirements. One interview with a member of directorate staff was conducted face-to-face.

In total 97 interviews were completed between April and June 2010. This included 50 with operational staff from: Customer Contact Centres; Benefit Delivery Centres; the Fraud Investigation Service; and Jobcentre Plus offices. There were 47 interviews completed with directorate staff. This included Directorate staff from: Business Strategy and Planning; Human Resources; Chief Operating Office; Employer and Stakeholder Directorate (including members of the Equality and Diversity team); Finance; and Transformation and Product Management. Table 1.1 details the breakdown of interviews by directorate and operations.

**Table 1.1 Interviews by directorate and operations**

Type of staff	Interviews completed
<b>Directorate staff</b>	<b>47</b>
Business Strategy and Planning	5
Chief Operating Officer	5
Employer and Stakeholder Directorate	10
Finance	9
Human Resources	6
Transformation and Product Management	10
<b>Executive staff</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Operational staff</b>	<b>50</b>
Jobcentre staff	25
Benefit Delivery Centre staff	5
Contact Centre staff	5
Fraud Investigation Service	5
Operational Senior Managers	10
<b>Total interviews</b>	<b>97</b>

Source: Institute for Employment Studies, 2010.

The staff interviewed undertook a range of roles. Some were internally focused dealing with finance or providing administrative support for example, other interviewees worked with and supported customers directly, some interviewees worked with employers, and others worked with other government departments and agencies, and other stakeholders such as voluntary and community sector organisations or providers. Some respondents did not manage any staff, whereas others had quite significant line and/or team management responsibilities. Between them the interviewees had a range of targets and responsibilities covering the whole variety of Jobcentre Plus' operations and processes.

Comparing the profile of the interviewees for this research with data about the make up of all Jobcentre Plus staff, our research included: a similar profile of staff in terms of their lengths of service; a greater proportion of directorate staff (due to the sampling strategy); fewer lower grade staff and proportionately more higher grade staff. This is likely to be as a result of the proportion of directorate staff we sought to interview, whose positions tended to be higher grade positions.

We also asked interviewees to share their own diversity characteristics for the purpose of the research so we could explore any differences in responses by characteristic and see how the people we interviewed compared to the profile of Jobcentre Plus staff overall. These are summarised in Tables A.1-A.5 (see Appendix A). Looking at how these compare to the diversity characteristics of Jobcentre Plus staff as a whole, the gender profile of our interviewees is roughly comparable. The age profile of our interviewees roughly matches that of Jobcentre Plus staff overall, but fewer younger staff took part in the interviews (again this could possibly be a reflection of over sampling Directorate staff who tend to hold more senior positions and require significant levels of experience). Data on sexuality was not available from the Jobcentre Plus staff database, and there was a significant amount of unknown responses to ethnicity and disability, suggesting that staff had not completed these fields of the resource management database. Therefore, it was not possible to make meaningful comparisons to the Jobcentre Plus workforce overall on these measures. This issue and how it relates to implementing equality and diversity is discussed in Section 4.9.

The diversity characteristics of interviewees have been used, where possible, to explore any differences in responses by these categories. The data on age has been used, for example, to try to better understand staff training preferences and specifically the use of e-learning (see Section 3.2.4).

Where interviewee permission was given, the interviews were recorded and the recordings transcribed. An example discussion guide used for this research can be found in Appendix B. Following completion of the interviews the researchers had a fieldwork debrief to discuss the main issues and themes arising from the data and to support the development of a coding framework to be used in Atlas.ti (a qualitative data software analysis package).

Whether or not staff had undertaken any recent equality and diversity training was felt to be important to their subsequent responses. This required definitions to enable this to be explored further in the analysis. In order to capture recent training we noted that an interviewee had received equality and diversity training if they had attended a seminar or workshop about equality and diversity in the last two years, or if they had undertaken some e-learning relating to equality and diversity. Other aspects of development, such as reading of guidance or attendance at diversity events were not included here as training, as the content was likely to be less focused and specific.

Following discussions among the researchers it was also felt to be useful to be able to analyse the data by whether or not interviewees themselves had declared their diversity information and recorded it on the Resource Management system. The intention was then to relate this to staff understanding of why these data were collected to see if understanding of the purpose influenced data recording.

The analysis process also took account of whether the operational offices were in rural or urban areas. In many cases the staff in these offices themselves discussed the greater or lesser ethnic diversity of the local area and the customers that they worked with. We wanted to be able to see whether the perceived ethnic diversity of their customer base related to their access to equality and diversity training opportunities, and their understanding and experience of equality and diversity in practice.

The coding frame used in Atlas.ti and the analysis plan is included in Appendix C.

### 1.4 Report structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 presents the findings about staff awareness and understanding of the equality duties that cover Jobcentre Plus and of equality and diversity more broadly.
- Chapter 3 looks at the equality and diversity training and support that staff had received over the previous two years and their views on its usefulness and impact.
- Chapter 4 examines the experiences of staff in implementing equality and diversity in practice, including working with colleagues, and working with customers and employers.
- Chapter 5 presents the findings about the recording and monitoring of staff and customer diversity data.
- Chapter 6 draws out the conclusions and presents recommendations for ways in which to enhance staff understanding and awareness of equality and diversity.

## 2 Staff awareness and understanding of equality and diversity

### Summary

- There was a consensus among interviewees that Jobcentre Plus takes seriously its duties to equality and diversity as an employer and provider of services.
- There was some confusion about which aspects of equality and diversity are covered by the equality duties, such as race, and other aspects of equality and diversity that staff would consider in undertaking their roles to ensure they uphold Jobcentre Plus values and meet other legislation.
- Interviewees generally understood Jobcentre Plus' public sector equality duties to be about respect and consideration for people's unique attributes as individuals. The role of the equality and diversity legislation was perceived to be one of promoting and of safeguarding the individuality of everybody. Offering everyone the same opportunities was therefore considered as promoting equality for all.
- On one hand many interviewees argued that Jobcentre Plus should treat everyone the same and offer the same opportunities, but on the other hand they also discussed that the workforce should reflect the wider population and that services should be adjusted to the needs of customers. This highlighted a gap in understanding that it is possible to treat people differently and that this can be fair.
- There is a reliance on guidance and other resources. By following guidance, staff generally believed that the legal requirements would be met. This was evident in comments about 'making sure' and 'ensuring' that Jobcentre Plus would fulfil their legislative duties and reflects a slight distancing from individual responsibility to meet the requirements in some of the language used by interviewees to describe their responsibilities.

This chapter presents the findings about staff awareness and understanding of equality and diversity legislation and particularly their understanding of their collective and individual responsibilities. How staff see the equality and diversity legalisation links to their role is detailed in Section 4.1.

### 2.1 'It should be in everything that we do': A commitment to equality and diversity

All interviewees were asked to explain, in broad terms, what they understood to be Jobcentre Plus' legal responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity. Most interviewees viewed equality and diversity as important and something that they perceived Jobcentre Plus was committed to. This echoes the findings of a 2009 study, where Jobcentre Plus staff that were interviewed also said that they were highly committed to the equalities agenda (Nunn *et al.*, 2009).

## 12 Staff awareness and understanding of equality and diversity

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The organisational commitment to equality and diversity was widely recognised and some interviewees noted that Jobcentre Plus had a culture of equality and fairness.

*'I think it is to do with ensuring that we have fairness in all our processes and procedures and that there is equal opportunities for all. I am not so sure about the legislation side of things but everything that we do within Jobcentre Plus is geared to equality and fairness.'*

(Directorate staff, Band F<sup>2</sup>)

*'I think it's pretty obvious that we're equal, we're fair, we're impartial regardless of people's backgrounds, where they come from, their religion, their beliefs, everybody's equal, everybody's fair and everybody is entitled to our advice and services that we provide.'*

(Operational staff, Band D)

As examples of the extent to which equality and diversity resonated in every part of the business, some managerial staff discussed the extensive support and advice available to staff to support them in their daily job roles. Some directorate staff also referred to staff surveys, risk assessments, regional diversity groups and diversity events. Other staff, particularly operational staff, pointed to the range of services in place to meet the diverse needs of customers, such as posters and leaflets in various languages and in Braille, information disseminated in various formats and extra services for some customers.

The widespread belief that Jobcentre Plus valued diversity and that it was also taken into consideration in all aspects of the business, is further illustrated by the two examples below:

*'There is always that kind of understated, kind of implicit, statement of the department's position in terms of equality and diversity so I think that comes across quite well.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

*'Everything they seem to touch is done with relation to, and consideration of, diversity.'*

(Directorate staff, Band C)

Staff with an equality and diversity component to their role argued for the continued integration of the legal duties within organisational culture. For example, as one member of Directorate staff with a specific equality and diversity component to their role explained:

*'It's [equality and diversity] an ethos isn't it, it's a culture, it's not just, the duties are there to make sure that we do do stuff, but it should be in everything that we do.'*

(Directorate staff, Band G or above)

Generally, interviewees understood the equality and diversity responsibilities in relation to services to customers and workforce issues such as recruitment, promotion and management of staff. There was less discussion of how the equality and diversity responsibilities affect services to employers and relationships with providers. This could reflect the composition of the interviews and the fact that relatively few interviewees had an employer-facing role or worked with providers and partner organisations.

More often than not, people would be able to name some of the elements of equality and diversity legislation. Those most recalled by interviewees were disability, race, gender, promoting equality

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<sup>2</sup> Band A is the most junior grade and Band G or above are the most senior grades.

of opportunities, and eliminating discrimination. Other aspects of diversity not currently covered by the public sector duties were also mentioned by staff, such as sexual orientation. Age, religion and transgender were also mentioned, but not as frequently as other strands. Some interviewees also talked more widely about promoting equal opportunities for part-time workers, employees with flexible working patterns and those with caring responsibilities. Interviewees were not typically able to make a distinction between those aspects of diversity covered by the equality duties and other aspects of diversity, covered for example, by the DWP diversity and equality policy statement.

The sections that follow explore further what staff understood as the organisation's responsibilities.

## 2.2 'We have a responsibility not to discriminate': Understandings of eliminating discrimination

The disability, race and gender equality duties set out that public bodies must have due regard for the need to eliminate discrimination. It was mainly operational staff who understood this aspect of the equality and diversity duties: to create an environment free from discrimination. This was mainly because, as several interviewees pointed out, they work with a variety of customers on a daily basis. These customers could belong to groups that were seen as potential subjects of unfair discriminatory behaviour. As this operational manager discusses:

*'For me it's making sure that we deliver against the legislation and we don't discriminate, you know, on the basis of age, gender, sexual orientation and the whole range that we have and that has got to be in terms of any policy change, or a structural change, or service change that we do in relation to customers, or that we make in relation to internal people who work for us. So we've got a duty of responsibility to make sure that we're not discriminating, we've got a duty of responsibility to make sure we get rid of any harassment and again all of these apply across customers and our people.'*

(Operational staff, Band G or above)

For other interviewees, eliminating discrimination was understood in the context of treating others in an impartial and unbiased way. Some operational staff described how, in line with Jobcentre Plus' responsibilities, they should not judge customers on the basis of their race, age, gender, religion or sexual orientation. Advisers needed to put aside their personal views and any potential prejudice in order to deliver their services in an impartial way. A few interviewees said they would treat everyone as they would like to be treated themselves, suggesting that discrimination could be tackled by using good manners and building on good interpersonal relationships.

Respecting clients' identity as individuals was considered an appropriate anti-discriminatory practice. For example:

*'Make sure you treat everybody with respect, and equally and don't discriminate against people because of information you might have about them personally. Keep things confidential. Respect everybody's right to have an opinion and be an individual.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

Operational staff who understood race or disability to be sensitive topics that could be used to stigmatise some customers, said they tried to make customers feel comfortable by paying no attention to their race or offering services based on self-declarations of disability (or not). This is illustrated by the responses detailed overleaf:



*'Personally I don't look at person's race. I take into account any sensitivities they might have say with religion. Generally, I tend to treat people how I like to be treated. Courteous and understanding.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

*'If I'm introducing myself to a customer, I always say my name is (X) and my role is to help people who have a health condition, I don't like saying disability...I don't know, not from my point of view, but other people feel it as a bit of a stigma...customers can be offended by it, because they don't see themselves as having a disability, so I tend to sort of say health condition...it's down to the individual what they see they've got, that's how I see it, you know, an individual might have what I would class as a disability, or what somebody else would class as a disability and they think no I haven't.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

Many, mainly operational staff, also felt that treating others with fairness was to treat everyone the same without any discrimination. So many respondents considered that the duty of Jobcentre Plus to treat people fairly was to provide the same standards of service to all customers or the same opportunities for recruitment and promotion for all staff. For example:

*'Everyone is equal and allowed a fair chance through promotion and work. Every individual is treated the same. Nobody is treated different because of age, sex, religion.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

*'Jobcentre Plus has a responsibility to give equal treatment and fair access to all with no discrimination.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

Some interviewees talked about the duty to eliminate discrimination in the recruitment and promotion of staff. They understood that a discrimination-free working environment was one whereby everybody had the opportunity to be included and no one was singled out:

*'I suppose in simple terms ensuring that everybody has the opportunity to be included in everything I suppose and that people aren't singled out for whatever reason, whether that be grade, I don't know, and then more personal such as race, or experience, or something like that.'*

(Directorate staff, Band E)

### 2.3 'We have to be slightly more active than that...don't we?': Understandings of promoting equality of opportunity and treating people differently

Part of the equality and diversity duty Jobcentre Plus has is to promote equality of opportunity, both for their staff, and for customers.

Few interviewees understood that having policies in place to ensure that certain groups receive different treatment to address inequalities could also be fair. The example below illustrates how staff could question whether treating people differently was compatible with meeting equality and diversity legislative requirements and providing equal opportunities:

*'I know race and religion, I suppose there are certain things that we have tried to do, things to help, I suppose which in a way is not treating everybody the same....make adjustments, reasonable adjustments if necessary. Which is fair isn't it?'*

(Directorate staff, Band A/B)

Many interviewees talked about the requirement for Jobcentre Plus to treat everyone the same and to give everyone the same opportunities. These examples, the first of which reflects Jobcentre Plus staff, and the latter working with customers, are typical:

*'Within the department everyone should have the same opportunities to upgrade and promote themselves through the company.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

*'Everybody should be treated the same when they come in.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

Some interviewees challenged what they regarded to be the wrong understanding among some staff of equality as treating everyone the same. This highlights that some interviewees, in both operational and directorate roles, understood the concept of treating people differently that many were yet to fully grasp:

*'It's the old adage, you know, we treat everybody equally. But actually if you want to treat people equally you may need to treat people differently and I think a lot of people don't really understand that.'*

(Operational staff, Band F)

*'I think that in some respects the policies now are more about making sure everyone has an equal opportunity rather than equal treatment. So you wouldn't – whereas before you would, you know, you might say well everybody's got the same opportunity – now if somebody had a different need you would try and address that different need. So that they could take advantage of the opportunity.'*

(Directorate staff, Band E)

Many staff that took part in the research changed between two rather conflicting understandings of their equality and diversity responsibilities: to avoid treating people differently and yet to provide different services for those who needed it. Here is one example that highlights some of the confusion:

*'To be fair with different people. Not treat anyone differently. Provide different equipment for people who may need it.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

While there was some confusion about whether the legislation allowed people to be treated differently, it is evident from discussions about how staff implement equality and diversity that changes and amendments are frequently made to best meet customer needs. Respondents' understanding of being able to treat customers differently centred on access to services and delivery, rather than outcomes such as job entry.

In discussing whether and how they would treat people differently some staff discussed making adjustments. Such adjustments were often understood as exceptional actions in the context of treating everyone the same, as the quote below illustrates:

*'To treat everyone exactly the same. Although sometimes making additional allowances for disabilities and language difficulties.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

One interviewee, who managed several operational staff, discussed how the meaning of the term 'reasonable adjustments' could be confusing:

*'That sort of gets us into the realms of the dreaded reasonable adjustments conversation as well, you know, and that's the one that I think challenges a number of managers around what does that mean when I'm working with our people to understand what reasonable adjustments means if somebody is not able to do their job because of a certain disability.'*

(Operational staff, Band G or above)

A small number of directorate staff understood the duty to promote equality of opportunity as tailoring activities to support specific groups in the recruitment and selection process, such as through Reach. This is a voluntary scheme that provides groups under-represented at higher grades within Jobcentre Plus, such as ethnic minorities and disabled staff, with a structured programme designed to help them gain confidence and to develop the skills to more successfully apply for promotions within the organisation.

Further illustrating some of the perceived tensions in promoting equality of opportunity on one hand (seen generally by interviewees as treating everyone the same) and positive action on the other, in order to achieve equality of outcomes, some interviewees argued that recruitment and promotion should be based on individual merit alone, whilst other interviewees emphasised the duty to have transparent processes in place to ensure that personal circumstances did not impact on recruitment and promotion decisions. The weight given to ability rather than other characteristics is shown in the quote below:

*'Having a fair and open driven force to make sure that everyone, regardless of personal circumstances, origin, anyone should get a fair crack of the whip against the ability to do your job rather than any other factors.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

One interviewee tried to explain this tension as the difference between equality (treating people equally) and diversity (where you could treat people differently based on their diverse circumstances):

*'That we have to embed equality and diversity in every part of the business and that we treat everyone equal regardless of, now then, there's gender, disability, etc. etc. etc. and in terms of diversity you may have to treat people differently, but for the right reasons if you see what I mean.'*

(Operational staff, Band F)

Many staff appeared to make sense of diversity in the context of individuality. Promoting diversity was interpreted as respecting and embracing differences among all individuals. The role of the equality and diversity legislation was therefore perceived to be one of promoting and of safeguarding the individuality of everybody. Consider, for example, the language used in the quotes below and the emphasis on diversity as a concept that touches everybody:

*'Diversity means everybody is different and you have to have an appreciation of that. We come from different backgrounds and you have to treat them with respect.'*

(Directorate staff, Band C)

*'It is basically about equal opportunities for everybody. In terms of treating everybody equally whether taking into account the whole range, embracing the diversity of people actually...it is about making sure that everybody has the same opportunities, that there is no discrimination.'*

(Directorate staff, Band E)

*'About 18 months ago I went on a diversity course just to reaffirm your understanding of what that meant and so when you're approaching anybody or within your day to day work, that you consider everybody as a person really.'*

(Directorate staff, Band C)

Many interviewees, particularly operational staff, understood that in the context of promoting diversity, Jobcentre Plus' responsibilities were to accommodate individuals' attitudes, skills and competencies. The focus was on individuals and tailoring services: whether for staff or customers. On the other hand, for a small number of directorate staff, the focusing on certain groups did not fit in very well with providing the same standard of service to everyone. This example shows the fine balance staff are trying to strike in implementing the equality and diversity legislation:

*'Having a sort of equal approach to the way that we offer a, sort of, standard quality of service to them etc. I think the issues are it becomes quite a sort of murky; it's a minefield isn't it really in terms of, sort of, what we actually mean by that...I think it is just about the way that we treat our customers with respect, dignity, we treat them equally, we offer the same quality and standard of service to them, which often actually probably doesn't fit too well with the fact that we do focus in on particular client groups, in certain times with certain initiatives for certain groups. It's quite a hard balancing act to, sort of, manage for our customers.'*

(Directorate staff, Band E)

In trying to navigate their way through these perceived complexities staff frequently relied on policies and processes, which is discussed further now.

## 2.4 'We've got a set of rules, we've got policies and we've got procedures, and we should follow them': Understandings of compliance with legislative duties

As discussed previously, interviewees regarded Jobcentre Plus as an organisation that had policies in place and a culture geared to equality and diversity. Interviewees tended to place a significant amount of confidence in these processes and policies and believed that by following those they would be able to meet their collective equality and diversity legislative duties.

Some interviewees emphasised they should adhere to equality and diversity legislation, to make sure that all their activities are performed in line with their legislative duties, and that staff are aware, understand and implement the legislation. For example:

*'Making sure that anything that we offer out to people is done within the confines of any legalities.'*

(Directorate staff, Band F)

Of those interviewees who talked about the need to comply with legislation, many admitted knowing some elements of the legislation, but not others, or said they lacked knowledge on what specific content is covered as discussed earlier in understanding of the groups covered by the legislation (see Section 2.1). When asked to talk about Jobcentre Plus' equality and diversity responsibilities, some interviewees said they did not know about it, but if needed they would refer to relevant guidance. They considered that they could comply with the legislation by following guidance rather than having an awareness of the legislation itself:

*'I'm not familiar with the legislation, because what I do is follow if I need to dip into it and when I need to dip into it, I follow the guidance that's available to us and I'm assuming that the Department/Jobcentre Plus is compliant with the guidance.'*

(Operational staff, Band E)

*'I don't know much about the legislation, I know the legislation is there and I know where to find the legislation but I do try and adhere to the rules as best I can.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

As a result of their confidence in their employer to provide support and guidance and to take account of equality and diversity, interviewees would often talk about their individual role in meeting the duties using language such as 'ensuring' and 'making sure'. As the example below demonstrates:

*'For me it's making sure that we deliver against the legislation and we don't discriminate... we've got a duty of responsibility to make sure that we're not discriminating, we've got a duty of responsibility to make sure we get rid of any harassment and again all of these apply across customers and our people and that we've got the opportunity for people to take advantage of our services if they're customers on a balanced approach, in the same way that we have that responsibility for our people in terms of opportunity.'*

(Operational staff, Band G or above)

This illustrates a certain reliance on the processes and procedures, and these being sufficient, to meet the legislative requirements. It raises a question about the extent to which following the guidance leads to outcomes that meet the legislation in practice, or whether staff need an understanding of the principles of the legislation in order to accurately interpret and implement guidance. Discrimination, equality, and diversity are complex issues so reliance on guidance, without proper understanding, particularly of those areas covered by law, may not be sufficient. There is a risk that some staff may disregard the complexity of these issues because they have pre-existing views on how to treat others and believe that they promote equality. The example below illustrates the relatively common view among respondents that respecting diversity and upholding equality is something that is in people's nature:

*'I mean you treat everybody with respect and I would expect to be treated the same as I treat them and that is what I try and fetch into this job as well but that's the way I have been brought up. I think the Jobcentre Plus obviously have the same thing to treat their employees and customers with the same, giving them the same opportunities.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

Further, the ‘standard operating model’ may limit the extent to which staff make adaptations to the way they operate for fear of going outside the standard model, as one interviewee discussed:

*‘Because it’s exactly what we were talking about, that you can only do a reasonable adjustment if we know about it. Line managers sometimes feel that Jobcentre Plus is a culture which does things by standard operating models. It will do it the way it’s told to do it. And sometimes line managers feel well that means I don’t have to do something. Whereas what we’re trying to say is actually your responsibilities don’t change, you will always have those responsibilities!’*

(Directorate staff, Band E)

The apparent reliance on the guidance, the levels of awareness of the specifics in the legislation itself, and the tendency for interviewees to report that they were checking or making sure the legislation was adhered to by implementing the guidance, suggests low levels of recognition of individual responsibility. While collectively Jobcentre Plus may be seen by its staff as taking into account the equality and diversity duties, what the legislation means for individual members of staff, and therefore their own individual responsibilities was less clearly articulated (see Section 4.1 for further discussion).

## 2.5 Chapter summary

Jobcentre Plus was seen as an organisation with a strong ethos of equality and diversity. Some interviewees had a broader understanding of the diversity strands than those aspects covered by the duties.

Pointing to the variety of out-of-work customers with complex needs they supported, many operational staff understood the duty to eliminate discrimination as avoiding making biased judgements and treating all of their customers with respect. They thought that discrimination can be tackled using good manners, building on good interpersonal relationships and offering the same treatment so that customers do not feel stigmatised.

Promoting equality of opportunity was generally seen as providing the same opportunities for all. Few interviewees fully understood that equality could be promoted by treating people differently and undertaking positive action. It was common for interviewees to change between two different understandings of equality and diversity responsibilities: avoiding treating people differently and yet providing different services for some to meet their needs.

Promoting equality of opportunity in the recruitment and promotion of staff, for some interviewees, meant a fair and open practice of assessing people on their individual merit. Few interviewees were aware of policies that aimed to reduce inequalities in recruitment and promotion of staff.

Interviewees tended to rely on the guidance to adhere to duties. Few were fully aware of all aspects of the legislation and many considered themselves able to tackle discrimination and promote equality and diversity by using commonsense and natural skills of building good relations with customers and colleagues.

# 3 Training and support for handling equality and diversity

## Summary

- Workshops, seminars and tutor-led training can have a powerful impact on staff because of the passion conveyed in face-to-face settings and because they are interactive.
- Accessing written information about equality and diversity on the intranet can be time-consuming. Interviewees appreciated that the guidance is accessible whenever they need it, although they may need support from colleagues to interpret it. Diversity champions in particular are a significant source of information for staff working with them, and such champions could be more widely available.
- Many interviewees do not like e-learning because it is not interactive and they felt that this reduced its effectiveness. Conversely, others could see the benefits, providing there is time to complete it and support alongside it. There were also concerns that the complexity of implementing equality and diversity did not lend itself to e-learning.
- Involvement in Staff Diversity Network Groups (SDNGs) increases with grade. Outputs from the groups can be useful but were not cascaded widely. There was very little awareness of the SDNGs and even less of the Diversity Challenge and Equality Schemes. The awareness of these was limited to those who have had direct involvement.
- Some staff were keen to develop their expertise and be involved in the area of equality and diversity, and for example, volunteer to participate in SDNGs, whereas others did not recognise they had gaps in their understanding. Staff who wanted to increase their understanding of equality and diversity issues tended to already be more aware of the legislation than those who did not show a similar interest.

This chapter presents the findings about staff use and awareness of equality and diversity training and support.

## 3.1 Designing and delivering equality and diversity training

A small number of interviewees from directorates had been involved in designing and delivering equality and diversity training and they relayed their experiences of doing so. Some also had a quality assurance role during training development; systematically checking course materials and providing training teams with examples and case studies. Some other interviewees had been involved in running the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) training and there were some union members who were involved in designing training for their members, covering equality and diversity issues.

The central equality and diversity team provides support and advice to members of staff in contact centres about taking employer vacancies. They can provide case studies to give real-life examples of adverts that are inappropriate or do not comply with equality and diversity legislation. This was seen

by contact centre and other staff as an effective method for supporting people and those who take employer vacancies are confident and seem effective at doing so (see Section 4.3.1).

Another form of support provided by the equality and diversity team are email query services. One email service covers queries from Jobcentre Plus staff about making reasonable adjustments for customers, and the other is for wider Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as an organisation for queries about staff and reasonable adjustments.

The equality and diversity team have developed other tools to help raise awareness and share information with staff. They are developing a calendar of events for the intranet that links to significant dates throughout the year, such as Louis Braille's birth or significant breakthroughs in gay rights. The calendar will also be interspersed with useful equality and diversity tips.

A large amount of information is currently intranet or paper-based such as Plus magazine. It is recognised that not all staff have equal opportunity to access the intranet because of their job type. Staff working in contact centres and in customer facing roles tend to get less time to read information on the intranet (see also Section 3.2.2).

In response to this the recent DWP national diversity event aimed to allow maximum participation from staff but limit time out of the workplace. Rather than having a physical event that people would have to travel to, the delivery of information was through video-conferencing and computer streaming. The messages relayed in the video streaming were about challenging stereotypes, positive action and reasonable adjustments; trying to get across the message that in order to give people to same opportunities they may be treated differently. In all, 1,600 staff took part in the event and for those who were not able to see the broadcast on the day DWP are considering making available on the intranet portions of the broadcast as a resource for staff to be used at a time that best suits operational pressures.

In one region, an operational manager gave another example of a video that had been produced to show staff dealing with everyday conversations that demonstrate improper behaviour. The DVD was shown at communications meetings followed by discussions and was felt to have been well-received:

*'It had a big powerful impact. Because what it was saying was, it wasn't just the sort of extreme examples of inappropriate behaviour, it was the sort of conversation you could imagine taking place but which shouldn't take place. We thought it worked very well; it was quite powerful.'*

(Operational staff, Band G or above)

The opportunity for discussion with colleagues as part of training sessions was found to be of central importance to staff (see Section 3.2.2) so videos and DVDs may be an effective way of structuring and stimulating discussions.

### 3.2 The training and support used by staff

This section looks at the learning and development activities related to equality and diversity that interviewees had taken part in or used in the last two years. These questions were asked of all staff, but not all staff had undertaken all or indeed any of these activities. Many of the interviewees spoke in general terms about learning and development activities which can be applied to thinking about equality and diversity training and support, such as views about how they like to learn.



### 3.2.1 Workshops and seminars

Staff were asked whether they had attended any workshops or seminars relating to equality and diversity in the last two years (either in the workplace or away from the workplace). Some differences were observed between operational staff and directorate staff.

A number of operational staff had attended workshops or courses, for example focusing on EIAs, or mental health awareness. Managers tended to report finding equality and diversity awareness sessions informative and particularly valued the opportunity to discuss issues and to reflect with colleagues. For example:

*'It was useful, because you got to talk to the other line managers there as well, because I've not got any particular experience on my team of any of that type. It was interesting to hear how the line managers dealt with it and just to confirm whether they were doing it right or wrong. It was quite interesting actually.'*

(Operational staff, Band D)

Some operational staff had recently attended external events, and particularly staff from senior grades (Band F and above). Some staff in customer-facing roles, typically those on lower grades (Bands A to C), commented that they found it difficult to find the time to attend external courses, as one customer-facing member of staff explained:

*'I wanted to, but I couldn't block my diary out. There was a course and I'm hoping it comes up again... they had spare places and it was offered to me, but I had a diary full, I couldn't go.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

Only one member of operational staff mentioned gaining an equality and diversity qualification through their learning and development activities, this was a National College of Further Education Level 3 qualification in Managing Diversity.

Several operational staff who were interviewed were union members and so had taken part in additional union learning and development activities that are not open to non-union members; seminars on gender, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender and issues affecting them in the workplace. Again, it was felt to be positive to share experiences and the opportunity to discuss issues with colleagues away from the workplace. For example:

*'It means that you can meet a network of people on neutral territory and it's more conducive to opening up and to share experiences where you don't feel you're in the workplace and people are looking at you and you're going to get questioned on what you're asking and things like that, it's a neutral territory so it's better.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

In contrast to operational staff, interviewees from the directorates gave more examples of workshops and training courses with an equality and diversity element that they had attended in the last two years. There were commonalities, with interviewees attending EIA workshops and mental health awareness training, but also sessions on new legislation, workshops looking at equality and diversity plans and seminars on policy making. As with operational staff there were a few who had attended external workshops, some with other government departments such as the Inland Revenue and the National Health Service in order to share experiences and best practice.

Other workshops that some interviewees had attended were part of the Reach programme. These are for staff that want help with development and gaining competencies necessary for promotion. The workshops used action learning sets; using the ideas of colleagues to help staff to work out

ways to address problems. This programme was well-received by most, although one person who was already working at a relatively senior level did not feel that it was sufficiently stretching.

Customer-facing staff receive a certain amount of training before they have customer contact and there are some elements of compulsory training, such as the adviser routeway. Contact centre staff are trained to use a standardised script with all customers in order to treat everybody equally. Those who had been on these types of training said they had been given some training on treating people differently to enable access to services, such as providing interpreters, but the message about being able to treat people differently in order to provide equal opportunities was not explicitly drawn out.

*‘Certainly equality and diversity, I think it was certainly a regular theme which runs through most presentations, most courses. I am going to a workshop for advisers and I have no doubt that diversity and equality will be brought up because it is something that you have to be kind of close to and make sure it doesn’t impinge on prejudices and impinge on what you do.’*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

There was some inconsistency in the amount of training courses and workshops that staff had attended, but this did not seem related to interviewee’s length of service with Jobcentre Plus. Some interviewees have done lots of training, whereas others have not had training recently, as these two comments illustrate:

*‘I’ve gone on different types of equality and diversity training programmes as they’ve changed and evolved over the years.’*

(Directorate staff, Band D)

*‘It’s because I have been a manager for quite a long time. I mean I did these courses years ago. I don’t feel as if I need to go back to having an introduction on the principles of Equality and Diversity.’*

(Operational staff, Band G or above)

Directorate staff attended workshops and seminars that were job-role related and these were often about strategy and policy. Workshops for operations staff are also often linked directly to a job role, such as the adviser routeway training, Contact Centre training or the equality and diversity team advising on job vacancies. This type of directly relevant training was very useful and can have an impact on how people carry out their job role.

Where the training or workshop was not directly related to the individuals’ job role it was seen as being less relevant because it was less able to change the way an individual does their job. However, it could serve as a reminder of the issues. For example:

*‘It just reminds you though, you know, you should be adhering to the values.’*

(Operational staff, Band D)

Tutor-led training and workshops were felt to work well if they promoted discussion and enabled staff to share good practice with members of staff from other offices. Mixing with colleagues that they would not otherwise do was seen to be a significant benefit of this type of learning as these responses illustrate:

*‘I think by meeting those different people and listening to different people from different backgrounds and their experiences does really help you understand a lot of things.’*

(Operational staff, Band D)

*'There was a certain amount of input but an awful lot of self-awareness generated by it and I don't think you can generate that kind of self-awareness and self-challenge or challenge within the group from sitting at a computer screen and reading something. You need to be bouncing ideas off people. You need to have your prejudices and stereotypes drawn out, to be challenged. And I don't think sitting in front of a computer screen that could possibly happen.'*

(Operational staff, Band E)

Personal stories told face-to-face were felt to be engaging because of the passion of those speaking. Workshops and seminars also offer a chance to ask questions to clarify ideas. This was also seen as an important aspect of these events for staff. These quotes illustrate the impact that face-to-face training can have:

*'If you've got someone there you listen and more often than not because it's a person's story, you get quite drawn into it and I think that way you get to see the best of, and that could work quite well for diversity I think...someone telling their story really would drive it home.'*

(Directorate staff, Band D)

*'It suits my learning style better plus if there's anything you don't understand you've got somebody there who can explain it to you, rather than either missing the point and thinking that you understand it, or not knowing where to go to clarify.'*

(Directorate staff, Band D)

### 3.2.2 Written materials and discussion with colleagues

Interviewees were asked if they had accessed written materials such as leaflets, online resources and guidance or other web-based materials to help them carry out their equality and diversity responsibilities in the last two years. They were also asked if they had had any discussion about equality and diversity legislation and practice with colleagues, team members or line managers.

For all staff the most common way of keeping up to date with equality and diversity information was the intranet homepage from which they could follow links to things of interest. This opens automatically when computers are started so most staff then have a chance to read it. Interviewees reported that when information is sent out via email, people either do not get a chance to read it, or just skim the information.

Many interviewees across all grades talked of the difficulty of finding time to access written materials about equality and diversity. For example, in Contact Centres interviewees reported that they do not have much time in the working day away from calls to access the internet or intranet.

Nevertheless, one of the strengths of having written material accessible on the intranet is that they are readily available when staff do have the time, the inclination or need. However, it was noted that looking up information online relies on staff making an effort to find information and in practice, interviewees said they spend a short amount of time looking at these pages. Some staff highlighted that it is easy to forget to look up guidance updates, and people often need prompting, which is a weakness of this type of information.

*'When we go into the system in the mornings, we have a home page come up and there's often lots of information on there and then you just click and get further information. So time obviously some days is better defined than others to read things. But where possible I try and keep abreast as much as I can.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

*'On an average day if I were on telephony I would get maybe a few minutes in the morning and a couple of minutes before I log off at night because you come in, you're on the 'phones, it's bang, bang, bang all day then that's it, you come off the 'phones you go home.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

Junior operational staff we interviewed tended to be in busy customer-facing roles. They said working in a target driven environment added pressure and made it difficult to find time to undertake learning and development activities. Finding time for training could also be an issue for part-time staff as these quotes illustrate:

*'Very rarely because I am only part-time and I am not here very much. I tend to work through my lunch and say once a month I will go on and have a quick read of things but that's it.'*

(Directorate staff, Band D)

*'The difficult part is getting the time to do that. Because in all honesty I spent time on that which I can't get value for on my daily figures and I have to evaluate how many interviews I've done in a day and what I have gained from them. The extra time you spend on something like that, you don't get the credit for.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

Some advisers spoke of their responsibility to keep up to date and be aware of equality and diversity legislation for their customers; this seemed more prevalent for some roles like Disability Employment Advisers than others.

*'I could just ignore it all and say "it's nothing to do with me", but if I didn't know a bit about it all, then I wouldn't be doing my job.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

Across all grades, interviewees who use the intranet to access written materials, like it. However, some had difficulties finding the information they wanted and found that this could lead to extra time being spent trying to access the relevant materials.

*'I quite like the intranet it gives you quite a bit of detail. Sometimes it can be a bit difficult to find. You never know what heading it should come under. Once you find it, it's usually quite good information and that's what I would tend to use the intranet for.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

*'I think our intranet is very, very good and it does what it needs to do, sort of highlights the bit of information there and obviously, you know, you look at it and see important stuff that you think you'll need whether it's about age, legislation or diversity, whatever, you know, so I think it's a common part of our jobs now. I think, to actually keep updated with things that are happening, and from that viewpoint, I think it's good that that's there.'*

(Directorate staff, Band E)

While most equality and diversity information can be accessed via the intranet, some lower level operational staff felt restricted in their use of the Internet and felt they would have to be careful if they were using the internet to look up information. They felt they would have to ask beforehand, which then takes away privacy for people looking up potentially sensitive equality and diversity information. For example:

*‘Some people are twitching about going onto external websites. I know you can do it in your tea or your lunch breaks and that’s fine but you’d have to be very careful about it and let somebody know you were doing it.’*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

Staff would read what they thought was relevant to their job role especially if they were short of time; however, this could mean that staff are missing out on information because they do not think it is relevant to them. One member of operational staff in a rural office felt some types of diversity characteristics were more relevant to their location than others such as ethnicity:

*‘I suppose it depends on the area you’re covering, it’s more round the disabled side I’ve been looking at because the ethnicity, we don’t have so much of an issue [here].’*

(Operational staff, Band D)

As well as some interviewees choosing to look up information that is most relevant to job role or location, a few directorate and junior managerial staff had not looked up guidance because they feel they have had no need to. This could link to confidence in dealing with diversity issues which was generally high (see Section 4.2). One member of staff who demonstrated some understanding of diversity and equality, but not of the concept of treating people differently stated:

*‘I think I’ve got all the information I need in terms of treating everybody equally and fairly within the workplace and making sure as a person I’m compliant with the values and the department standards of behaviour, because they’re all linked and all that information is available to me and I don’t know that I need more information at this time, but who knows what could happen in the future if any policy or legislation changes.’*

(Operational staff, Band D)

Some managers gave examples of the sources of written materials that they use when someone asks them for help:

*‘You have got the equality and diversity website and you have got people like [provider of employment assistance programmes] who provide help and information for us, if staff have got particular problems they can be referred there. You can look at individual stress risk assessments for staff, you can look at changing job roles and from a staff point of view as long as you are flagging it up with your manager and you are raising the concerns there is a lot of help out there.’*

(Operational staff, Band C)

Managers also felt that it was important to keep abreast of guidance for their staff.

*‘I want to know that information and I want to look at that information, because I’ve got a diverse range of staff.’*

(Directorate staff, Band D)

*‘When you are a line manager of staff you need to check things out and make sure that your understanding is correct and check on policy and in other jobs that I have done I have had reason to look at the guidance to make decisions.’*

(Directorate staff, Band F)

It can be hard for some staff to make the step from reading and understanding the guidance to actually implementing it in real-life situations (see Section 4.1). This is where backing up written information with discussion can be invaluable. Having discussions with ‘experts’ like HR business partners or other senior managers could help to resolve queries and help interviewees to put the written information into practice:

*‘As it stands all of our guidance is good. I think helping people understand what it is and in what circumstances they need to use it instead of how they might use it is another matter.’*

(Operational staff, Band F)

Diversity and equality champions could be another significant source of information for staff of all grades as this member of staff illustrates:

*‘There’s a diversity website we visit very often to see what’s happening. We have an intralink site for that and a diversity lead downstairs. He emails regularly to check things on the website.’*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

Newsletters have also been produced by SDNGs. An example of one newsletter was given which contained interviews with staff highlighting how they overcame challenges. As with face-to-face workshops and presentations these are an opportunity for staff to find out about other peoples’ stories. Those interviewees that had used newsletters gave positive feedback about receiving information through written materials, for example:

*‘So things like that really get people’s attention because you know, they may know that individual or know of them but also they were very open and honest and quite gripping to read.’*

(Operational staff, Band E)

*‘I think there is a lot of very good communicating goes on in this field and I think the stuff that is produced both electronically and in printed form really does the job.’*

(Directorate staff, Band D)

A common way for communicating information to operations staff and having informal learning and development activities is through the regular communications meetings. These were seen by many interviewees to be a good way of reinforcing messages that had been delivered by other means such as classroom-learning, e-learning and messages on the intranet. However, in recent times many local offices have cut-back on these meetings due to increases in the volume of customers as a result of the recession.

Where team meetings were taking place discussions about equality and diversity were generally prompted by an incident and did not take place routinely. Advisers can also be part of case-conferencing where they can discuss with their peers how best to help customers and talk about equality and diversity issues.

Discussions with colleagues were seen as an important source of information often to interpret guidance and give the benefit of experience to others.

*‘I think it’s the best way to communicate, face-to-face and discuss situations. Obviously, research what’s available for the individuals and discuss with them and ascertain what their needs are, provide them with the information and make sure they’re happy in their work environment.’*

(Directorate staff, Band D)

*'We also have a good liaison with our HR district office as well if we ever have any issues then we can sort of pick up the phone and speak to them as well.'*

(Operational staff, Band D)

Discussions can also prompt people to investigate more and find out more information from other sources.

Some interviewees reported that they can feel 'swamped' with written information, especially emails. This highlights the need for a 'gatekeeper' of information, like the diversity champion, so that staff in specific job roles only receive the information that is relevant to them:

*'I think for it to take my attention, it is better if someone either points it out to me and says to go and look at it, or read this, or some kind of seminar or something because you are just swamped with information generally.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

*'He [the diversity champion] normally brings out this information or he sends it through the email or in the spotlight meeting. He does awareness as well so that's how we have it.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

Interviewees from senior grades also found colleagues who are diversity champions to be an important source of information.

*'It's very useful, certainly what's given at team meetings is useful; my colleague in equality and diversity will give a little update for 15/20 minutes to talk about the kind of things that have been raised at the moment and the kind of issues that maybe employees are talking about as well and it's good to get a feel for those issues and feel that you're keeping on top of them.'*

(Directorate staff, Band E)

*'One of my team is a member of the district diversity group and we have a regular agenda item every team meeting. She will have a diversity agenda item and she will choose something different each time to focus on.'*

(Operational staff, Band F)

It seems that not all interviewees had, or were aware of, diversity champions. Those staff that used them found diversity champions an effective source of information and advice.

### **3.2.3 Diversity events and awareness raising activities**

Interviewees were asked about participation in, or awareness of, diversity events or other awareness-raising activities that had taken place in the last two years.

Directorate staff had taken part in a number of different diversity events and awareness-raising activities, most of which were informal office-based activities. Numerous directorate and operational staff mentioned taking part in quizzes about diversity and equality, which could then develop discussions on the issues raised. These events were organised by a variety of staff, including those who were members of staff diversity network groups.

Many of the awareness raising activities focused on the food of other cultures, some staff wore the national dress of another country, or answered the telephone in different languages. However, these are often seen as a team-building events rather than effective ways to tackle equality and diversity issues and build awareness of legalisation. Consideration should be given to the learning opportunities involved and the targeting of the events. This is reflected in the experiences of this interviewee:

*'I think you have to be careful around sort of how you promote it, because what the team here nearly did was to miss the point I think, which is kind of dressing up as different people...it was like well hang on a minute, what's the reason behind that and there were a few of us who raised some objections to that...it's for to be above that basic level, it's got to engage people and cover that information and knowledge and discussion.'*

(Directorate staff, Band D)

As with other types of training and awareness raising activity, operational staff felt that they had less time than directorate staff to take part in these types of activities because of their customer-facing roles.

People involved with SDNGs were more likely to be involved with diversity events than those who were not in these networks. People who worked in offices with diversity champions or people in SDNGs were also more likely to have been part of diversity events than other members of staff. There was also a perception that more events happen in urban areas than rural areas. This perhaps reflects a tendency for these events to focus on ethnicity and race and not the full spectrum of diversity strands.

Building relationships within teams can be a good way to tackle diversity and equality issues. One urban office held activities that included reading poetry, for Black History Month, that some of the interviewees involved felt was powerful. The event helped staff learn about other cultures and each other, as they are an ethnically diverse team, as one participant described:

*'Yeah, it was very good. I learnt about different things...I think it is good when you have got different kinds of people in the same team and you learn from them and you learn about their culture. So that's a good thing and you start accepting people you know, you start accepting the way they live.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

Some interviewees felt that pigeon-holing could be an issue with themed diversity events. This was an issue for some interviewees who felt that the issues would not be seen as important at other times of the year. Other interviewees felt that it could alienate other groups who did not have dedicated weeks or events, and others felt that there was a danger that the issues could be seen as 'flavour of the month', as one manager discussed:

*'We do have sort of themed weeks, etc. whereas truth be told it probably should be a priority every day of the week and sometimes it maybe doesn't feel like that, maybe we do have flavours of the month where it becomes high profile, or some results come out from a survey that we're not doing so well at it so, therefore, the charge goes out to do better and then it falls back again for a little bit and takes a back seat and, you know, people probably tend to forget about that a little bit.'*

(Operational staff, Band E)



While diversity events were felt to be valuable by some interviewees to increase the profile of diversity, there has been a tendency for them to focus on visible aspects of diversity, particularly ethnicity. There was some concern that these events detracted from the message that equality and diversity should be in everything, and not just for one day. While some staff benefited from the team-building aspects, diversity events do not in their current guise seem to be a way to develop awareness and understanding of equality and diversity and specifically how it relates to individual job roles.

### 3.2.4 E-learning

Another method of training and support with equality and diversity issues that interviewees were asked about was their participation in e-learning. Interviewees were also asked about their experience of e-learning in general.

E-learning has some strength; it can be re-visited, it can fit around work duties, individuals can choose when to do it and it can be a powerful tool especially when combined with other learning methods. However, most staff wanted discussion to back up e-learning.

*'I don't think there's an easier way of doing it. As long as you're getting backed up with reasons why it's important from your managers and doing practical experience.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

*'I think it is best when it is combined with a facilitated session in terms of maybe what came out of it and able to talk about it, what was learnt and what came out of it and how to take it forward.'*

(Operational staff, Band F)

There were many interviewees however, who do not like e-learning. They reported that they find it hard to engage with, prefer discussions, get interrupted while working on it, do not think it is an effective method, feel isolated as a learner, and think the information is easily forgotten. These examples illustrate staff views:

*'I think that is not a terribly useful way of reinforcing a message, I think you end up being very bored going through e-learning and forgetting messages almost as soon as you learn it.'*

(Directorate staff, Band F)

*'I personally don't like e-learning. I find e-learning, whatever it is, very, very difficult...I find it quite difficult to take in stuff that I'm reading from a screen. I prefer it on paper, or I prefer someone talking to me.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

Younger members of staff (aged 19-29) were more likely to be positive about e-learning. There were more mixed views on the ease of use from older staff. Staff over 50 years old were more likely to report that they do not like e-learning, most commonly because they felt they were not computer literate or because they experienced problems with computers.

*'Oh terrible. Terrible. I am not tremendously computer-literate.'*

(Directorate staff, Band F)

*'I find with e-learning I find it hard to engage with it.'*

(Directorate staff, Band D)

E-learning on equality and diversity is mandatory for new staff, but it is not mandatory to complete e-learning every two years or at any other specified interval. There was little evidence of staff undertaking e-learning about equality and diversity as a voluntary activity, possibly reflecting that some respondents were relatively new to Jobcentre Plus. A few members of staff mentioned that they thought it is mandatory to repeat equality and diversity e-learning every two to three years, and these included both operations and directorate staff. For example:

*'Because it was mandatory. I think it has to be done at least once every three years or maybe even two years.'*

(Directorate staff, Band D)

Some staff felt that complex information such as that on equality and diversity legislation cannot be effectively conveyed through e-learning. They suggested that e-learning may be better suited to updates.

Staff tended to want further support and discussions around e-learning, but this did not often happen:

*'There's no follow up to say you've understood it.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

*'Oh never, I've never had any briefing. It's just been right everybody has got to do this, go in and do it, that's how it's always seemed to be.'*

(Directorate staff, Band D)

In contrast, managers thought that they gave support and recognised the need for follow up. For example:

*'All staff are given time to complete the e-learning, the trick is, 1) to make sure they do it, and 2) to offer some means of discussion afterwards, because I think e-learning, I think open learning is excellent, but it's no good unless you actually review it and discuss it afterwards and I think there is an element of people, you know, perhaps quickly skimming through it without having necessarily taken things in. So one of the things we want to do is do that.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

### 3.2.5 Staff Diversity Network Groups

Interviewees were asked about their awareness and use of, or participation in, SDNGs. This section discusses interviewee awareness of SDNGs, participation in the groups, the activities undertaken by SDNGs and the outcomes from the groups.

The most common way for all grades of staff to have heard of SDNGs was by having a colleague who is involved with one of the groups or working with a diversity champion.

One member of administrative staff was a member of a local SDNG, but current and past membership was more frequent among interviewees at higher grades. Junior staff were least likely to have heard of the groups, as were people from the two rural operational offices in our sample.

Several interviewees had previously been involved with SDNGs but had stopped their involvement when they had changed job roles, due to relocation or increased work commitments. Some interviewees were aware of the SDNGs because of their output, such as newsletters and events, and the work that they do to raise awareness of equality and diversity issues. Some senior interviewees were involved with SDNG because of their job role and provided managerial and strategic input. People involved or close to those involved have a good understanding of the purpose of the groups and were able to articulate this.

Some members of SDNGs reported their reasons for joining an SDNG were personal and as a result of a passion and interest in the area, and other members said they had joined SDNGs for personal development and to try to expand their role. Because of the different reasons people have for being involved they may be willing to spend different amounts of time on the groups' activities. They are, however, all volunteers in the groups and have to balance the time taken up by the group with their job role, as one manager explained:

*'It's about volunteers, people are definitely given time to attend and take part, but it's managing taking up too much time as well as managing the day work as well...so there's a balance to be had about people being actively involved and engaged.'*

(Operational staff, Band F)

Activities reported as part of the network groups included a conference in one district with presentations from people from minority groups, sharing their experiences of work. Workshops informed SDNG action plans and some had guest speakers, who shared their experiences.

*'We have guest speakers on, we had the National Diversity Leader in yesterday and he showed us a DVD which had been presented to a number of colleagues within DWP and that covered aspects of diversity. Then we had someone else who was working on disability come in and talk to us about what the department is doing with employment and disability. Then we had some forum for discussion amongst us as well.'*

(Directorate staff, Band C)

Some useful resources and awareness raising activity were felt to have come out of the SDNGs; newsletters, campaigning for more equality and diversity learning and development, updates on legislation, presentations, involvement in local events like Pride, as these interviewees highlighted:

*'The group itself are trying campaigns to get the facilitated events back...I think if we can get a half day session that is mandatory for all staff then that would be great. Something that really does challenge people rather than sitting at the screen going through the motions.'*

(Operational staff, Band E)

*'Yes we get newsletters from them. We get regular updates and when there's stuff happening in terms of legislation or things like...we sometimes have a minority ethnic event. Those things would be publicised through there...they would provide us with statistics about the make up of our customer groups so we can see how many people from the different minorities are represented in the people that we serve or work for us. So we do get that information on a fairly regular basis.'*

(Directorate staff, Band E)

Part of the remit of the groups is to share information with colleagues outside the groups. However, some interviewees reported that the information was not as frequently and effectively cascaded as it should be, and that there was little feedback. There was also a criticism that the groups focused too narrowly on the needs of those who attended them.

*'I think it is excellent for people around the table but I'm not convinced it gets cascaded much further than the people that are there, at the actual meetings themselves sadly.'*

(Operational staff, Band E)

*'I think it tends to be run by more junior staff for issues that are of importance to them, whereas perhaps six years ago when I was in the district, we were looking at matters that were affecting us as a new district.'*

(Directorate staff, Band F)

### 3.2.6 Diversity Challenge

Public authorities, such as Jobcentre Plus, are required to produce Equality Schemes explaining how they meet their legislative requirements in respect of race, disability and gender. The Equality Schemes span a three-year period and outline the Race, Disability and Gender Action Plans. There are also progress reports published each year, providing updates against the plans. The Diversity Challenge is Jobcentre Plus internal guidance on how to comply with diversity and equality legal responsibilities, by fulfilling the commitments laid out in the Equality Schemes.

Diversity Challenge aims to help:

- Jobcentre Plus to understand its performance in relation to diverse customer groups and identify and address key parity issues;
- capability by ensuring legal requirements are understood and discharged across individual job roles;
- provide an assurance check on compliance with equality legislation.

Interviewees were also asked about their awareness and understanding of Diversity Challenge and the Jobcentre Plus Equality Schemes. Interviewees were asked what these are and if they had heard of them, their purpose and whether they were aware of any forthcoming changes.

There were very few comprehensive descriptions of Diversity Challenge from the staff interviewed. This mirrors a recent qualitative study of Jobcentre Plus customer satisfaction which also found that Jobcentre Plus staff awareness of Diversity Challenge was low (Nunn *et al.*, 2009).

Staff in grades A, B, and C were not able to give a description of what the Diversity Challenge entails, with the exception of one person. Those in higher grades had some awareness of Diversity Challenge and those best able to articulate it were the interviewees who have been involved, many of whose main job role was related to equality and diversity.

*'I'm aware it's a self-assessment to ensure that we've embedded equality and diversity into all parts of the business and it records evidence against certain criteria to show where we are or not against those.'*

(Operational staff, Band F)

*'It gives regions and Directorates an idea of what's happening in their patch for further investigation to see whether there are any issues... it should highlight where there are parity issues, so we know which areas we need to prioritise in and improve in rather than just this "oh, that sounds good, let's have a look at that" sort of way we were doing it before.'*

(Directorate staff, Band E)

Interviewees' involvement with Diversity Challenge included attendance at a workshop on how to progress Diversity Challenge, input and discussions about launching the new Diversity Challenge and coming up with action plans.

Awareness of Jobcentre Plus Equality Schemes was very similar to awareness of Diversity Challenge; staff in lower grades were not able to give anything more than a vague description of what they thought the Equality Schemes were. Interviewees tended to describe it as part of equality and diversity policy and communication. Senior interviewees tended to have a greater understanding about the Equality Schemes. Very few interviewees across all grades had direct involvement with the Equality Schemes.

### **3.2.7 The effectiveness of equality and diversity training and awareness activities**

As seen in the sections above, interviewees talked about their training preferences, and views on the support they want to meet their equality and diversity responsibilities. They also gave their views on the influence training and support had on their behaviour. The perceived effectiveness of different mediums has been explored as part of the discussion about each method of training and support. This section explores in more depth the impact that training and support has had on individuals.

Keeping up to date on equality and diversity issues was seen as important and it was an area where some staff felt their knowledge would need to be continually refreshed:

*'I think the changes in the legislation are really, really important to us and I think I could have said, and certainly might have said a couple of years ago, look, I'm fully experienced, I know a lot of this, [but it was] abundantly clear when I did the learning packs there was a heck of a lot that I'd missed and I think that would resonate for most of our staff.'*

(Operational staff, Band F)

Examples given by interviewees of the impact that equality and diversity training can have include:

- Help to deal with colleagues; for example line managers making sure they acknowledge the differences between their staff and their circumstances to bring out their best.
- Increased confidence; for example by learning about legislation people were able to speak with more confidence to employers about possible breaches of equality legislation in submitted vacancies.
- Raised awareness of issues; for example reminding staff that there may be 'hidden' disabilities that staff may not immediately recognise.
- Better understanding of other people; for example different types of activities can develop a better understanding of other cultures or particular disabilities or health problems such as mental illness.

It can also help people to recognise their own prejudices, as this interviewee describes:

*'It made me maybe aware that you might have preconceptions about certain customers and you should never judge anyone.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

Training can also have an impact on the way that people do their jobs, in particular, managers of staff mentioned this, and they noted that they are increasingly likely to take into account equality and diversity in their treatment of staff.

*'Some of the learning materials have been quite powerful in terms of helping me to realise, to take things into account that might not have been taken into account before... So I think it [the impact] has been more around as a manager and as a member of staff, being a lot more thoughtful and mindful and understanding maybe the issues of people with particular issues rather than just making assumptions.'*

(Operational staff, Band F)

*'I suppose I consider things more and as a result, trying to make sure that everything is as fair as possible, yeah I have changed the way I manage.'*

(Directorate staff, Band F)

Interviewees who tended to illustrate that they understood the concept of treating people differently talked about training and awareness-raising as having a big impact on them. For example:

*'I think it has made me more aware that to treat people fairly, you don't necessarily treat everybody the same. I think just recently being exposed to, for example, people of different sexual orientation, a transgender person and listening to the kind of things they were saying about the way in which people treated them, it really opened my eyes to realising that actually, you don't necessarily have to treat everybody exactly the same, you have got to think very carefully about, or you can ask that person how they want to be treated. That's something I have picked up on.'*

(Operational staff, Band E)

*'It just brings it home to you why it's important to do this, you know, bring it to life in a way that really captured you and you remember we're doing this for a really, really valid social reason, it's very important, and again that for me makes it more transformational than transactional as well.'*

(Operational staff, Band G or above)

### 3.2.8 Future training

Very few of the staff interviewed had plans to do any additional equality and diversity learning and development. Interviewees who demonstrated an understanding of treating people differently and had a good grasp of the groups covered by the equality duties were more likely to want training in the future than those interviewees who were unable to articulate the equality duties and the diversity strands it covers. Very few interviewees were aware of any gaps in their knowledge and many interviewees felt that equality and diversity was not a development need for them, as these two quotes from interviewees illustrate:

*'If I was told I needed to do it, yes I would do. It's not been flagged up to me that I need to do it. It's not a developmental thing for me.'*

(Directorate staff, Band D)

*'It isn't an area where I feel that I've got a very big sort of gap. It is one where, if I needed to, I would go and look for a specific piece of information, so I haven't identified that this is a specific area I would like to develop.'*

(Directorate staff, Band F)

This highlights a challenge: some staff are keen to develop their expertise and be involved, and for example, volunteer to participate in network groups, whereas others do not recognise they have gaps in their understanding and may need to develop in this area.

## 3.3 Summary

The equality and diversity team provides practical support to members of staff involved in delivery and in the development of learning and development products.

Workshops, seminars and tutor-led training can have a powerful impact on staff because of the passion conveyed in face-to-face settings and because staff questions can be answered. Tutor-led workshops are becoming less common because of the expense and time they take to deliver, but most interviewees felt that they should be kept for equality and diversity training because of its complexity and for many it was their preferred learning method.

Accessing written information about equality and diversity on the intranet can be time-consuming. Interviewees appreciated that written guidance is accessible whenever they need it, although they may need support from colleagues to interpret it. Discussions among staff are often prompted by an event or issue and are invaluable for staff to help clarify queries or access support. Diversity champions in particular are a significant source of information for those who work with them and have access to them.

Many interviewees do not like e-learning but there were also many who could see the benefits of this method as long as there is time to undertake it and sufficient support alongside it. There were also concerns that e-learning may not be the most appropriate tool for delivery of complex information about equality and diversity legislation and implementation.

Involvement in SDNGs increases with grade. Outputs from the groups can be useful but could be cascaded more widely and are felt to have too narrow a focus. There was little awareness of the SDNGs and even less of Diversity Challenge and the Equality Scheme. The awareness of these was limited to those who have had direct involvement.

## 4 Implementing equality and diversity policies

### Summary

- Some directorate staff were clear about what the equality duties meant for their job role, whereas others were less so, particularly those whose job roles were internally focused. Operational staff tended to give more examples than directorate staff about how equality and diversity was a part of their role.
- Generally, interviewees were confident that they were able to meet the equality and diversity duties. This was despite some interviewees not being able to articulate the requirements of the legislation or what it meant for their role.
- Operational staff were making changes to the ways in which customers accessed services, and tailoring services to their needs. The extent to which operational staff gave examples of tailoring services to meet the diverse needs of customers seemed to depend on whether they were based in a rural or urban office.
- Partners of Jobcentre Plus were, generally, seen as being on board with the equality and diversity agenda and supportive and easy to work with in this regard in upholding the public sector duties.

### 4.1 How equality and diversity fits with staff roles

Staff were asked what responsibility they thought they had in their own role to meet the equality and diversity legislation. Interviewee responses are presented below.

#### 4.1.1 Directorate staff

Despite the fact that most directorate staff were able to refer to at least one area of their work where equality and diversity duties applied, the majority spoke about equality and diversity responsibilities in generic terms. Directorate staff provided few specific examples of how they undertake their duties in line with equality and diversity legislation, although some discussed how they work with or support colleagues in this regard. Only a few interviewees said that equality and diversity duties were well embedded within their roles.

Overall, a few interviewees talked very generally about their responsibility to keep up-to-date and be aware of any developments in equality and diversity as they relate to their role. They argued that they individually had a responsibility to treat others equally, to avoid discrimination, and to create a good reputation and promote a positive image of Jobcentre Plus as an employer. However, other staff were not as clear about how equality and diversity related to their role and felt there was a gap between what the legislation said in theory and what they would have to do in practice. For example:

*'I suppose what would be useful is something more specific around what each of the legislations do actually mean because when you start reading if you go into one of these if you read up its just mammoth...so probably a bit more of a summary about what it means and how it relates to us at work and to our customers.'*

(Directorate staff, Band D)



Overall, the individual equality and diversity responsibilities mentioned by directorate staff varied depending on their division, grade and role.

### *Human resources, management of staff, and support with legislation*

The individual responsibilities interviewees had that related to human resources and the management of staff depended on the department and grade of the person interviewed. They covered:

- Ensuring harmonious and effective working relationships.
- Creating a diverse workforce through recruitment and promotion.
- Managing staff with flexible and part-time working patterns without disadvantaging them.
- Undertaking assessments of the needs of new staff to undertake their duties and ensure reasonable adjustments are made to that effect.
- Advising staff on bullying and harassment issues and supporting them to raise complaints against bullying or harassment.
- Looking at staff survey findings to identify gaps in job satisfaction among different minority groups and/or act upon the outcomes of this.
- Encouraging staff to get involved with diversity events and groups.
- Acting as a role model for others.

### *Equality and diversity duties towards customers, employers and partners*

Very few directorate staff had roles relating to customers. In a couple of cases, these duties would include monitoring the performance of staff towards customers, providing support to staff to improve access for disabled customers and those with language requirements, or dealing with customer complaints.

There were few directorate staff who discussed their individual equality and diversity duties in the context of engaging with employers. One of these duties was to challenge large employers on diversity issues such as recruiting a more diverse workforce. These responsibilities would involve meetings with an employer to help them revise their diversity strategy on staff recruitment, or to provide information to them about equality and diversity legislation.

Individual equality and diversity duties in relation to partners, tended to fall into two categories: liaising with customer representative groups to draw on their expertise, for example in how particular customer groups might be affected by a change in policy; and liaising with providers to ensure that they are giving those that most need it help to access jobs and that they do not discriminate.

### *Involvement with Equality Impact Assessments*

Some directorate staff talked about their involvement with Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs): some had designed and administered impact assessments themselves; others had been involved because they managed projects or were responsible for policy changes and the impact of these; and others had been involved in disseminating information about these.

### 4.1.2 Operational staff

Operational staff, who deliver services to a wide range of customers, gave more examples than directorate staff about how the equality and diversity duties fitted into their roles. They were, in the words of one interviewee, *'the ambassadors of Jobcentre Plus' equality and diversity agenda*.

#### *Equality and diversity duties when working with customers*

Operational staff supported a range of customers face-to-face as well as over the telephone. They often talked about the need to be fair and equal. They explained how they needed to make adjustments, using any service or resource available to deliver services, and to make customers aware of services they were entitled to. When asked whether their role had any specific equality and diversity elements, one interviewee said *'I think in the whole job you've got to be aware of people's different needs'*.

There were some particular issues for staff who dealt with customers over the telephone. Every call could be different as they dealt with people with a multitude of needs ranging from people with substance misuse problems, lone parents, people for whom English is not their first language, people with disabilities including mental health problems and older customers. They felt that part of their equality and diversity duties was being empathetic and patient, asking open questions to gather as much information as they could, and making arrangements if needed for face-to-face contact or for others, such as relatives, to liaise on the customer's behalf.

Many interviewees regarded the promotion of an environment free of discrimination as one of their key responsibilities.

*'Well obviously by being fair across the board with everybody, not discriminating against anybody. If somebody came in and told me that they felt they were being discriminated against in work, or something like that, I would signpost them, try and find any telephone numbers they needed, I would help and support them any way I could. I would like a customer to feel they could come to me and get help and not be judged or discriminated against.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

Many operational staff explained that the equality and diversity duties were an integral part of their role. They argued that they would try and offer an equal and fair service respecting individual views, needs and circumstances. In this context, they said that it was important to treat each customer as an individual and to take time to discuss their background and circumstances and how it might affect their ability to access the labour market. Others argued that they ensured they did not discriminate against customers by treating everyone the same, rather than taking any particular actions (see Chapter 2 for further discussion of staff understanding of equality and diversity).

*'I think it is really hard, because I don't think Oh! I won't do this or I won't do that. I think I just treat everyone just the same. So it is a really hard question because I don't think I do anything actively. I just don't discriminate you know.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

At times, advisers were trying to cut a fine balance between taking individual needs into account in order to enable customers' equal access to services, whilst trying to overlook customers' individual characteristics that could bias their own judgements. For example:

*'Basically, if I see a customer I don't see what they are or who they are, I look at how I can help them to overcome the barriers they are facing.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

### *Equality and diversity duties when working with colleagues*

Treating others fairly, equally and with respect were seen as key responsibilities in working with colleagues.

For senior operational staff, an important element of their equality and diversity duties was to ensure that team leaders and managers were offering equal opportunities for promotion and recruitment. Some also described their responsibility to create a working environment where staff would be encouraged to contribute their views. For example:

*'We tend to have a lot of discussions at team meetings to ensure if anyone has anything they want to bring up they will bring it up and we will discuss it with everybody to make sure everyone is doing the same thing.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

Specific responsibilities when working with colleagues included avoiding inappropriate remarks that could make colleagues feel uncomfortable, confronting staff who were behaving inappropriately towards others, informing managers about any inappropriate behaviour, and taking into consideration people's religion when celebrating religious events.

Those with managerial responsibilities said they also had a responsibility to:

- arrange training and meetings to include staff who were working part-time;
- make adjustments and offer specialist equipment to staff who needed these;
- act as a role model;
- take into account the diverse needs of their staff and to be fair. For example:

*'I have a duty as a manager to make sure that my staff have the time they need to do learning, the time they need to be at home, work-life balance, that's my responsibility to monitor that and to make sure on an ongoing basis that my staff are aware that it's there for them and to work the legislation, but just to make sure they're aware that they can come to me and I will treat them fairly and that they'll be given a fair hearing if anything had to go wrong.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

A small number of operational managers had further specific equality and diversity duties because they chaired or participated in certain groups or forums, such as the Staff diversity network group (SDNGs).

## 4.2 Staff confidence in implementing equality and diversity

Interviewees were asked how they felt about implementing equality legislation and generally, people were confident that they could carry out their responsibilities. This confidence was expressed both by interviewees that had recently undertaken learning and development activities on diversity and equality as well as among those who had not. The subsections that follow detail the two most popular reasons why staff felt confident: the processes, procedures and colleagues and a belief that equality and diversity is embedded within Jobcentre Plus.

### 4.2.1 Confidence founded in processes, procedures and colleagues

Among those who had undertaken equality and diversity learning and development activities in the past two years the most common reason for feeling confident in implementing the equalities duties was that guidance and other mechanisms were in place to support them. Many of the interviewees that had received training said that most of the time they were able to carry out their equality and diversity responsibilities. However, if they had to deal with something they had not come across before or if they were unsure, then they knew that guidance was in place and they would seek this guidance prior to approaching anyone else for advice. For example, one member of Directorate staff describes their use of written guidance:

*'If I'm unsure about anything I do look at the policies and procedures, I do look at whatever's there and I do that with anything, so managing attendance, any health issues, any HR issues, I don't jump, I always look first. So I know where it is, I know where the guidance is and I would look up if I was unsure about anything.'*

(Directorate staff, Band D)

Others were confident because they had a clear idea of the different resources available within Jobcentre Plus to support them if needed:

*'Well usually my first port of call is, I tend to look it up myself and see what guidance I can find and then depending on what the issue is I then raise it with my line manager, depending on whether it is something I thought perhaps might be a wider issue, whether it is a whole office thing.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

A small number of directorate staff, however, pointed out that guidance was open to interpretation and that they had encountered some tricky situations when they were not certain how to apply the guidance (see Section 4.8).

Some felt confident, not so much because there was guidance, but because they felt that they could be supported by their manager, or some other expert.

### 4.2.2 Confidence founded in a belief that equality and diversity is embedded

Many of the interviewees who elaborated on why they felt confident to carry out their responsibilities for implementing equality and diversity policy said that they did not think about equality and diversity a great deal when they undertook their job role. Equality and diversity responsibilities were embedded in what they were doing and were a normal part of what they were doing. Carrying out their responsibilities was seen as a 'natural process' that they did not have to think about. This example is typical:

*'I think because it's embedded in us from day one and people, especially the advisers who are dealing with the service to customers, I think they naturally know that they're providing a service on an equal level to everybody and it's not something we would talk about on a daily basis or something that came up at a meeting.'*

(Operational staff, Band D)

Others attributed their confidence in carrying out their responsibilities as coming naturally to them because of their good nature or the experience that they had, as this operational member of staff describes:

*'I always find it quite easy because that's just how I am anyway...well I'd like to think that I'm quite, like, equal and treat people the same anyway. So I find it quite easy...I don't find it a problem. Well I think if someone came to me and said they had had this problem and they were being discriminated against, I think I'd deal with it quite well, I think I'd know what to do.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

### 4.3 Experience of working with employers on equality and diversity

Only some of the interviewees had a job role that included working with employers. Between them they had experience of working with employers in promoting diversity in recruitment, discussing and uploading employer vacancies onto Jobcentre Plus systems and liaising with employers to best support their customers into work.

#### 4.3.1 Taking employer vacancies

Jobcentre Plus receives job vacancies from employers. The exact requirements are discussed prior to the vacancy being uploaded onto the computer system and applications invited from customers. Staff dealing with employer vacancies discussed how on occasions they have to explain to the employer and work with them to ensure that the wording of the vacancy meets equality and diversity legislation. Interviewees gave examples of discussing with employers the titles of vacancies and making these gender neutral, for example advertising for a cleaner, instead of cleaning lady, or bar steward instead of bar man. Other examples included employers specifying the amount of experience required to fill a vacancy. For example, employers might want to specify that applicants needed to be aged 25 or over, when actually they were looking for experience and could express this more equitably by describing the skills and competencies they were looking for. Interviewees explained that in most cases employers were open to the suggested changes to wording and had not necessarily considered the diversity implications of using particular language in the vacancy.

Migrant workers often raised equality and diversity issues. This was on two counts: some employers specifically did not want to recruit migrant workers, and for example sought to specify levels of English from applicants, whereas other employers were thought to be seeking to employ migrants and placed the vacancy in a limited way on the Jobcentre Plus system in order to meet Home Office requirements.

Although in some cases the most appropriate course of action and ensuring things were fair was felt to be a fine line, interviewees generally seemed confident in working with employers, to ensure that the vacancies listed on the Jobcentre Plus system were open to all. For example:

*'Because it's discrimination guidance I'm quite happy to have the details in front of me. I have the experience of working with vacancies all the time and dealing with discrimination. I don't have a problem speaking with my employers about it.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

As discussed in Section 3.1, considerable training of contact centre staff about the legislation and scenarios relevant to their job role seems to have helped to create a confident team. In the most extreme cases, where employers would not concede, or acknowledge that they were advertising their vacancy unfairly, then staff said they may refuse to list it, or would refer the case to their managers to resolve.

### 4.3.2 Tailoring positions to customers

Some operational staff discussed how they worked with employers to meet the individual needs of customers who had been interviewed and were felt to be the best candidate. This could include, for example, negotiating with employers to adjust working hours, to make the position up to 16 hours to enable the customer to move off benefits, or to slightly adjust start times, to take account of a customer's caring responsibilities. In another example, an adviser had, with the customer's approval, discussed their health condition with an employer who had interviewed them and wanted to offer them the position. They discussed how the condition affected the customer day to day, and what sort of adjustments could be made to enable the employer to take them on.

### 4.3.3 Two Ticks: the disability symbol

The Two Ticks symbol is awarded by Jobcentre Plus to organisations that meet certain criteria and are deemed to be 'Positive about disabled people'. The symbol recognises employers who make a commitment to employ, and develop the ability of disabled staff. As part of their role, a small number of interviewees worked with employers to promote the take-up of this award and also undertook inspections of employers to assess their processes to support the aims of Two Ticks.

### 4.3.4 Diversity events

A small number of interviewees described diversity events they had run for employers to promote equality and diversity in the workforce. The purpose of the events was to work with employers to encourage applications from a wide range of communities, and to encourage employers to reflect the diversity of their customer base and the local community in their staff. The events tried to support employers to think about whether their recruitment processes were open and fair and whether (inadvertently) processes might be excluding applications from particular groups of people.

## 4.4 Experience of working with customers

This section largely draws on interviews with operational staff as they tended to work directly with customers. As noted earlier in Section 2.3 a large number of staff did not articulate that you could treat people differently to achieve the aims of equality and diversity legislation. It is clear, however, that in practice many staff were making changes to the ways in which customers accessed services, and tailoring them to their needs, as is shown below.

The extent of staff experience of equality and diversity issues seems to relate to the geographic location of their office and whether it was urban or rural. Staff in rural offices tended to discuss how their customer base was not diverse, and staff that had worked in both urban and rural Jobcentre Plus offices made comparisons between the diversity of their customers' groups in different locations. For example:

*'Especially in an office like this where obviously in this part of the country we don't get an awful lot of diversity coming into the office, it's not like being in a city, so I think we're quite sheltered here, we don't get the chance to see diversity not really, not in [rural area].'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

*'Moving up here was perhaps a bit of an eye opener in as much as in my old office a lot of the diversity issues didn't necessarily raise themselves because [rural area] is a very white area.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

It is worth noting again that this research took place in two rural and three urban operational offices, so the findings about differences between rural and urban offices should be treated with some caution and are not representative of all Jobcentre Plus offices.

The quotes are also illustrative of a tendency for interviewees to consider diversity in terms of visual differences, such as ethnicity. All Jobcentre Plus offices, whether rural or urban, are likely to have customers with diverse needs, for example, health issues or disabilities, or caring responsibilities, yet these seemed to be less frequently identified by interviewees in the context of diversity. These distinctions seem to then have influenced the extent to which interviewees in operational roles were able to illustrate how they tailored services to meet diverse customer needs.

Overall, interviewees working in the two rural offices in the research were less likely to discuss times at which they had tailored the services they offer to meet customers' diverse needs. In these rural offices some interviewees discussed making adjustments to the organisation of the office, so that customers with physical disabilities could access services, and increasing the length of appointment times if appropriate, to ensure that customers with learning disabilities had sufficient time for things to be explained to them. However, they did not discuss working with customers to meet other aspects of what could be considered diverse needs, such as those relating to caring responsibilities.

Compared to colleagues working in rural areas, interviewees in urban Jobcentre Plus offices were able to cite many more examples of ways in which they had supported customers with diverse needs to be able to access and get the most from Jobcentre Plus services. Relating to religion and non-English speakers these included:

- the regular use of interpreters and printed materials in other languages;
- taking into account religious preferences in the type of work sought and signing times, for example, not on Fridays for Muslim customers so that they could attend mosque.

Interviewees in urban offices also discussed customers' childcare requirements and how these responsibilities may differ. They discussed how they could take these into account when setting job search targets, as well as when deciding signing times for customers with caring responsibilities.

Customers' diverse health and disability needs were often taken into consideration and one interviewee described how they may liaise with providers to ensure that customers' needs could be accommodated, and that, for example, the provision could be tailored if the customer was not able to attend full-time due to health issues. Customers' health issues or disabilities could also affect the type of work they could do and this could also be taken into account when setting job search requirements. As one operational member of staff working in an urban Jobcentre office said:

*'They always have to do the same job search it's just the kind of jobs they can look for...they still have to be actively seeking work, the difference is the adjustment that's made for them.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

In urban areas there were other examples given by interviewees where they might take into account the gender of the adviser working with the customer, so that it was the same as the customer. This could be to take account of customer preference or, for example, if advisers were supporting known sex offenders.

There were no clear differences in responses to how interviewees had supported and worked with diverse groups of customers by whether or not the interviewee had recently received training on equality and diversity. What seems most important is what staff recognise as diversity and the opportunities they have to put this into practice.

## 4.5 Experience of working with partners

Only a very small number of interviewees worked with partners as part of their role. Some interviewees with a partnership role, worked with partner organisations on equality and diversity policy and how best to implement it. This included gathering information and data from partners to inform EIAs. Overall, partners were generally seen as being supportive of the equality and diversity agenda.

Other interviewees worked with private and voluntary sector providers, contracted by Jobcentre Plus to provide support to their customers. Overall, providers were felt to be supportive and used to taking into account effectively the equality and diversity needs of customers. Some providers, for example, work solely and specifically with particular groups, such as customers with health issues and disabilities, and they were thought to be able to understand customer needs in this regard.

## 4.6 Experience of working with and supporting Jobcentre Plus colleagues

All of the interviewees were able to reflect on their experiences of working with Jobcentre Plus colleagues, and managers were also able to reflect on providing support through line and team management. Staff often reported that there was a supportive working environment and many long-serving staff noted that there had been significant improvements to the way in which colleagues worked with other staff over time, and that equality and diversity was increasingly part of the organisational culture (see Section 2.1).

Nevertheless, interviewees described situations where there had been tensions in meeting the diverse needs of Jobcentre Plus staff and a common theme that colleagues and managers had to work through was how to implement changes for an individual or group of staff, whilst not causing disengagement among other staff members. Sensitivity to all groups of staff, not just the ones for whom changes were being made, and communication of the reasons why adaptations were being applied helped all staff to understand the situation. For example, one manager described the tension between groups of staff from different religious backgrounds when one group was allowed to have time off work to pray:

*‘There have been some racial tensions within our offices...one particular office where 50 per cent of the staff are actually Muslim who require time to go to the mosque on Friday afternoon, which has caused considerable discussions and has been handled, but had to be handled very sensitively.’*

(Operational staff, Band F)

The necessity to communicate and explain changes to meet the diverse needs of staff were also evident in the way interviewees discussed changes to working hours and working patterns to meet caring responsibilities. It was reported that this could be a source of conflict if not properly explained. When responding to requests for flexible or part-time working some managers also described the challenge they faced of balancing the requirements of individual staff members with those of the business. As one operational manager explained, staff capacity needs to reflect the demand for services from customers:



*'There are better days of the week for us in terms of how our staff shape sits...ideally what you want based on the flows of work as say for example Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays are your hot spot days...so I am trying to balance their needs with the business needs and that can be difficult at times.'*

(Operational staff, Band E)

Some interviewees also discussed that they needed to ensure that all staff members who wanted it got an equal chance to undertake work that would stretch them and provide them with the experience to develop competencies that would aide their promotion and progression chances. For example:

*'You've got to watch you're not favouring somebody above somebody else because they pick things up quickly...you've got to try and make sure that they get the chance to get that experience.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

There were several examples given by managers about how they had helped to make adjustments for staff they managed on the grounds of health or disability. As with other equality and diversity challenges interviewees faced when working with colleagues, they generally felt that there was a good level of support available to help them to decide on the best course of action. Colleagues in various parts of Jobcentre Plus were seen as a source of support including: colleagues in the same team or office, line managers, Human Resources professionals, and the equality and diversity team. Written guidance could also be a source of reference (see Section 4.9).

Interviewees were asked whether they had had to challenge any inappropriate behaviour from colleagues: many said they had not. One manager felt that this was because equality and diversity was part of the organisational culture:

*'I don't feel that I've ever got to remind people that they've got to be, it's just embedded, they're all very well embraced if you like, I don't feel I have to remind them of how they need to behave at all, because they don't display unequal un-diverse behaviours.'*

(Operational staff, Band F)

Many interviewees went on to say that should a situation arise, they would feel comfortable challenging the behaviour of other staff that was felt to be inappropriate.

A small number of interviewees, however, described recent isolated instances where they had challenged colleagues about using language which they felt undermined the equality and diversity policy of the organisation. These examples tended to be given by staff working at the lower levels of the organisation.

Only one interviewee described a situation that had arisen that they did not feel comfortable confronting because the colleague was their line manager:

*'I see that as a racist word and to use it as a way to define yourself, which is how they used it, made me feel uncomfortable. Anyone else who is not from the same culture or background saying that word, it would have been... taken in a completely different context.'*

(Directorate staff, Band D)

There were no apparent differences in responses between those interviewees that had had recent equality and diversity training and those that had not, and there were no apparent variations in responses between operational and directorate staff.

## 4.7 Information and communications technology

Only a small number of interviewees had responsibilities for designing, delivering or overseeing IT systems. Some discussed their responsibilities for commissioning data fields to be used in the existing IT systems in order to ensure Jobcentre Plus was capturing equality and diversity data. It was noted that there were gaps in diversity information for some customers as their claims had been processed several years ago when this information was not collated, and they were not required to maintain contact with Jobcentre Plus in order to continue to receive payment. This limited the opportunities for these data to be collected subsequently.

IT systems are used to store equality and diversity data. Some interviewees discussed the paramount importance of being able to keep this information secure, and for staff and customers to have confidence that this would be the case.

Some interviewees, both in IT and in other departments, discussed making adjustments to IT systems and equipment in order to meet the needs of staff. These included, for example, extra printers to enable staff with physical disabilities to have access to one on their desks. As one member of staff explained:

*'If we're going to put IT on everybody's desks, every member of staff should be able to use that IT in an equal manner and if that requires them to get extra equipment...then we should be investigating that and being prepared to do it and undertake that work.'*

(Directorate staff, Band G or above)

IT systems designed several years previously, when the technology was less accessible than it is now, was identified as an issue as staff sought to ensure that all customers had equal access to the IT system.

*'Our legacy and heritage systems are not accessible, they weren't built to be accessible in the first place; that provides challenges as we have to spend money to change them.'*

(Directorate staff, Band G or above)

An example of this, explained by one interviewee, was the updating of Jobpoints (computers accessed in Jobcentre Plus offices that can be searched for available vacancies). At the time of the research Jobcentre Plus were working on increasing their accessibility. For example, so that the screen height could be adjusted, making them easier to use for a wider range of users and that the size of the text and colours on screen could be adjusted to meet the needs of customers who are colour blind or visually impaired.

Some customer-facing staff discussed their concerns about the increasing amount of information and advice available to customers online and via computers and whether they had the ability and skills customers required to use it effectively. Another issue identified by staff working with customers over the telephone was that although English speaking ability was checked prior to the commencement of conversations, some customers seemed to call several times about the same issue, perhaps indicating that they had not fully understood the content of the discussion first time round.

## 4.8 Equality Impact Assessments

The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) assessment highlighted some specific concerns relating to the completion of EIAs. These included the need to consider diversity aspects that may not be the central focus of a new policy. For example, EHRC found that Jobcentre Plus had carried out a disability equality assessment for the implementation of the Employment and Support Allowance, but had done less to consider issues of race and gender (EHRC, 2009). The EHRC also raised concerns about the quality of the evidence base and the effects that gaps in the data had on the ability of Jobcentre Plus to carry out a robust equality impact assessment. The report also stressed that EIAs should not only look for adverse impacts but should look for missed opportunities to promote equality of opportunity, and raise participation and encourage positive relations. Finally, the ongoing review and monitoring of the impact of policy on equality after implementation was also highlighted as an area for improvement.

In response to the EHRC report Jobcentre Plus committed to:

- undertaking new FIA training to upskill staff and help them to understand their roles and responsibilities when carrying out EIAs;
- review the equality evidence base;
- align to EIA guidance between Jobcentre Plus and wider Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as an organisation and to integrate the EIA processes.

As a result, the completion of EIAs by Jobcentre Plus staff is undergoing a period of change and some of the issues raised by the small number of staff that had been involved in EIAs in the interviews for this research are already being addressed. In many respects their responses and experiences support the findings of the EHRC assessment and the direction of the response from Jobcentre Plus.

Generally, staff that had been involved in EIAs, either in quality assuring them, or in writing them directly, demonstrated a sound understanding of the purpose of undertaking EIAs or spoke about why they had undertaken them for specific projects. This quote is typical:

*'One of the key parts of the project management approach is to undertake an equality impact assessment...What you would try to do as part of preparing for that assessment is to have an initial sort of redress of the policy to see whether there's anything which would be obvious to you which could have an impact on a particular group of people but if not that is the idea behind the impact assessment.'*

(Directorate staff, Band G or above)

As the responsibility for who undertakes EIAs could vary from project to project, interviewees were not always clear about the job role of the member of staff that would do this. EIAs were not undertaken regularly by individual staff. This creates a challenge to ensure that staff new to the process are able and supported to implement it correctly. Interviewees who had gone through the current process said that they found colleagues to be supportive. They also thought that the written guidance was clear. There were some concerns, though, about how the written word might have been interpreted and the extent to which interpretations of how to carry out EIAs might vary among staff. For example:

*'I think we all try and do things as they should be done, but sometimes the written word can be left open to interpretation and the more complicated the area is, then the more risk there is for misinterpretation to occur.'*

(Operational staff, Band E)

The new EIA process aims to be more integrated between Jobcentre Plus and wider DWP as an organisation, and interviewee views supported this change. In their previous experience some interviewees felt the links between national and regional EIAs had not always been sufficient. As one member of staff working regionally explained:

*‘We haven’t probably been good at in my experience...is joining up understanding that an equality impact assessment has been done on that policy and been satisfied...when I come to deploy it...I would probably do another equality impact assessment so that I understood what the impact of deploying it in my region would be.’*

(Operational staff, Band G or above)

The EHRC assessment also highlighted the lack of diversity data could limit the accuracy of EIAs. Jobcentre Plus is trying to improve the quality and reliability of diversity data that is available to support EIAs, and this change was again supported by the previous experiences of interviewees. For example:

*‘We still suffer from a lack of information and so we don’t always know and we can do the impact assessment but we don’t always know what the true impact is.’*

(Directorate staff, Band G or above)

Some interviewees that looked at the impact of changes on Jobcentre Plus staff discussed the data gaps in the Resource Management system. They felt these made it difficult for them to establish a baseline and to look at the potential impact of the change on diverse groups, particularly where they were seeking to examine the impacts on sub-groups. For example, the effects on people with particular types of disabilities rather than disabled people as a whole.

Making EIAs continuous and living documents was also recognised as being beneficial to their purpose by some interviewees. For example:

*‘You might need to tweak the policies here and there but you can only find that out when the policy has been implemented.’*

(Directorate staff, Band F)

## 4.9 Sources of support

Interviewees were asked what sources of support they have used or would use to overcome challenges in implementing their equality and diversity responsibilities. Most staff interviewed had used some form of support and very few interviewees felt that there was no support available or did not have an idea where they would look for support.

The sources of support being used included:

- business partners such as HR;
- occupational health providers;
- legal teams;
- the Diversity and Equality Team.

Colleagues are also an important source of support, peers and SDNGs can offer advice and experience, as do managers and diversity champions which are part of the SDNGs. The quote below illustrates the range of possible sources staff could use to support them, depending on the issue:

*'There is someone in the district who is assigned as the diversity person, champion, lead role... You would go initially to your line manager. That's who I would expect to go to. I would think if they couldn't help me, there is definitely somebody. You can go to HR as well. And you've got, I'm thinking more for staff, there's occupational health, for maybe adjustments. They would give advice on what they would think and then you can always get people to come out and look at chairs, desks etc.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

With so many different sources of support available, knowing where to start with the search for further information could be the first obstacle for staff.

*'Getting over the first hurdle is the hard bit and once you start the support is there.'*

(Directorate staff, Band E)

Line managers were often the first port of call for many of our interviewees. They already provide other forms of support and they are often more experienced than the staff they manage and so may have come across and/or resolved the issue before. Approaching a line manager for support is conventional practice for many interviewees. For example:

*'If there was something where I wanted some sort of specialised advice around that then I would get that, but it would probably have to go up through, unless I knew somebody that worked there specifically, it would go through the normal protocol...up my line management chain and across.'*

(Directorate staff, Band F)

Managers, however, do not always feel that they have the tools or the support they need in order to be able to support their staff with equality and diversity issues, especially if there is a performance issue with a member of their staff. For example, one manager who was trying to manage an attendance issue with a member of staff that had health issues said:

*'There wasn't a huge support for what you were doing and...it...got to the final stage where it was going to the decision maker to look at that person...I...felt more that you are on scrutiny to make sure that you've done every correctly.'*

(Directorate staff, Band C)

Although mentioned by a few, not many interviewees knew about the support that they could access from the central equality and diversity team. More interviewees were aware of diversity champions that form the SDNGs.

*'I must admit I didn't know they had one! I mean people have got a diversity role I think within the districts for London we put in six diversity leads, I wasn't aware of a separate Jobcentre Plus national team.'*

(Directorate staff, Band G or above)

*'I would go to my diversity rep or the district champion...I know they have all got a lot of expertise in diversity, I think they would be my first port of call.'*

(Operational staff, Band F)

Another frequently mentioned form of support was the intranet, and HR guidance accessed via the intranet. As with approaching line managers, the intranet is often the starting point for most people looking for more information or guidance. As a source of support with implementing equality and diversity, many felt that the guidance could be better. Translating the theory into practice can be difficult as many report that real-life situations are often not as straightforward as guidance suggests. One interviewee described this:

*‘Sometimes what I do find with web pages within Jobcentre Plus... they’re very black and white and they’re... I understand they can’t be prescriptive for every cause but when you do sometimes have a particular problem the actual web page can be very vague.’*

(Directorate staff, Band C)

## 4.10 Chapter summary

Some directorate staff were clear about what the equality duties meant for their job role, whereas others were less so, particularly those whose job roles were internally focused. Operational staff tended to give more examples than directorate staff as to how equality and diversity was a part of their role and these tended to focus on working with customers. Generally, interviewees expressed a confidence that they were able to meet the equality and diversity duties. This was despite some interviewees not being able to articulate the requirements of the legislation or what it meant for their role.

Whilst some staff were not able to articulate that you could treat people differently when asked about their understanding of the legislation, in practice operational staff were making changes to the ways in which customers accessed services, and tailoring them to their needs. The extent to which operational staff gave examples of tailoring services to meet the diverse needs of customers seemed to depend on whether they were based in a rural or urban office. Interviewees in rural offices tended to discuss how their area was not diverse.

Staff often reflected on the supportive environment of Jobcentre Plus. Depending on the issues that arose, interviewees had used a variety of sources of support, including line managers, occupational health providers and the HR team.

When working with colleagues staff felt that they needed to be sensitive to the requirements of everyone and to communicate and explain any changes, for example to working patterns that had been made to meet staff requirements.

# 5 Recording and monitoring diversity data

## Summary

- Many of the interviewees were able to describe in broad terms why Jobcentre Plus collects customer diversity data. Operational staff tended to focus on the practical application these data could have. For example, to support and inform job searching and the services customers could access and not on monitoring the equality of outcomes, such as job entry. This understanding meant that staff were often unsure about the purpose of collecting other types of diversity data, not so easily related to the provision of services, such as sexual orientation.
- Generally, staff had a more rounded understanding of the purpose of collecting staff diversity information and for example, discussed using this information to look at whether Jobcentre Plus staff reflect the communities they serve, and promotion and progression within the organisation.

## 5.1 Recording and monitoring customer diversity data

Interviewees were asked for their views on collecting diversity information from customers, including possible changes to include religious views and sexuality in the diversity information that is collected. Interviewees were also asked for their understanding of the reasons why these data are collected and, if they were customer-facing they were also asked, how comfortable they felt collecting this information and if they are able to explain to customers why the information is being collected.

Many of the staff interviewed were able to describe in broad terms why Jobcentre Plus collect customer diversity information. Most felt that statistical information is collected in order to be aware of the make-up of customers and to provide practical support tailored to those groups. This level of understanding of the reasons for collecting customer data reflected their job role and was more prevalent in directorate staff:

*‘We need to understand our customer base. Part of understanding the customer base is not only what diversity needs they have but how many of them have that... clearly we need to think about how we can tailor our services accordingly.’*

(Directorate staff, Band G or above)

*‘Ministers will be interested in trends in the community we support. They will be interested in ethnic backgrounds, disabilities, employment figures and to be able to form policy and put legislation through to maybe target, at the top end to perhaps change legislation, in a softer sense where funding is provided in certain parts of the country to support groups.’*

(Directorate staff, Band E)

Fewer directorate staff were able to articulate that the information would be analysed to ensure that Jobcentre Plus is providing a fair service and that the information collected could be used to measure performance. Operational staff were better able to communicate this concept, as these quotes demonstrate:

*'I've always said to customers it's for statistical information... to make sure everyone's treated fairly after diversity and equality.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

*'It's to make sure that everybody, every person that needs the help and support that we can give are able to freely access the service.'*

(Operational staff, Band E)

Operational staff could understand collecting information about health problems or disabilities as this has a practical application for their job searching. Staff were unsure as to why they may be required in future to collect additional diversity information such as religious belief or sexuality, perhaps because of the operational focus on collecting diversity information to inform services and tailor support. Interviewees tended to focus on process and access to services to describe how they worked with customers. There seems to be less understanding among staff about equality of outcomes, such as job entry.

*'I feel OK, because I'm asking it directly in relation to jobs, so what I'm saying is do you have any health, or any other problems that we could record on here that would restrict your working, or the sort of jobs you're looking for, so it can make it positive.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

*'That has no bearing whatsoever on somebody making a claim for benefit. Obviously we need to know their age and their gender and ethnicity only for Government statistics I would imagine, but why would they need to know someone's sexual orientation or religion, why? I can't see why anybody would need to know that. Why does anybody need to know what I do when I go home tonight and who I get in bed with? Nobody needs to know that.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

*'I don't know how we would use the religion to enhance their job prospects... I don't see how we are going to improve their job prospects by knowing that information.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

There were some concerns about disclosure of sexual orientation as being potentially dangerous for some customers, for example Muslim males, especially in relation to the method of collection and potential data losses.

*'I think what Jobcentre Plus has to be aware of is that when people 'phone us they may not be 'phoning alone. Now you might get the situation, particularly on sexual orientation, if somebody is a Muslim they are not going to say I'm gay, not especially if the family's around or if they think there's any possibility that that information could possibly get out into the public domain as has happened with lost information.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)



However, most of the concern about collecting this information reflected a lack of understanding of why the diversity information is collected. Many staff stated that they would be uncomfortable or embarrassed asking for additional information especially about sexual orientation, as this was less related to the provision of, or access to, services. Some interviewees worried about customer reactions:

*'I would feel uncomfortable about asking someone maybe about sexual beliefs, or religious beliefs, because I would feel I was intruding on somebody. If I had to ask it, I would ask it, but I would be very surprised if anybody would tell me that. I would think people would become quite hostile if they were asked that sort of question.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

Some interviewees reflected that they had become accustomed to asking about ethnicity and health problems and so felt that this would happen over time with these new categories. If other organisations were also starting to collect this information, it would become 'normalised'.

Some advisers, who already handle sensitive issues with customers, recognised that their behaviour and attitude to collecting the information could make a difference in how comfortable customers feel with giving the information.

*'Now I don't have any issues about it at all. Initially, yeah sometimes I thought it would be awkward but I have realised that if I make it awkward, it becomes awkward.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

Although there was reluctance from some interviewees to collect additional customer diversity information, many said that they would ask these questions if required to and they had a clear understanding of why this information needed to be collected. This is illustrated by the following quote:

*'I think we need to be first of all absolutely comfortable why we need the information and what the benefits of having that information are going to be in terms of improving our services to the customer and if we are satisfied that yes this has benefits that outweigh any issues then yes, I am all for it. But we will have barriers to overcome, barriers in terms of staff being comfortable so we will have a job at hand there to make sure it is worded in such a way and explained in such a way that staff feel comfortable with it but moreover, they will be possibly extended because customers are not comfortable with the questions, query the questions, possibly complain.'*

(Operational staff, Band E)

Some interviewees suggested that if Jobcentre Plus did something with the data that was obvious to staff, staff could then see why they have collected it.

There were also concerns about how the information will be collected from customers and that they should not feel pressurised into disclosing potentially sensitive information about themselves. A few interviewees suggested that it should only be asked once and there should be a 'prefer not to say' option. Another suggestion was that rather than asking face-to-face or on the telephone where other people could overhear it could be a paper-based form, perhaps automatically generated by the system. This was a preferred option for people who were uncomfortable asking about sexuality or religious belief.

*'First and foremost I think it only needs to be asked once and then there needs to be effective systems to ensure that it is not asked again and again... As long as we are only asking the customer once then great, as long as we explain clearly why we are asking for it.'*

(Operational staff, Band E)

*'I would have thought that it's a thing that you want to get people to complete by filling in a form or online as opposed to having a conversation...I mean, would you really want to have a conversation about somebody's, their sexuality, face-to-face in a public building. I don't think you would.'*

(Operational staff, Band G or above)

Some interviewees would prefer not to ask customers sensitive questions. This is why some suggested automatically generated forms, so that they could avoid potentially awkward conversations. There were some concerns that even currently where 'prefer not to say' is the customer response to ethnic group; it can be 'prefer not to ask', as one member of directorate staff described:

*'And this is from experience, I used to be an adviser so it's not as if I'm just making it up! But I've seen this done - it becomes a "prefer not to ask".'*

(Directorate staff, Band E)

## 5.2 Recording and monitoring staff diversity data

Interviewees were asked for their views on, and experiences of, recording their own diversity information on the Resource Management system. They were also asked why they thought this information is collected and what it is used for.

Staff had a better understanding of why staff diversity information is collected than why customer diversity information is collected. Most interviewees believe that it is so Jobcentre Plus can see whether their staff are diverse, and that any issues can be identified, such as not complying with equality and diversity legislation, or not reflecting the community that they serve. The two responses below are typical:

*'You need to know who you've got working for you and also it would help the department because before, they can look and say we haven't got a good proportion here maybe we need to think about where we're advertising jobs. Things like that they need to know.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

*'It's very difficult if you don't have statistical information to work out whether we are treating everyone fairly and if statistically it's coming back that 98 per cent of your workforce is white but the area that you are working in 95 per cent of them aren't, then if we don't have that information you can't necessarily see that perhaps we are not following equality and diversity.'*

(Operational staff, Band A/B)

There was some understanding of monitoring statistical information to see if staff are treated fairly and given equal opportunities for promotion, or access to special leave for example. As one person stated:

*'Unless you're actually monitoring something you're not actually able to manage that.'*

(Operational staff, Band E)

There were a few staff from across operations and the directorates (although mainly from lower grades) who had limited understanding about why staff diversity data were recorded. There appeared to be no relationship between whether staff had recorded their own diversity information onto Resource Management and their understanding of the purposes for doing so.

As with collecting customer information, some interviewees did not seem to associate recording their own diversity characteristics with monitoring and avoiding discrimination. Similarly to the understanding of why customer data is collected and how this related to the service that was offered, some staff saw the diversity information as not relevant to their job role and did not link the data to wider business outcomes. For example:

*'I'm not too sure. It shouldn't make any difference to the way you do your job, possibly potential discrimination? It's not something that should affect you doing your work. The relationship between your sexual orientation and the way you do your job, I don't really get that.'*

(Directorate staff, Band C)

*'I can't see the relevance. The male, female and ethnicity part of it I do but sexual orientation I don't see there is any point.'*

(Directorate staff, Band C)

Many interviewees had recorded their diversity information on Resource Management. Some recalled the recent 'Count me in' campaign and that senior managers have publicly declared that they have filled in their information, to encourage completion by example. Yet, as with customers, interviewees feel they should be able to 'prefer not to say':

*'I've done it because I don't have a problem with people knowing it, but I do have a problem with keep being told to do it, or asked to do it...We keep being reminded to, yes. To me, if it's voluntary, it's voluntary.'*

(Directorate staff, Band D)

One reason that some interviewees had for being happy about completing the information was that they did not consider themselves to be in a minority group and were therefore happy to give the information. Conversely, some staff who were in minority groups wanted the information to be recorded to help minority groups in the long-run.

*'I'm quite happy to do so simply because I'm fairly bog standard apart from the part-time aspect: I don't have anything to hide. I'm not sure whether people who do have, particular minority ethnic groups or whatever, would want to do that, I don't know, but I have no objection.'*

(Directorate staff, Band F)

*'I actually could be counted as being disabled I suppose, so I do have a vested interest in that, so I am interested to see it being recorded.'*

(Directorate staff, Band F)

Some staff feared that the data could link to them and could possibly have a negative effect on their career. For example:

*'I always feel some things could, information about health, could be used in a negative way sometimes, if it was divulged.'*

(Operational staff, Band C)

As with customer diversity information, staff would like to see what happens with the information that is collected about staff. This would then enable them to see why they are being encouraged to record their information. Some of the respondents had been involved in using the information collected from staff; they found it informative for their research and decision-making.

*‘When we are trying to do any sort of research that’s really helpful to have that. I don’t have an issue with sharing it personally. Professionally I found it very useful.’*

(Directorate staff, Band E)

*‘It’s essential when decisions are being made. It’s part of the supporting information that’s needed.’*

(Directorate staff, Band E)

### 5.3 Chapter summary

Many of the interviewees were able to describe in broad terms why Jobcentre Plus collects customer diversity data. Operational staff tended to focus on the practical application these data could have. For example, to support and inform job searching and the services customers could access and not on monitoring the equality of outcomes, such as job entry. This understanding meant that staff were often unsure about the purpose of collecting other aspects of diversity data, not so easily related to the provision of services, such as sexual orientation.

Staff conducting EIAs felt there were gaps in the data that made it difficult for them to establish a baseline and to look at the effects of potential changes on diverse groups. Generally, staff had a better understanding of why staff diversity information is collected and for example, discussed using this information to look at whether Jobcentre Plus staff reflect the communities they serve.

## 6 Conclusions and recommendations

It was widely acknowledged that the principles of equality and diversity are important to Jobcentre Plus. Senior staff were seen by others as committed to the agenda. Many staff reflected that there had been positive changes over a number of years, with particular progress and impetus achieved more recently.

This chapter draws together the main findings for each of the research questions and then presents suggested recommendations about how the issues raised might be addressed. The recommendations presented are made in the context of the recent change of government and the impending reductions in public spending. They, therefore focus on actions that could be taken with little or no cost implication.

### 6.1 Staff awareness of the legislation and understanding of their collective and individual responsibilities in implementing it

Interviewees felt that the principles of equality and diversity were important and central to effective delivery of Jobcentre Plus services. They generally recognised a collective responsibility for adhering to equality and diversity legislation. Some job roles, such as those working with customers, partners or employers are more likely to raise equality and diversity issues than others. However, all staff may need to draw on the legislation when they work with colleagues and if they have management responsibilities.

Interviewees were not generally aware of the public sector equalities duties per se, but could generally mention aspects of equality and diversity that were covered by legislation, such as gender. Interviewees tended to have a wider view of diversity than the facets covered by the duties and, for example, discussed caring responsibilities of staff and customers and how they would consider these when working with them.

Interviewees displayed a high level of confidence in Jobcentre Plus' guidance and processes and felt that by following and implementing these that the legislative requirements would be met, particularly collective responsibilities. There tended to be less clarity among interviewees about what the legislation meant for their own job role. This was particularly how best to deal with some of the grey areas that might arise in putting the legislation into practice, such as times where the most suitable course of action might differ from one case to another.

Many staff did not articulate the concept of treating people differently when asked about the coverage of equality and diversity legislation. There was some uncertainty about whether treating people differently was appropriate, and if so in what circumstances. On a day-to-day basis it was clear from the examples staff gave of how they worked in practice that they take into account equality and diversity when working with customers, employers and partners. In several instances this was because interviewees believed equality and diversity requirements could be met by personal attitude and treating others how you would like to be treated. However, interviewees did not necessarily connect this practice to any legal responsibility or the public sector duties.

Operational interviewees in the urban case-study areas were more likely than those in the rural case-study areas to discuss situations where they tailored services to meet customers' diverse needs. Staff in the rural offices tended to believe that they did not work in a diverse area whereas operational staff in urban areas did. This is most likely to be a reflection of the ethnic make up of these areas, rather than other strands of diversity such as disability, or gender, which are likely to be relevant to all geographic areas.

### 6.2 Staff views on the levels and content of support

Staff described how they could find themselves in unfamiliar circumstances depending on the situations that arose. For example, undertaking their first Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), or supporting a member of staff with a disability or health condition. However, overall interviewees tended to report feeling confident when dealing with any equality and diversity-related situations that arose and staff that had done so had used a variety of support to help them. Line managers and colleagues were often the first port of call and source of advice. Diversity champions, in areas where they existed, were also considered as a useful source of information, advice and support about equality and diversity legislation and practice.

Structured training, such as workshops, was felt to be useful, particularly where it involved the opportunity to discuss equality and diversity legislation with colleagues and to relate the principles to practice. While recognising some of the benefits of e-learning, such as its flexibility, generally interviewees, and particularly those from older age groups, did not like learning via this medium. They said they found it less effective because they could not discuss the arising issues with colleagues in a structured way.

Staff involved in Staff Diversity Network Group (SDNGs) felt these groups were a useful source of advice and support. Members of these groups and some other staff that had heard of them said SDNGs could produce useful equality and diversity related outputs to influence and inform staff. Operational staff in the rural case-study areas were less likely to have heard of SDNGs or to be part of one.

Staff in the rural case-study offices were also less likely than staff in urban case-study offices to have access to other types of support, such as diversity champions and diversity events. This could suggest a lack of diversity champions and diversity events in rural areas that tend to be less ethnically diverse. The diversity events were seen as good for team building, but seemed to have been less effective at creating an understanding of the public sector duties and equalities legislation.

It was reported to be difficult to find time to participate in training and that time away from the workplace was not easily justified in a target driven environment, particularly for staff in operations.

Staff were generally confident that they could put the equality and diversity legislation into practice, although some had gaps in their knowledge about the specific requirements of the public sector duties. Only a small number of interviewees had any equality and diversity training planned.

### 6.3 Staff views on diversity monitoring and their willingness to participate in it and encourage others to do so

Most of the staff interviewed for this research said they had input their diversity information onto Resource Management. However, there are still gaps in these data as staff experience of using it to carry out EIAs illustrates. Generally, interviewees felt they understood why staff diversity data were collected, for example, to see the extent to which Jobcentre Plus staff reflect the population, and to look for possible discrimination, for example with regards to promotion. Using these data to undertake tasks such as EIAs was mentioned less frequently.

Staff less frequently understood the purpose of collecting customer diversity data compared to the purpose of collecting staff data, but this could reflect that some of the staff we interviewed did not have customer-facing roles. Operational staff in particular focused on collecting the data as a way of ensuring that customers were able to access the services to which they are entitled. There was less awareness that the data could be used to look at discrimination or outcomes and in the long-term to improve services for specific customer groups.

Staff understanding about the purpose of collecting the data seemed to reflect the extent to which they felt comfortable asking customers for this information. Operational staff were happy to ask customers for their diversity data if they felt that knowing it could enable them to provide a better, more tailored, service. Where this was not perceived to be the case, for example with sexual orientation, then staff were more reluctant to ask customers for these data.

## 6.4 Recommendations

Our suggested improvements in relation to the public sector duties are detailed in the Table 6.1. The section number in brackets gives the section in the report where the evidence on which the area for improvement and suggested action is based.

**Table 6.1 Suggested improvements in relation to the public sector duties**

Area for improvement	Suggested action
<b>Staff awareness and understanding</b>	
1 Increase staff understanding of the coverage of the public sector duties and other aspects of equality and diversity legislation and policy (see Section 2.1).	Consider expanding the network of diversity champions, particularly in rural areas, and exploring the feasibility of virtual groups. Virtual groups could, for example, provide staff with support to implement equality and diversity and help to further the equality and diversity agenda within Jobcentre Plus.
2 Increase staff understanding that treating people differently is lawful in some circumstances (see Section 2.3).	Explore opportunities to develop material, such as case-studies and scenarios, focused on the gaps in staff understanding, and that are relevant to different job roles (such as working with customers, supporting employers and working with colleagues). These could be used to illustrate how deviations from the standard operating model can be made and why, to give staff the confidence to treat people differently, where necessary. Consider how case-studies could be used within virtual groups.
3 Increase staff understanding of their individual responsibilities for upholding the public sector duties (see Section 4.1).	Further investigate perceptions of diversity being based on visible aspects, and particularly in rural areas. If required increase the understanding of staff in rural areas about equality and diversity in practice.
4 Staff awareness and understanding of the less visible aspects of diversity (see Section 4.4).	
<b>Training and support</b>	
5 The frequency of internal meetings for operational staff (see Section 3.2.2).	When the business climate allows, consider increasing the frequency of team meetings to give a regular forum for staff to discuss equality and diversity legislation and good practice.

Continued

**Table 6.1 Continued**

<b>Area for improvement</b>	<b>Suggested action</b>
6 The interactivity of e-learning (see Section 3.2.4).	Consider the feasibility of making e-learning more interactive, for example by completing it in a group setting with a moderator, requiring follow-up with line managers, or undertaking it in virtual groups.
7 The coverage of Staff Diversity Network Groups (SDNGs) (see Section 3.2.5).	Consider whether there is scope to increase the coverage of SDNGs, especially in rural areas, and increase the information flows and outputs to the rest of the organisation.
8 Increase access to web-based advice (see Section 3.2.2).	Explore the possibility of implementing ‘virtual diversity champions’ that could be accessed via the internet and give staff immediate access to advice and support about equality and diversity legislation and practice, including case-study examples.
9 Access to training and support for all staff in the future (see Section 3.2.8).	Consider how best to extend participation in equality and diversity training and support to all staff, including those who perceive that understanding and implementing equality and diversity in practice is not an area of development for them.
<b>Implementing equality and diversity</b>	
10 Written guidance (see Section 4.2.1).	Continue to ensure that all written guidance is up-to-date and accurate, is accessible and is easy for staff to understand and interpret.
<b>Monitoring and collecting diversity data</b>	
11 Improve staff understanding of the purpose of collecting diversity information (see Sections 5.1 and 5.2).	Once finalised use the assurance check to explain and demonstrate to staff the practical application of staff and customer diversity data.
12 Increase the completeness of staff diversity data on Resource Management (see Sections 4.8 and 5.2).	Once finalised use assurance check scorecard to highlight where there are gaps in staff diversity data and to encourage staff to complete it. Consider illustrating to staff the use of staff diversity data in an EIA, for example one relating to office relocation, to increase understanding of the practical use of their diversity data.



# Appendix A

## Diversity characteristics of interviewees

**Table A.1 Age profile of interviewees**

Age	Number of interviewees
19-24	3
25-29	4
30-34	8
35-39	11
40-44	18
45-49	22
50-54	19
55-59	8
60 or over	4
Total	97

Source: Institute for Employment Studies, 2010.

**Table A.2 Gender profile of interviewees**

Gender	Number of interviewees
Female	66
Male	31
Total	97

Source: Institute for Employment Studies, 2010.

**Table A.3 Sexual orientation profile of interviewees**

Sexual orientation	Number of interviewees
Heterosexual	89
Lesbian	3
Gay	2
I do not wish to say	3
Total	97

Source: Institute for Employment Studies, 2010.

**Table A.4 Ethnic profile of interviewees**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Number of interviewees</b>
White British	86
White Irish	2
Any other white	1
Asian or British Asian: Indian	4
Asian or British Asian: Bangladeshi	1
Asian or British Asian: Pakistani	1
Black or Black British: Caribbean	1
Mixed: white and black Caribbean	1
Total	97

Source: Institute for Employment Studies, 2010.

**Table A.5 Health profile of interviewees**

<b>Health issue or disability</b>	<b>Number of interviewees</b>
No	82
Yes	13
I do not know/I do not wish to say	2
Total	97

Source: Institute for Employment Studies, 2010.

Below is the discussion guide for operational staff. This formed the basis of the topic guide for Directorate staff too, although questions relating to working with customers were removed as this was not part of their job role.

# Appendix B

## Discussion guide for operational staff

### A. Organisational role

Can I check with you that you are a member of the OPERATIONAL STAFF?

A1. Which Grade are you currently working in?

- AA/Band A
- AO/BAND B
- EO/BAND C
- HEO/BAND D
- SEO/BAND E
- G7/BAND F
- G6 AND ABOVE/BAND G AND ABOVE
- SCS

A2. Which part of Operations are you working in?

- CCD, including support functions.
- BDC, including support functions.
- Jobcentre.
- District Office.
- Regional Office.
- Fraud, including support functions.

A3. What is your job title?

A4. How long have you been working for Jobcentre Plus including its predecessors? (eg Benefits Agency, Employment Services)

A5. How long have you been working in your current role?

A6. Do you work part-time or full-time? If part-time, how many hours per week do you usually work (excluding breaks)? PROBES:

- up to 16 hours per week.
- 17-25 hours per week.
- 26 hours per week or over.

- A7. Could you give me a brief description of what your job entails? (use probes)
- a) Dealing with individuals and employers? Note to interviewer: individuals = claimants/job seekers, employers as recruiters
  - b) Engaging with local/regional/national third party, voluntary, and/or community/customer representative groups?
  - c) Managing/implementing change within your area of responsibility for monitoring performance within your area of the business?
  - d) Do you manage any staff? How many?
  - e) Responsibility for managing the performance of a business unit or team.
- A8. Do you think your role has any specific Diversity and Equality components? If so what are they?

## **B. Understanding of responsibilities to implement diversity and equality law**

- B1. In broad terms, what do you understand Jobcentre Plus' responsibilities are in relation to equality and diversity? PROBE ABOUT THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS:
- Race.
  - Gender.
  - Disability: Ask what do they understand to be covered by the term 'disability'?
  - Age.
  - Religion and Belief.
  - Sexual Orientation.
  - Transgender.
  - Eliminating Discrimination.
  - Promoting Equality of Opportunity as well as preventing discrimination.
- B2. What role do you think you have to play to help Jobcentre Plus comply with the legislation? PROBE ABOUT THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS:
- Individual customers – equal access to services (eg making reasonable adjustments such as making certain arrangements to enable customers to participate in interviews; making sure that people understand; undertaking positive action; treating people differently in order to treat them fairly; ETC).
  - Employers' treatment of people from different groups (eg support to employers to help them both create and retain a diverse workforce, work with employers to help them evaluate their progress towards creating a more diverse workforce; help for employers who place vacancies with us to ensure that their vacancies do not discriminate against any particular group, taking action/knowing what to do if a jobseeker says they have been discriminated against by an employer, giving advice to an employer in relation to equality and diversity, etc.).
  - Jobcentre Plus staff – treatment of people from different groups (eg treating colleagues with respect, knowledge of the 4 DWP Values (Achieving the Best, Respecting People, Making a Difference, and Looking Outwards)).

- Third party/external parties such as providers or partners (eg providing advice, shared responsibility to implement the equality legislation, contracts/tendering including an equality element, strengthen links with other government departments and agencies such as the Home Office and the Prison Service, to improve access to the labour market for those customers who face the greatest barriers to getting work, etc.).
- (for any Equality and Diversity partners interviewed) supporting Jobcentre Plus staff to carry out equality and diversity duties.

**C. Learning activity to support staff in upholding equality and diversity law**

Next, I want to ask you about learning and development activities you may have undertaken in order to meet requirements of equality legislation. Some staff may have undertaken a lot of learning in this area, others may have done none. We're equally interested in both. Can you recall whether, during the last two years, you have:

Attended a seminar/course/workshop delivered at the workplace?	Y	N	DK
Attended a seminar/course/workshop away from workplace	Y	N	DK
E-learning on RM (Resource Management)	Y	N	DK
Used online resources and guidance, eg intranet or web-based materials (eg Diversity Team's intranet pages)	Y	N	DK
Read leaflets or other material	Y	N	DK
Discussion with line manager/team/colleagues (specify) or shadowing	Y	N	DK
Read about or taken part in Black History Month (October '09) or LGBT Month (February '10) ( promoted on DWP intranet)	Y	N	DK
Diversity Event (due to be taking place 25 February 2010 – taking place in selected offices but may be available on the intranet)	Y	N	DK
Diversity Week (this happened during a week in October in 2007 and 2008)	Y	N	DK
Other (please specify)	Y	N	DK
None	Y	N	DK

(If NONE, then proceed to Question C10)

C2. Can you tell me a bit more about this activity? PROBE FOR EACH ACTIVITY/TRAINING MENTIONED:

- When did it take place/ for how long/who delivered it?
- Did you undertake it by yourself or with other staff?
- What issues were covered?
- What methods were used, eg role play, presentations, quizzes, discussions, question and answer sessions, videos etc.?
- Any assessment of knowledge/understanding involved?

C3. Why did you take part in this activity? (use following probes, if needed)

PROBE FOR EACH ACTIVITY/TRAINING MENTIONED:

- It was compulsory.
- It was part of my personal development plan.
- My manager suggested it to me.
- I asked to attend.
- Other.

- C4. What did you think were the strengths and weaknesses of: PROBE FOR EACH ACTIVITY/ TRAINING MENTIONED:
- the content of the activity.
  - how it was delivered.
- C5. Which was the best activity? Which was the least useful activity? Why? (delivery, content, length etc.).
- C6. Do you think these learning resources and activities could be improved for staff? If so, how (eg content, delivery)?
- C7. What, if any, aspect of how you carry out your job have you changed as a result of undertaking these activities?
- C8. Thinking back to when you took part in this activity, what did you learn in addition to what you already knew about diversity and equality?
- C9. How did you find the process of finding out and undertaking each of these L&D products? (eg, easy, difficult).
- C10. If you have not done any learning and development in relation to equality and diversity, please tell us why not? (eg unaware, difficult to get time away from work, not sure of benefits/ importance).
- C11. Are you planning to do any equality and diversity training in the near future?

### **D. E-Learning**

(Only for those who stated they had done e-learning in response to Question C1)

- D1a. Do you feel you were given the appropriate time allowed to complete your e-learning package(s) effectively?
- D1b. How much time have you ever had to spend outside your normal working hours to complete an e-learning package?
- D1c. When undertaking an e-learning package, did you have any of the following:
- a briefing or any other information prior to the event?
  - support whilst undertaking the e-learning?
  - a discussion with anyone afterwards about the learning?
  - appropriate time after completing the package to think about what the learning meant for you and how you might use it?
- D1d. How easy did you find the online L&D products to identify and navigate?
- D1e. Have you ever had to undertake the same e-learning more than once, or required additional training once e-learning had been completed? If so, why is that?

### **E. Experiences of upholding equality legislation**

- E1. Overall, how do you feel about your experience of carrying out your responsibilities for implementing diversity and equality law?

- E2. Have you faced any challenges, in undertaking these responsibilities? Can you tell me a bit about what they were and what you did about them? PROBE FOR CHALLENGES REGARDING:
- adjusting services to ensure clients have equal access.
  - working with employers.
  - involving and consulting other partners.
  - implementing the Departmental Diversity Monitoring Strategy.
  - monitoring and evaluating diversity and equality issues.
  - having enough time.
  - IT systems.
  - knowing who to ask for help.
  - challenging inappropriate behaviour of colleagues/staff/customers/employers.
  - anything else?
- E3. What sources of support have you used to help you overcome these challenges? PROBE ON WHY CHOSEN AND USEFULNESS OF:
- online resources.
  - line manager.
  - Jobcentre Plus Equality and Diversity team.
  - colleagues.
  - union.
  - other.
- E4. Do you think existing guidance and support could be improved? If so, how? PROBE ON CONTENT, FORMAT, TIMING, AVAILABILITY:
- E5. (If interviewee does not identify Jobcentre Plus Equality and Diversity team as source of support in E3) Where do you go for support on Diversity and Equality Issues?
- E6. What do know, if anything, about the Staff Diversity Network Groups? Are you a member? Do you feed in to the group(s) in any way?
- E7. Have you heard of the Jobcentre Plus Equality Scheme? If yes what can you tell me about it? PROBE: PURPOSE AND EFFECTIVENESS, INFLUENCE ON INTERVIEWEE BEHAVIOUR AND WHY INTERVIEWEES HOLD THESE VIEWS.
- E8. What can you tell me about, the Jobcentre Plus Diversity Challenge? PROBE: PURPOSE AND EFFECTIVENESS, INFLUENCE ON INTERVIEWEE BEHAVIOUR AND WHY INTERVIEWEES HOLD THESE VIEWS.
- E9. Anything else that your Jobcentre/BDC/Contact Centre/FIS/District/Region is doing locally?

## **F. Conducting Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)**

- F1. Can you remind me again whether you are responsible for conducting EIAs?  
(If NO, proceed to next section G )

- F2. Can you tell me about your experience of conducting Equality Impact Assessments? PROBE ON:
- How many/how often?
  - How they decide that these are needed (knowledge/training, new policy etc.).
  - What the process involves?
  - How easy/difficult it is to decide when EIA is needed and to undertake the process?
  - Support, if any, that you received? PROBE ON
  - Who provided it (eg Diversity Business Partner)?
  - Why it was needed (to supplement own expertise/needed extra resources etc.)?
  - How useful the advice/resources used were and whether/how they could be improved?
- F3. What happened after conducting these EIAs? What actions, if any, have been taken as a result?

### **G. Supporting staff to carry out their Diversity and Equality duties**

- G1. Remind me again whether you have management responsibility for other Jobcentre Plus staff as part of your job?
- (If NO, proceed to next section H )
- G1a. What do you understand your role to be in supporting staff to carry out their diversity and equality responsibilities?
- G1b. What do you find are the easier and more difficult aspects of this?
- G1c. Have staff ever asked you for support to undertake their diversity and equality duties? Can you tell me about this?
- G1d. Are there occasions when you have not been able to provide the support that staff asked for or which you think they need? If yes, can you tell me about these occasions?
- G1e. Have you had to challenge inappropriate behaviour either of your staff or of your manager or colleagues? If yes please can you say what happened?
- G2. Do you manage staff who have undertaken E-Learning on RM?
- (If NO, proceed to next section H )
- G2a. Do you feel your staff fully understand the implications of e-learning once completed?
- G2b. Has any member of your staff ever had to undertake the same e-learning more than once or required additional training once e-learning has been completed? Why/why not?

### **H. Willingness to monitor Equality and Diversity characteristics**

- H1. How do you feel about recording your own diversity characteristics on RM for monitoring by Jobcentre Plus? Do you know where you record your diversity information? PROBE ABOUT ETHNICITY, DISABILITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION



- H2. Why do you think Jobcentre Plus encourages you to record your own diversity information/ characteristics?
- H3. Why do you think Jobcentre Plus needs to record customers’ diversity characteristics?
- H4. How do you feel asking customers for this information (ie ethnicity, disability)? How easy or difficult is it to avoid making assumptions?
- H5. How do you request this information from the customers? (eg interview customer, giving form for customer to complete)
- H6. What would help you to collect this information more easily from customers?
- H7. If a customer asks you why you need to collect their diversity information (ethnicity, disability) do you feel able to explain this to customers?
- H8. In the future, legislation will require Jobcentre Plus to collect customer information on sexual orientation and religion or belief. How would you feel about asking customers for this information?

**J. Improvements**

- J1. Now we are near the end of the interview, what do you think Jobcentre Plus needs to do to improve awareness and understanding of Diversity and Equality issues?

**K. Demographic Characteristics**

We need to ask some questions about your personal characteristics in order to assess whether people from different backgrounds have different responses to our questions. It would be helpful if you are willing to answer some questions about your background. You do not have to answer them, but answers to these questions will not be used to identify you.

- 1. For research purposes can you please let us know your age? Please **circle**

19-24	35-39	50-54	I do not wish to say
25-29	40-44	55-59	
30-34	45-49	60 or over	

- 2. How would you describe your gender? Please **circle**

Male	Female	I do not wish to say
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- 3. How would you describe your sexual orientation?

Heterosexual	Lesbian	Gay
Bisexual	I do not wish to say	Other

- 4. How would you describe your ethnic group?

A) White

- 1. British
- 2. Irish
- 3. Any other White background (Please Specify)

B) Mixed

1. White and Black Caribbean
2. White and Black African
3. White and Asian
4. Any other Mixed background (Please Specify)

C) Asian or British Asian

1. Indian
2. Pakistani
3. Bangladeshi
4. Any other Asian background (Please Specify)

D) Black or Black British

1. Caribbean
2. African
3. Any other Black background (Please Specify)

E) Chinese or other ethnic group

1. Chinese
2. Any other (Please Specify)

F) I do not wish to say

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

Yes	No	I do not know	I do not wish to say
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# Appendix C

## Analysis framework

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1. Grade	1.1 AA/Band A or AO/Band B 1.2 EO/Band C 1.3 HEO/Band D 1.4 SEO/Band E 1.5 G7/Band F or G6/Band G 1.6 SCS
2. Job type	2.1 Directorate 2.2 Operations 2.3 Equality and Diversity team
3. Length of time in role	3.1 < 1 year 3.2 1-3 years 3.3 4-10 years 3.4 11+ years
4. Length of time working for Jobcentre Plus	4.1 < 1 year 4.2 1-5 years 4.3 6-10 years 4.4 11-20 years 4.5 21+ years
5. Manager of staff	5.1 Yes 5.2 No
6. Work hours	6.1 < 16 hours per week 6.2 16-26 hours per week 6.3 26+ hours per week
7. Age of interviewee	7.1 19-29 7.2 30-49 7.3 50 or over
8. Location of Jobcentre Plus office <b>Only allocated to Jobcentre Plus offices (not BDC/CC)</b>	8.1 Urban 8.2 Rural
9. Training undertaken	9.1 Yes (workshops/seminars/e-learning) 9.2 No
10. Understanding of E&D	10.1 Excellent understanding ( <b>Note: demonstrates understanding of treating people differently</b> ) 10.2 Good understanding ( <b>Note: discusses at least 3 of ANY diversity categories</b> ) 10.3 Vague understanding ( <b>Note: talks around the subject, no specifics, mentions less than 3 of any diversity categories</b> )
11. Details on RM	11.1 Yes (fully complete details) 11.2 No (include patchy and no completion of details here)

Continued

12. Interviewee health problem or disability	12.1 Yes 12.2 No
13. Interviewee ethnicity	13.1 White (all white categories) 13.2 All other ethnicities
14. Interviewee gender	14.1 Male 14.2 Female

Code	Description	Families to analyse by
<b>A. Background, awareness and understanding</b>		
Job role	Details of the interviewee’s job role and main responsibilities.	No split
E&D and role	Details of any E&D components to the interviewee’s role and understanding of how E&D fits with their role. Include views of the role they have in working with employers, staff, third parties/ partners and role working with colleagues/staff and customers.	Job type Training undertaken
Awareness and understanding of Jobcentre Plus E&D responsibilities	Understanding and awareness of Jobcentre Plus responsibilities. Include detail of E&D components (all aspects ie race, gender, positive action). Also include here other things mentioned in relation to E&D, such as part-time working, children, language, union member etc. and attitudes to E&D.	Job type Grade Manager Training undertaken Length of time working for Jobcentre Plus
<b>B. Training and support</b>		
Training designed	Details of any E&D training staff have been involved in designing or delivering.	No split
Workshops and seminars	Details of the workshops/seminars staff have had (in last 2 years) about E&D. Include details of the activity, length, delivery method, time allowed etc. Detail about strengths and weaknesses of this type of training.	Job type Grade Work hours
Written materials and discussions	Details of the written materials (leaflets etc.) and discussions with line managers/colleagues staff have had (in last 2 years) about E&D. Include details of the activity, length, delivery method, time allowed etc. Detail about strengths and weaknesses of this type of training.	Job type Grade Work hours
Diversity events	Include details of any participation in diversity events (ie diversity week, Black History Month etc.) and the perceived usefulness of these. Include details of the activity, length, delivery method, time allowed etc. Detail about strengths and weaknesses of this type of training. Also include here any local activity around awareness raising/training.	Job type Grade Work hours Location
E-learning	Details of any recent E&D e-learning, time allowed for completion, easy of use, views about this form of learning and development, complementary activities undertaken alongside it. Include also experience of managing staff who have undertaken e-learning.	Age Job type Grade Work hours

Continued

<b>Code</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Families to analyse by</b>
Impact of training	Details of how the training affected how they do their role or influenced them.	Job type Grade Understanding
Future training	Any details of anticipated future E&D training or development activity.	Job type Grade Training undertaken Understanding
Network groups	Awareness of diversity network groups, whether they are members and if so how they feed into the group. Include any details of information or support provided by these groups.	Job type Grade Location
Diversity Challenge/Equality Scheme	Awareness and understanding of the Diversity Challenge and Equality Scheme, include also any influence of these schemes on interviewee behaviour and all other detail about these two schemes, such as forthcoming changes.	Job type Grade
<b>C. Application and practice</b>		
Confidence implementing E&D	General comments about how staff feel about carrying out E&D responsibilities, and their confidence to do so.	Job type Grade Training undertaken
Working with customers	Details about how staff work with customers to uphold E&D responsibilities and any challenges in doing so.	Location Training undertaken
Working with employers	Details about how staff work with employers to uphold E&D responsibilities and any challenges in doing so.	No splits
Working with partners	Details about how staff work with partners and third parties to uphold E&D responsibilities and any challenges in doing so.	No splits
Working with colleagues	Details about how staff work with and support colleagues to uphold E&D responsibilities and any challenges in doing so. Include any details from managers about how they support their teams here and any specific examples of supporting or managing staff and E&D. Include also any incidences where they have challenged behaviour of colleagues. NOTE SUPPORTING STAFF ON E-LEARNING IS CODED ELSEWHERE.	Job type Grade Training undertaken
Support for challenges	Sources of support that staff have used to help them to overcome E&D challenges (including negative responses) and views on why they used this and its usefulness. Include also how this support/guidance could be improved.	Job type Grade
IT systems	Details of how staff have implemented, developed and used IT systems in relation to upholding E&D responsibilities.	No splits

Continued

Code	Description	Families to analyse by
EIAs	All details of experience of conducting EIAs. Include, for example, ease/difficulty of process, how they decided whether to do one, any support needed and how useful this was, and actions taken as a result, also any suggestions for improvement.	No splits
Recording customer data	Include understanding of purpose of data collection and explaining this to customers, any difficulties asking about specific E&D components, how they ask customers for these data and anything that would help them to collect this information more easily.	Job type Time in role Training undertaken Location Understanding
Recording staff data	Include understanding of purpose of collecting staff E&D data and whether they record their own diversity information and the reasons for this.	Job type Grade Whether recorded on RM Training undertaken Understanding
Recommendations for improvements	Any recommendations about how to improve awareness and understanding of E&D issues.	Length of time at Jobcentre Plus Training undertaken
Other	Any other relevant information mentioned by staff and not covered by the codes.	Job type No splits

# References

DWP (2009), *Equality and Human Rights Commission Improvement Plan*, Department for Work and Pensions.

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Jobcentre Plus (2009), *Jobcentre Plus Business Plan 2009-2010*. London: Jobcentre Plus.

Nunn, A., Walton, F. and Jassi, S. (2009), *A qualitative study of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with Jobcentre Plus; an exploration of issues identified in the 2007 Customer Satisfaction Survey with a particular focus on those most likely to be dissatisfied*. London: Department for Work and Pensions.

Like all public sector organisations, Jobcentre Plus and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as a wider organisation are obliged to eliminate discrimination and promote equality within their workforce, amongst their customers and the wider stakeholders with whom they interact. Revised equality duties which will cover seven equality strands will come into force in 2011. However, at present the duties cover race, gender and disability.

This report draws on 97 qualitative interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff to provide insight into staff perceptions of their individual and collective responsibilities for implementing the equality duties, views about the training and support they had received about the equality duties and to capture their experiences of working with customers, employers, other partners and colleagues in upholding this legislation.

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