Research report

Increasing digital channel use amongst digitally excluded Jobcentre Plus claimants

by Duncan Adam, Vicky Campbell-Hall, Dr Maria de Hoyos, Anne E. Green and Dr Andrew Thomas

DWP Department for Work and Pensions

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Abbreviations and glossary

CV	Curriculum Vitae
Digital Champions	Jobcentre Plus advisers who have taken on additional responsibilities to provide digital support to staff and claimants.
Digital Partners	External organisations providing digital (and other) support to staff and claimants.
Digital Services	Information and transactional services offered online, as well as the measures taken to support usage.
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
ERMs	External Relations Managers
ESA	Employment Support Allowance
FAQs	Frequently asked questions
IB	Incapacity Benefit
IS	Income Support
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
NHS	National Health Service
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PAs	Jobcentre Plus Personal Advisers
PC	Personal Computer
TV	Television

Summary

Background and methods

The 2011/12 Jobcentre Plus delivery plan makes a commitment to develop and increase digital services[1], enabling claimants to self-serve but also creating the potential for a more comprehensive rich media service[2].

Research shows there is a statistically significant association between the social disadvantages an individual faces and their inability to access and use digital services[3].

Qualitative research was commissioned to develop an actionable approach to encourage digitally excluded claimants to use Jobcentre Plus digital channels, by increasing Jobcentre Plus' understanding of:

- how to address the barriers to digital service usage;

- the behavioural strategies required to encourage digitally excluded claimants online;

- the types of services that claimants might value (which involved presenting claimants with examples of potential digital services); and

- the role of Jobcentre Plus staff and digital partners in supporting the migration of claimants to online services.

For the purpose of this research, 'digitally excluded' claimants are defined as individuals who never access the internet, or do so no more than three times a month, and lack confidence in their internet skills.

Between April and June 2011, 80 face-to-face interviews with digitally excluded Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Income Support (IS), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimants, 35 telephone interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff and five telephone interviews with external digital partners were undertaken and analysed thematically (further details are presented in Chapter 1).

Key findings

Awareness and use of digital services

Digitally excluded claimants awareness of Jobcentre Plus digital services was low: none had registered online; and usage of services currently available was low. Views about current Jobcentre Plus digital services were mixed. For those who had used them, online job searching was the most enthusiastically received and there was some interest expressed in having the ability to track a

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[1]   Digital services – Information and transactional services offered online, as well as the measures taken to support usage.

[2]   Jobcentre Plus Delivery Plan 2011 to 2012. April 2011. Accessed online on 28th July 2011 at http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/jcp-delivery-plan-2011-2012.pdf

[3]   Dutton, W. and Helsper, E. of the Oxford Internet Institute on behalf of Communities and Local Government, (2008) *Digital Inclusion – An Analysis of Social Disadvantage and the Information Society*. P.9.

benefit appeal online. However, those who were uninterested in finding employment or thought that their health condition prevented them from working (typically receiving IS, IB or ESA) expressed minimal interest in digital services.

Attitudes towards extending the Jobcentre Plus digital offer

Digitally excluded claimants views about a range of potential digital services were generally shaped by two overarching factors – views about internet security and the potential value of the online service to them as an individual. For example:

- views about internet security impacted on reactions towards creating a claimant account and entering personal and financial information online; and

- the ability to create, save and print CVs held some interest for those looking for work, although most of these claimants felt that they had already undertaken this elsewhere, either at home or through a local library.

Overall, the options to contact advisers, change personal details, report fraud or undertake better-off-calculations online were seen as one-off transactions and of little interest.

Those claimants, who were interested in looking for work, thought that Jobcentre Plus digital services should be made generally available online to enable access at home or through other organisations such as libraries. Claimants who regularly visited a Jobcentre Plus office expressed a preference for internet-enabled Personal Computers (PCs) to be located in Jobcentre Plus offices, rather than job points for reasons of greater internet connectivity and privacy.

Overall, there was little enthusiasm for digital channels other than through a PC, job point (primarily for job search) or kiosks located with an external provider. Games consoles were not generally connected to the internet; there were also concerns about how one would enter information without a keyboard for both games consoles and digital television.

Smartphones were generally too expensive for these claimants, although the ability to receive new job alerts by text to a standard mobile phone was thought to be a useful service.

Supporting Jobcentre Plus claimants

JSA claimants in particular were keen for an assessment of their digital skills and generally welcomed the idea of training to use the Jobcentre Plus digital services. Some would also welcome training on how to use a PC, sending and receiving emails and using an internet browser. Claimants in receipt of ESA, IS and IB were much less interested in any form of computer or internet training unless they had a definite goal of finding work.

Most claimants interested in receiving training welcomed the idea of group and one-to-one training sessions; although those who were least familiar and confident preferred one-to-one or one-to-two training sessions. Local Jobcentre Plus offices were thought to be ideal training venues, particularly for those who regularly attended. Depending on prior experience, training offered through external providers was also welcomed.

In terms of providing ongoing support, most claimants expressed a desire for face-to-face support in local Jobcentre Plus offices, supplemented by telephone support. To accommodate those accessing digital services from outside the Jobcentre, telephone support was considered to be required from early morning to early evening, ideally with some weekend provision.

Jobcentre Plus staff were varied in their understanding, usage and confidence in using PCs, online services and a range of digital platforms. Some did not have the confidence to even suggest to

claimants that they might try online services; while others were sufficiently confident to provide a quick demonstration of an internet browser. A number of staff lacked familiarity with the internet more generally, as well as the DirectGov website. Staff felt they were limited in what they could offer as they could not access external job searching websites, nor can they send CVs to employers on a claimant's behalf.

Staff thought that they needed basic 'digital awareness' training to be confident enough to raise claimants' awareness of Jobcentre Plus digital services, give reassurance about the security of the Jobcentre Plus website and provide ongoing support.

Staff with a particular interest in online services suggested that additional training would be required to provide the more specialised one-to-one and group training sessions that claimants were requesting. Digital Champions were thought to be especially well positioned to support claimants in this respect.

Staff recognised however, that some claimants would require intensive, long-term support beyond the capacity of Digital Champions or trained staff. Digital partners were seen as a vital resource, in this respect. However, the services of digital partners were viewed as limited as they cannot currently access Jobcentre Plus digital services on a claimant's behalf.

Conclusion

In terms of their focus on finding work and their interest in using digital services, claimants can be classified into one of four types:

- **unaware**: these claimants were mainly recently unemployed and receiving JSA or ESA, with some experience of using the internet. A lack of awareness was the principle reason for their current failure to utilise Jobcentre Plus online services;

- **unready**: claimants who were longer-term unemployed, mainly in receipt of JSA or ESA and with little or no internet experience. Their key barriers to using Jobcentre Plus digital services were: a lack of awareness; little or no internet access; insufficient IT skills; and a lack of confidence in using the internet. Access to the internet via a Jobcentre Plus PC or kiosk, coupled with some tailored computer and internet training and face-to-face support, would enable this group of claimants to use digital services. In some cases they may need to be persuaded of the value of using the internet;

- **uninterested**: these claimants tended to be: long-term unemployed in receipt of JSA; older claimants nearing state pension age; and those with health problems that the claimant felt precluded them from working. They generally had minimal internet experience, and no interest in learning about the internet. These claimants would be the most challenging to move online. If Jobcentre Plus did want to move them online, persuasion or compulsion, coupled with computer and internet training alongside Jobcentre Plus/external provider support would be required; and

- **unable**: generally, these are long-term unemployed claimants in receipt of IS, IB or ESA for whom work was a very distant goal, if a goal at all. They had multiple barriers, including poor literacy and English language skills, often with health problems that limited their mobility. This group would need to be persuaded of the value of the internet, together with intensive, long-term, personalised support.

As indicated above, Jobcentre Plus claimants vary considerably in their 'distance' from using the internet, the amount of support they will need and the amount of time it will take before they become digitally active. Strategies are therefore required that operate over the short, medium and longer-term and target specific customer needs.

In the **short-term**, there is a need to embed the digital message with claimants who regularly use Jobcentre Plus but are **unaware** of its digital services. This could be achieved through local marketing activities such as: posters and television screens in Jobcentre Plus sites; reference to digital services at all points of Jobcentre Plus contact and on signing cards; and giving out items such as pens and fridge magnets marked with the Directgov website.

For all claimants, the most immediate requirement is a focus on job search facilities that better meet the needs of claimants. With a secondary focus on the ability to register online, create a claimant account and make and track a benefit claim or appeal (providing online security could be assured). New job updates, via texts to standard mobile phones, would be a welcome service.

To support these developments, Jobcentre Plus staff will require training to: understand the role of digital services in everyday life and the role they can play in enhancing the job search process; and be an advocate for digital services. In addition, they would welcome development plan objective to raise their own and claimants' digital awareness.

In the **medium**-term there is a need to focus on enabling the **Unready** group of claimants who have little or no internet experience and for whom digital services are perceived to be of little relevance.

These claimants would require wide ranging support in the form of: training to use a computer, an internet browser and email facilities; how to access Jobcentre Plus digital services; and reassurance that online services are secure. Group training sessions would generally suffice, but for the less internet-literate, one-to-one or small group sessions would be required.

These claimants required internet-enabled PCs either in Jobcentre Plus offices or other locations such as libraries, local organisations, and external providers. Bookable facilities with privacy ensured are paramount. Telephone and online support would generally suffice; but for claimants with lower levels of confidence, face-to-face support would still be required.

Claimants with multiple barriers (**Unable** claimants) will require **longer-term**, personalised support. In addition to basic computer and internet training and ease of internet access, these claimants are also likely to require literacy and English language training. Training will need to be ongoing and supported by Jobcentre Plus staff or external training providers to build up claimants' confidence in using the internet generally and Jobcentre Plus digital services specifically.

Uninterested claimants are a varied group and the most challenging to influence. Some would need relatively little computer training; others are likely to require longer-term training and support. However, this group of claimants will most likely require persuasion or compulsion before they will use digital services, possibly with the threat of a benefit sanction for non-use.

To provide this more intensive support, staff would require additional training to be able to run PC and internet training sessions for claimants. In addition, digital partners were viewed as a vital support. However, relationships and communications with Jobcentre Plus would need strengthening to include: a better understanding of the types of services that each organisation offers; a more structured system of claimant referrals; more effective follow-up of claimant referrals; and access to Jobcentre Plus digital services.

1   Introduction

1.1   Background

As part of the government's digital strategy, Jobcentre Plus is developing its future vision and transforming the claimant journey and experience through the provision of digital services. Digital services will be at the heart of the modern, multi-channel business, supported by smaller, expert face-to-face and telephone channels and re-designed streamlined products and services. Not only will digital services enable claimants to self-serve but they will also provide access to a wide range of information, support and other services.

However, a recent Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2010) survey has indicated that there remains a 'digital divide' between those who regularly utilise digital channels and those who remain less likely to access and use digital channels; these are the digitally excluded. PriceWaterhouseCoopers (2009) have suggested that there is a link between digital and social exclusion that is particularly pronounced for unemployed adults; a finding that is supported by comparing the ONS estimates of national internet usage with those of Jobcentre Plus claimants. While ONS estimate that 73 per cent of UK households have fixed line internet access, the most recent satisfaction survey among Jobcentre Plus claimants indicates that only two-thirds have regular access to the internet at home. Access to the internet at home varies considerably with age and type of benefit received (Howat and Pickering 2011[4]).

It is also clear that awareness of digital services does not necessarily correlate highly with usage. For example, evidence from the same survey found that, while 77 per cent of claimants were aware of the Jobcentre Plus webpages on DirectGov, only 51 per cent had used it (compared to 45 per cent Thomas et al 2010[5]). Overall, Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants were more likely to be aware and to have used it.

Moving online for digitally excluded claimants represents a step-change in the nature of their interaction with Jobcentre Plus services and research was therefore required to consider how best to engage these claimants with online services.

1.2   Research aims

The overall aim of the research was to develop an actionable approach to encouraging Jobcentre Plus claimants who experience digital exclusion to use Jobcentre Plus digital channels. Within this overarching aim there were a number of research objectives. These were to explore:

• awareness and usage of Jobcentre Plus digital services;

• differences in attitudes and behaviours to digital services among different Jobcentre Plus claimant groups;

• how to address the barriers to digital channel usage by exploring views about actual and potential transactional digital services;

• the attitudes and role of Jobcentre Plus staff in the provision of information, signposting and support for digitally excluded claimants;

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[4]   Howat, N. and Pickering, E. *Jobcentre Plus customer survey 2011*. DWP Research Report No. 775.

[5]   Thomas, A *et al.* (2010) *2009 Jobcentre Plus Customer Satisfaction Research. Findings from quantitative and qualitative research.* DWP Research Report No. 657.

• digital partner organisations' views about how Jobcentre Plus could support digitally excluded claimants, the support digital partners could provide and whether there is scope for partners to interact digitally with Jobcentre Plus on behalf of claimants (proxy use).

1.3   Research design

The research comprised three stages:

• an initial **design stage** that comprised a review of the relevant literature and a set-up meeting with the Jobcentre Plus policy and research team. This was used to refine the overall design of the research study, establish a working definition of digital exclusion, define the interview topics and generate a list of digital services to be discussed with Jobcentre Plus claimants, staff and digital partners;

• a **claimant insight stage** that comprised face-to-face interviews with 80 Jobcentre Plus claimants who were defined as digitally excluded. The way in which the sample was constructed is discussed in Section 1.4. This stage was designed to explore:

  – claimants' overall response to online services, their views about current and potential Jobcentre Plus digital services;

  – the support that they would require from Jobcentre Plus staff; and

  – the behavioural triggers required for them to use digital services;

• a **service review** comprising telephone interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff, including Digital Champions (30), External Relations Managers (ERMs) (five) and external digital partners (five). The purpose of this component of the research was fourfold:

  – to explore Jobcentre Plus staff experience, confidence and views about using and promoting Jobcentre Plus digital services;

  – to investigate the role of Digital Champions in supporting Jobcentre Plus staff;

  – to discuss with ERMs the plans, or potential plans, to co-ordinate Jobcentre Plus digital services with those of external organisations; and

  – to explore how digital partners can support Jobcentre Plus in its mission to move more claimants online.

The methods used in this research were qualitative. The purposive nature of the sample design means that the research cannot provide any statistical information relating to the prevalence of these views, experiences or reflections in the general population. Any attempt to provide numerical evidence of this kind would require an additional quantitative phase.

1.4   Research method

1.4.1   **Sampling approach – Jobcentre Plus claimants**

The sample of Jobcentre Plus claimants was constructed to reflect those who were most likely to be digitally excluded; in terms of their location, their demographic characteristics and their access to the internet.

The study was undertaken in four Jobcentre Plus districts. Two of these were selected to reflect urban and rural locations, the latter with lower than average levels of household internet access (ONS, 2010). For the purposes of anonymity the districts are referred to as A, B, C and D.

The sample of claimants was constructed on the basis of what was already known about digitally excluded claimants; using Jobcentre Plus records as the sampling frame.

In constructing the sample of Jobcentre Plus claimants, the following information was taken into account:

- the Oxford Internet Survey 2009, 2010 ONS data on internet use and the 2009 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) survey of claimants undertaken by FDS International (2009) noted that the typical characteristics of digitally excluded claimants were likely to be:

  – aged 55-64;

  – living in remote areas with restricted internet access;

  – disabled or have a health condition;

  – receiving Income Support (IS), Incapacity Benefit (IB) or Employment Support Allowance (ESA);

  – longer-term unemployed (three years or more);

  – on a lower income, or in a lower socio-economic group;

  – renting social housing (local authority or Housing Association);

  – a childless household;

  – without qualifications, or low level qualifications; or

  – from an ethnic minority background.

Freshminds and UK Online Centres (2007) have identified four different digital behavioural groups: digitally included, digitally determined, connected non-users and disconnected non-users. Within the digitally included group are the 'digitally constrained' – people who are digitally constrained by their level of skill and confidence. People who are digitally excluded may therefore either have no access to the internet, have access but do not use it, or have access but do not have the skills or confidence to use it. However, there is no standard definition of digital exclusion in terms of frequency of accessing the internet. A decision was therefore made to define digitally excluded claimants as those who have:

- no household access to the internet and never access the internet; or

- access to the internet but only do so between one and three times per month on average, and lack confidence in their IT abilities.

To reflect a broad range of Jobcentre Plus claimants the following quota variables were used to construct the sample:

- Jobcentre Plus district.

- Ability to access the internet.

- Level of comfort in using the internet for information or transactional services.

- Age.

- Length of unemployment.

- Previous type of employment.

- Whether they were disabled or had a health condition.

- The benefit they were receiving.

- Housing tenure.

- Whether they had dependent children.

- Ethnicity.

For full definitions of each of these quota variables see Appendix A.

1.4.2   Sampling approach – Jobcentre Plus staff

The Jobcentre Plus staff participants covered a range of job levels, and included Digital Champions, as well as a mix of claimant facing and managerial staff.

The staff sample was provided by Jobcentre Plus. A full breakdown of the Jobcentre Plus staff sample may be found in Appendix A.

1.4.3   Sampling approach – ERMs and digital partners

The ERMs were based in England, Scotland, and Wales. The digital partners included UK-wide organisations as well as nation-specific organisations.

1.5   Recruitment

A sample of claimants living in the four study districts was provided by Jobcentre Plus. The sample was extracted on the basis of the quota variables discussed in Section 1.4.1. However, Jobcentre Plus records do not hold information about internet use or confidence in using the internet, which were determined at the time of recruitment.

The recruitment proceeded by invitation letters being sent to claimants (see Appendix A for a copy). Following a two-week opt out period claimants were telephoned by TNS-BMRB and asked if they would like to participate in the research. A screening questionnaire was used to determine their eligibility for inclusion in the research and to screen them for the quota variables that were not available from the Jobcentre Plus record. See Appendix A for a copy of the screening questionnaire.

Following recruitment, claimants were sent a confirmation letter detailing the place and time of the interview and the name of the interviewer.

For claimants to fully participate in the research they were asked during the screening process whether they had any additional needs, such as documents in large print. A Welsh-speaking researcher was also made available for Welsh-speaking participants.

Jobcentre Plus staff, the ERMs and digital partner organisations were initially sent a courtesy letter informing them of the research. This was followed up with a recruitment telephone call to arrange a time for a telephone interview. Letter or email confirmations were provided.

1.6   Fieldwork and analysis

Interviews were structured using topic guides. The content of the topic guides varied according to the type of interviewee (claimant, Jobcentre Plus staff, ERM, digital partner).

Critical to this research was a need to understand how to change claimants' behaviour so that they become more engaged with Jobcentre Plus digital services. It is known from previous research that behaviour is shaped by personal, social and wider environmental factors. For example, at the personal level, behaviour may be shaped by the claimant's IT skills, confidence in using the internet, or beliefs about the security of the internet. At the social level behaviour may be shaped by family and friends' beliefs and experiences, while at the environmental level it may be the internet facilities available locally or at Jobcentre Plus that may shape their behaviour (For a fuller explanation of this 'ecological' approach to understanding behaviour, see Appendix B). The topic guides were therefore designed to explore claimants' internet-related behaviour, probing topics that were suggested through the literature review and policy interests, and focusing on the mechanisms and triggers that may be required to change claimants' internet behaviour.

The claimant topic guides used:

- **projective techniques** (e.g. pen-portraits) to explore the perceived value of behavioural enablers to using Jobcentre Plus' digital services;

- **screen shots** of relevant Jobcentre Plus websites to facilitate understanding of the structure and content of the website. These enabled an exploration of the features of a digital experience with Jobcentre Plus with claimants who had not used digital services; and focused on the use of transactional services rather than simple information gathering.

See Appendix C for copies of the topic guides and stimulus materials.

Claimant interviews were all undertaken face-to-face, usually in the claimant's home. Interviews were undertaken between April and June 2011 and generally lasted around 60 minutes; although some interviews were shorter due to participant health issues.

Jobcentre Plus staff, ERMs and digital partners were all interviewed by telephone. Interviews lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and were undertaken during the fieldwork dates above.

All interviews were recorded using encrypted digital recorders prior to verbatim transcription and analysis.

All the interviews were analysed in a structured and comprehensive way using a thematic analytical method – Matrix Mapping (see Appendix B for details). To consider the most effective behavioural drivers for change and the triggers that may be necessary to move Jobcentre Plus claimants online, the claimant interview material was further analysed using a social marketing approach that is based on four primary mechanisms to change people's behaviour. The four mechanisms are:

- **educate** – making people aware;

- **persuade** – helping people to understand that an issue is worth caring about and has relevance for them;

- **design** – changes to the environment that are necessary to bring about behavioural change; and

- **control** – the introduction of mechanisms that might regulate or compel certain types of behaviour.

This approach is used later in the report to demonstrate that different types of mechanisms are needed to encourage Jobcentre Plus claimants to use digital services. For a fuller description of this analytical approach see Appendix B.

1.7   Sample overview

Table 1.1, provides an outline of how the 80 Jobcentre Plus claimants were distributed in terms of their internet usage. Table 1.2 shows the number of Jobcentre Plus staff interviewed by their job band. A full demographic breakdown of Jobcentre Plus claimants and a further breakdown of Jobcentre Plus staff may be found in Appendix A.

Table 1.1   Achieved sample of Jobcentre Plus claimants

	Internet usage		
Access to the internet	**Never**	**Irregular**	**Total**
Easy access at home	6	17	23
Easy access somewhere else/mobile phone	3	17	20
Difficult to access	13	16	29
No access	8	NA	8
Level of comfort with using the internet			
Not comfortable with using any online services	20	9	29
Only comfortable with finding information	11	43	44
Total	30	50	80

Table 1.2   Achieved sample of Jobcentre Plus staff

	Jobcentre Plus district				
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**Total**
Band B (Assistant Advisers)	3	1	0	1	5
Band C (Advisers)	4	3	3	2	12
Band C (Digital Champions)	1	1	2	2	6
Band D/E (Jobcentre Plus Managers)	2	2	1	2	7
Total	10	7	6	7	30

1.8   Report structure

Following this introductory chapter, the report comprises five chapters, as follows:

Chapter 2: describes the digital landscape by considering Jobcentre Plus claimants' awareness and views about current Jobcentre Plus digital services, together with the support that Jobcentre Plus staff are currently able to provide.

Chapter 3: focuses on views about a range of digital services that could be provided by Jobcentre Plus from the perspectives of claimants, Jobcentre Plus staff and digital partners. The chapter also considers claimant preferences for a range of digital services.

Chapter 4: explores, using a behavioural framework, how to engage different types of claimant in Jobcentre Plus digital services; as well as the digital services that may address the needs of specific types of claimant.

Chapter 5: describes how claimants may be supported in their migration to digital services by Jobcentre Plus staff and digital partners.

Chapter 6: summarises the findings and considers the types of digital services and the behavioural mechanisms required to engage digitally excluded claimants, together with Jobcentre Plus staff training required to support claimants.

The report findings are evidenced with quotations taken from the verbatim transcripts. These quotes are attributed in the following way:

• staff – role, whether Digital Champion and district (e.g. Assistant Adviser, Digital Champion, district D);

• claimant – benefit claimed, district, age, amount of time unemployed (e.g. JSA claimant, district D, 35-44 years old, less than six months unemployed).

2   The digital landscape

As discussed in Chapter 1, some of the needs of digitally excluded claimants in relation to digital services are well-known (Dutton *et al.*, 2009; Ofcom, 2009; Freshminds and UK online centres, 2007;[6]) and include:

- increased support;

- increased access to online services;

- improved literacy and IT skills;

- enhanced motivation;

- improved communication skills; and

- managing security issues.

The variations between different claimants and how Jobcentre Plus can most effectively address these needs within the available resources are less well-known.

This chapter provides an overview of the landscape in which digital needs are located. It starts by discussing claimant awareness of current Jobcentre Plus digital services (Section 2.1), followed by a summary of the provision of support available to claimants (Section 2.2).

2.1   Claimant awareness of Jobcentre Plus digital services

In April 2010, the Jobcentre Plus website closed and its content and functionality switched to the Directgov website[7]. The Directgov website has information about Jobcentre Plus services and benefits (informational use) as well as the option to apply for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) online (transactional use). To make an online application, claimants have to enter their personal details.

Overall **awareness** of the Jobcentre Plus online services was **low** among the digitally excluded claimant interviewees; particularly those in receipt of Incapacity Benefit (IB), Income Support (IS) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA) benefits (in spite of the website address appearing on Jobcentre Plus correspondence). In addition, there was minimal awareness that the Jobcentre Plus content was now hosted by Directgov website. Access was most likely to be the result of using an internet search engine rather than entering a website address. This was not unexpected, especially given the target audience.

The usage of the current services was as follows:

- online job search – most often used service;

- information about benefit entitlements, benefits adviser and JSA online – minimal usage; and

- online claims – none of the participants in the study had made a claim online.

The greater number of JSA claimants accessing the website aligns with the findings of the Jobcentre Plus satisfaction survey outlined in Chapter 1. This may be due to more regular contact with

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[6]   A recent piece of qualitative research conducted on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on Jobcentre Plus claimant views on a proposition being developed for automated service delivery (ASD) of JSA.

[7]   http://www.direct.gov.uk

Jobcentre Plus staff, with those participants who had previously used digital services, identifying their Assistant Adviser as directing them to use these.

2.2 Current provision of support to claimants by Jobcentre plus staff

This section describes how support is currently provided across the Jobcentre Plus claimant base, and explains the context in which that support is delivered. Contextual factors discussed are:

• the time allocated for adviser–claimant contact;

• the range of staff knowledge and familiarity with digital platforms;

• technical restrictions on what can be done by advisers; and

• advisers' concerns regarding how increasing digital services would affect service provision.

2.2.1 The time allocated for adviser – claimant contact

Staff contact with claimants was determined by the benefit received and the requirements which the claimant must fulfil. JSA claimants have more regular contact with Jobcentre Plus than do lone parents in receipt of IS, or IB/ESA claimants. Accordingly, JSA claimants have greater access to Jobcentre Plus support, but also have greater conditionality in terms of searching for employment. According to staff, as part of the drive to create a more 'active' benefits system, additional conditionality is being extended to the ESA and lone parent claimants (although lone parents' will still have varying conditions). At the time of this research, JSA claimants attended fortnightly appointments with their adviser, while lone parents were only required to attend once every six months (and even this was flexible).

Staff expressed concern about the limitations on what could be achieved during the allocated time with claimants, although the amount of time per claimant did appear to vary between advisers. There was a general sense that the time limitation prevented advisers from teaching claimants essential computer skills or demonstrating the Directgov website.

> '...the adviser's time is very limited in terms of what they can do during a particular interview, so that's not the sort of help we can offer.'

(Team Manager, district D)

> 'To be honest in my job you only really get about five minutes with the claimant so it would be quite hard for us to go through what we've got to do and then start using the online services.... and maybe if you did have the time you'd be able to show them like the Directgov and point them in the direction of which way to go. The majority of the time you don't actually have the time to be doing stuff like that.'

(Assistant Adviser, district A)

An alternative view expressed was that it was possible to demonstrate some basic functions to claimants; however, this view was not prevalent.

> 'Oh I do sometimes, just to show them what is involved you know. Some claimants come back sometimes and say 'Oh I tried to get onto Directgov, couldn't find what I was looking for' or they will say things like 'Oh well I tried a search and it only came up with a handful of jobs, I couldn't see anything that was suitable' so I will go on that with them and show them how to do the search properly to bring up all the jobs, and then they say 'Oh that's how it's done.''

(Adviser, district C)

If a need for further support was identified and this was outside of the adviser's capacity, digitally-excluded claimants would be referred to either another adviser or an external source of support such as local councils, training providers and charities.

> *'We don't have time with an interview to teach people how to search Google and find certain things. We can show them very quickly how it works so that they know it's there, but then we would have to direct them on so that they actually gain the knowledge in how to do it themselves elsewhere.'*

(Adviser, district A, Digital Champion)

A number of tensions were highlighted which impacted on the ability of staff to provide encouragement and support for digitally excluded claimants, including a tension between:

• adhering to the allocated interview slot (and thereby meeting throughput targets) and concurrently providing sufficient support; and

• effective use of staff time and capturing the interest of the claimant when they are likely to be at their most receptive.

In general, it was considered unrealistic to expect staff to individually instruct claimants about online digital services, particularly claimants who are digitally excluded with minimal IT knowledge. However, the provision of informal support by advisers for claimants with medium to high IT skills was viewed as more feasible, given increased appointment time and adviser capacity. Alongside this, claimants requiring more intensive help could continue to be referred to other sources of support. One adviser pointed out that claimants do not come into the Jobcentre looking for information on digital services; they are much more likely to be concerned with their benefit claim and/or finding a job.

Staff felt that advisers could promote the service to all elements of the digital spectrum, though the degree to which they can do this is constrained, mainly by time, but also by staff knowledge.

2.2.2   Staff knowledge and familiarity with digital platforms

On the whole, staff members were aware of Jobcentre Plus digital services, although more detailed knowledge of their content and functionality varied. Knowledge ranged from simply knowing the website address, through to in-depth familiarity with the website's content, functionality, and potential challenges for users. Confidence in explaining the digital services to claimants varies, with the suggestion of a need for staff training.

> *'I think that the staff that aren't confident with it are going to be the ones that aren't as confident in showing it to claimants because there's a feeling, they are outside their comfort zone and not going to understand really what they are talking about, which I think they would be more reluctant to try and promote it with claimants in case they get questioned on it really.'*

(Adviser, district A)

It is interesting to note that, although staff were asked about various platforms (PCs, smart phones, digital TV, games consoles), responses were almost exclusively confined to computers/the internet, as these were platforms with which they were most familiar.

2.2.3   Technical or legalistic restrictions

Advisers highlighted that technical and/or legal limitations restrict their ability to offer support to claimants.

> '..there is quite a strict policy on what you can and can't look at.'

(Adviser, district A)

Personal information was one particular issue often raised with regard to limitations faced by staff. For example, a Team Manager mentioned that some staff are *'a bit cautious'*, because they are not permitted to forward documents containing personal information on behalf of claimants such as application forms or CVs.

> 'We are not able to send certain claimant details over even though they can be sent to us which I think is a bit behind the time really.'

(Team Manager, district A)

Restrictions placed on handling personal information were seen to hamper support provided to claimants, particularly when compared with other recruitment agencies.

> 'And a CV is full of personal information. So it's which bits do you take off that aren't going to affect the CV to forward to the employer? And it's having that online contact between Jobcentres and employers where I don't think we have that at the moment, but in your competition (i.e. your recruitment agencies and your online websites), that's what they're doing all the time.'

(Team Manager, district A)

As an example of how restrictions can hamper support, an adviser highlighted that it is not possible to access a number of external websites which could potentially be useful to them.

> '...a lot of websites are blocked, so it is difficult to advise a claimant on how to access a website when you physically can't show them the process. The same with emails, a lot of claimants don't have an email set up and we can't do that with them because they can't access those sites, and they don't know how to attach a document to an email so that can be tricky, because we can't really show them those things directly, I have to refer them somewhere to get that advice.'

(Adviser, district A)

2.2.4   Advisers' concerns about the impact of a move to digital services

For the most part, staff accepted a move toward digital services was inevitable, highlighting numerous benefits for example, access to job searching tools. At the same time, concerns were raised about the impact of the drive for digital usage on their role, and on the quality of the service provided to claimants.

Staff were more resistant to increasing digital services if they saw it primarily as a means to reduce costs for Jobcentre Plus and allied to this, concerns were raised about what this would mean for claimants who needed greater levels of support. Staff were more positive about digital services if they felt that this would be a more efficient way of delivering the service for the whole claimant base, while at the same time ensuring 'proper' levels of support across the claimant groups. It was felt that the provision of online services could potentially allow advisers to dedicate more time to supporting those in need.

'I think it will be, well to me it will be an advantage. I would rather people were able to do their own job searches, and it would give me more time to spend time with claimants who really need extra help.'

(Adviser, district A, Digital Champion)

Furthermore, it was hoped that greater digital usage might lead to a reduction in the restrictions regarding personal data.

'I presume the more digital the Jobcentre becomes the less restrictive it will become and the more effective everybody will work.'

(Adviser, district A, Digital Champion)

Given the existing concerns, there would be value in DWP setting out explicitly how the adviser role will alter with greater digitalisation.

2.2.5   Summary

Digitally excluded claimant awareness of Jobcentre Plus digital services was low; knowledge that the Jobcentre Plus web content was now hosted by Directgov was minimal; and there was poor usage of digital services. The job search facility was the service most likely to have been used by claimants.

The extent to which staff could currently support claimants in accessing services via digital platforms was constrained by a variety of factors, principally: the time allocated for consultation, the familiarity of staff with the various platforms; technical and legal restrictions; and the need for clarity about the evolving role. Advisers on the whole were positive about offering greater digital support to claimants, given additional training and capacity, and providing a high level of customer service for those who remained. Advisers considered this would enable them to play a more 'hands on role' in helping the claimant.

3   Enhancing Jobcentre Plus digital services

A series of potential digital services, digital channels and support measures for digitally excluded claimants were generated during the initial stage of the research. These were discussed with claimants, Jobcentre Plus staff and digital partners and the outcomes of these discussions are presented in this chapter.

3.1   Providing digital services through Jobcentre Plus

3.1.1   Claimant views about specific Jobcentre Plus digital services

Jobcentre Plus can provide a wide range of digital services that can be accessed generally online through PCs or through job points and kiosks that may be located in Jobcentre Plus offices or a range of external sites. Jobcentre Plus provides and could additionally provide the following:

Current services:

• Benefit Adviser online and information on the new claim process.

• A search engine for job vacancies.

• The capability to apply for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) online.

Proposed additional services:

• Ability to register a jobseeker profile and receive matched vacancie.

• Apply for vacancies.

• Create a claimant account.

• Make or change appointments with advisers.

• Carry out Better Off Calculations.

• Create, save and print a CV.

• Apply for all benefits online.

• make enquiries about a benefit claim.

• Declare changes in circumstances.

For digitally excluded claimants there were two overarching issues in relation to these specific digital services:

• claimants who had minimal interest in any of these services were those who were uninterested in finding employment; those who did not feel that they could find employment because of their health or skill level; and those who rarely contacted Jobcentre Plus advisers. The Jobcentre Plus web pages generated far more interest from participants with requirements to conduct employment searches; and

• claimants with internet security fears were reluctant to use services requiring them to enter personal information.

'Well, I do search and apply for vacancies. I would like to know more about calculating better off in work calculations…But it means putting in my address and name again so no I wouldn't like to do that really, no, not if it means putting my name and address in, no. I wouldn't like to declare any changes such as banking or address details online…'

(JSA claimant, district A, 35-44 years, less than six months unemployed)

Turning to the specific digital services, the **online job search facility** was viewed as the most useful service. Many claimants, mostly JSA claimants are already using the this online service, with the ability to carry out online job searches at home being viewed positively for convenience and speed.

However, those with most experience of the service highlighted a number of shortcomings in relation to the website. The job search facility was said to: be overly complicated and slow to be updated; offer few jobs in local areas; and require a telephone call to Jobcentre Plus rather than submitting a CV directly. Other job-searching websites, such as monster.com, were said to be more up-to-date and user friendly.

'…some of the job markets' agency sites are far better than Jobcentre Plus site. They give you a wider range of jobs, you can find out which jobs are today's jobs, which jobs were yesterday's jobs so you can see how long a job has been about.'

(JSA claimant, district D, 55-64 years old, two to three years unemployed)

The ability to **obtain information about benefit entitlements** online was viewed positively and those who had already utilised this service had mostly found useful information. However, concerns were expressed regarding the non-interactive aspect and the inability to ask questions about the information provided.

'In some ways it could be, probably speed wise…it is probably easier on the internet. I think if you are trying to explain something it is easier to explain face-to-face with someone rather than try to do it through a computer. It is like talking to a robot on the computer.'

(Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimant, district D, 55-64 years old, more than three years non-employed)

Views towards **making a claim online** were mixed. Some participants expressed a belief that making a claim online would be quicker and easier than via telephone, although others required the reassurance and interaction provided by direct contact. As previously mentioned, none of the participants had made their claim online.

'…if someone explains it you have got an idea what they are on about then.'

(JSA claimant, district B, 45-54 years old, two to three years unemployed)

Annoyance was expressed regarding the need to complete separate online forms with similar information for various entitlements.

'…you fill in all your information for the Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)…may be entitled to Council Tax Relief but then you have to go through and fill another form in with all the same details that you put on the first form. And again it's the same, if you want one of the other allowances as far as I can see, you go filling in the same information and well if you've filled it in once why isn't it good enough for all the other departments that are related to the Jobcentre?'

(JSA claimant, district D, 55-64 years old, JSA, two to three years unemployed)

In terms of creating a **claimant account**, for those who were willing to enter their personal information, it was said to be useful to have all of the information and services easily accessible 'in one place'.

'Well I suppose it's a lot easier than going through all the rigmarole of actually having to go to the place to do them sort of things.'

(Income Support (IS) claimant, district D, 45-54 years old, more than three years non-employed)

Minimal interest was expressed toward **changing personal details, reporting fraud, contacting advisers and better-off-in-work calculations**. Reasons for this lack of interest were: the limited number of times that these services would be required; lack of confidence in their ability to use these services; and the inability to check that details have been changed officially. Despite some interest in an online better-off-in-work calculator, claimants generally lacked confidence in their ability to effectively utilise this complicated tool.

The least popular online option related to entering financial information such as **banking details** due to widespread fears of fraud. These fears were said to stem primarily from media stories and to a much lesser extent from personal experiences of family and friends.

'...because there's so much people that can hack into things on computers, that's the only thing I worry about.'

(IS claimant, district B, 45-54 years old, six months to two years non-employed)

Two additional potential online services mentioned spontaneously by some of the claimants were:

- **signing on online** – there were many doubts about the idea of online signing and it was felt that this was likely to be abused;

- **tracking appeals** – a number of claimants were in the process of appealing against decisions to move them onto benefits with additional requirements. There was interest expressed by these claimants to be able to track the progress of their appeals online.

3.1.2   Making digital services available

Providing digital services at local Jobcentre Plus sites was most enthusiastically embraced by JSA claimants as they regularly attended a Jobcentre. They welcomed the idea that internet enabled job points and PCs could be provided within their local office so that they could conduct their job search and benefit related transactions in one place and at no cost. Overall, PCs were preferred to job points as claimants had privacy concerns and were unsure about the feasibility of converting them to online facilities. As previous research has indicated (Thomas *et al.* 2010) claimants felt that job points were useful but had some issues:

- lack of privacy;

- attempts to restrict the job search to specific geographical areas were unsuccessful;

- searching by type of job often led to unexpected results; and

- job points were often not working, or were unavailable due to their popularity.

For job points and PCs to be useful, claimants felt that they should be able to access a wide range of facilities. These included: access to jobs held on the Jobcentre Plus Labour Market System facility; the ability to access job recruitment sites; general access to employers; and information about different geographical locations should they consider moving from the area. The ability to send CVs to potential employers by email and receive replies was also a facility that would be welcomed. Although they were not initially enthusiastic about all the services mentioned above, they felt that they should be available through the facilities as they 'might' use them if they were available.

> *'Well like I say I am always up there and I am always in the Jobcentre, so just being able to go online at one of the terminals would be a good idea to access their other services, not just looking for a job because you can do that with a terminal, but seeing what else they have got to offer, that would be a good idea.'*
>
> (JSA claimant, district A, 55-64 years old, six months to two years non-employed)

Typically, claimants were concerned that online PCs and job points in Jobcentre Plus offices might be abused by others using them for games, and accessing social networks. For this reason, it was felt that their use should be restricted and monitored. Again, there was concern about whether there would be sufficient facilities available although introducing a booking system with timed slots was thought to alleviate this issue. For claimants to be comfortable using job points or PCs in Jobcentres, these should be designed to ensure privacy. In addition, support should be available either from Jobcentre Plus staff or through online help facilities. Support issues are discussed in Section 2.2.

There was a strongly held view among claimants that whatever services were offered they should be available generally on the internet as well as within Jobcentre Plus offices.

Claimants in receipt of IS, IB and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) were generally less enthusiastic about the idea of increasing the digital services available. Most did not see it as a benefit and did not anticipate using any of the services due to their perceived improbability of working in the near future, or ever again. Even the facility to check benefit payments or report changes in circumstances were of little interest as they had few issues or delays with their payments and would not move house very often. For these claimants, Jobcentre Plus digital services were of little interest.

From the staff perspective, advisers immediately recognised the value of having PCs in Jobcentre Plus offices. Some advantages mentioned in relation to this included the potential to increase efficiency in helping the claimant find work and to improve the relationship with the claimant. For example:

> *'I think the local* [Jobcentre] *office should really have available terminals that the claimant could use, because a lot of them maybe don't have computers. I know there are other outlets but sometimes if you've got a problem you just want it done there and then.'*
>
> (Assistant Adviser, district C)

Having PCs for claimant use in Jobcentre Plus offices would require setting clear guidelines in relation to their use to ensure that they are a resource that provides value for money. Questions such as the following were raised by staff and digital partners:

- Would this reduce the need to refer claimants to external providers?
- What would staff be able to do with claimants in the office (e.g. one-to-one coaching, demonstrations)?
- What further related resources would be needed (e.g. space, hardware)?
- Should job search and longer activities be allowed?
- Would Digital Champions play a role in monitoring this service?
- What impact would this have on the face-to-face contact?

It was suggested that if claimants are going to be required to use digital channels, more points of access should be made available. To this end, providing access by making PCs available at Jobcentre Plus offices was seen as essential by most staff participants. As an interviewee put it:

'We've got six phones in this Jobcentre and no internet access [for claimants]*, so if I'm saying to someone you can go on this website or you can phone this number, if they're in here they're going to go on the phone. If there were a couple of computers here as well, even if there were three phones and three computers then they could go on the computer and do whatever they have to do.'*

(Assistant Adviser, district A)

Advisers shared the concerns expressed by claimants about the possibility of online facilities being used for other purposes and it was mentioned that *'misuse would be a big problem'* (Adviser, district D).

Having access to the internet in Jobcentre Plus offices was seen as more important than extending the availability of computers or job points to other locations. A Jobcentre Plus Team Manager was of the opinion that, even if access through libraries and local colleges was sufficient, there was still the need to increase internet access at the Jobcentre. Also, a digital partner expressed concerns about the issue of limited time available (on PCs) in some public places for users to be able to finish what they want to do and suggested that *'Jobcentre Plus needs to think about having some of its own computers available'* (Digital partner).

3.2 Alternative digital channels

Claimants were asked about the potential facility of making Jobcentre Plus services available through a range of channels, including smart phones, digital television and games consoles.

Among the claimants interviewed there were very few who owned a smartphone, with some not using a phone at all, primarily due to the cost involved. Mobile phone users did recognise the potential for using their phone as a digital service channel. However, given the tiny screen and expense of downloading data, they wondered about its potential usefulness and take-up. For the same reason there was no enthusiasm for creating CVs and making or checking a benefit claim on a mobile phone.

'...if you've not got all these things it's going to cost you money to get them...young ones probably yes, you know because they have all these things like that.'

(ESA claimant, district C, 54-65 years old, six months to two years non-employed).

Games consoles were also of limited interest; where they were available they were invariably not connected to the internet, usually because of the cost involved. The few claimants who did have internet access via a games console used it only for internet-based games and highlighted the difficulty of internet surfing using a games console.

With the increasing roll-out of digital television, more claimants interviewed had this facility than mobile phones or games consoles; however, none had used their digital television to access the internet. Although they were not averse to accessing digital services through the television, overall there was little enthusiasm as televisions were not widely used for interactive services. A key question was how they would input the information without a keyboard and the idea of stepping through an on-screen alphabet using a remote control was not at all appealing. There were also some concerns raised about privacy when displaying job search results and benefit claims on the television potentially in front of the whole household.

From the Jobcentre Plus staff perspective, an argument in favour of making use of a wider range of digital channels was that *'you've got to move with the times'* and offer a more diverse service. The fact that claimants now have the option of connecting to the internet through other media

was seen as an area of opportunity. An adviser highlighted the importance of *'promoting the places where claimants can access the internet'* (Adviser, district A, Digital Champion) and a Team Manager talked about offering different alternatives.

> *'A lot of claimants now are on the phone all the time but they use their phones to* [connect to the internet]*...A lot of people now...actually go online through their PS3* [PlayStation 3], *so* [offering services through different digital channels] *you are going to hit a lot of claimants who are on their PS3's a lot of the time, maybe you could offer a way of engaging with them and that's just another angle.'*
>
> (Team Manager, district A)

However, as discussed earlier, it is important to take into account the fact that digitally-excluded claimants are, by definition, less likely to own and use these digital media. Also, a need to be cautious was expressed in relation to how certain channels are used. For example, a Digital Champion was sceptical about the use of networking websites and even mobile phones for job search. In this person's view: if *'you go looking for a job you do that in the correct place, you do it professionally, you don't do it on a bus looking at your phone'* (Adviser, district A, Digital Champion).

Furthermore, there were seen to be some disadvantages with offering digital services over mobile phones: *'looking at a tiny phone'* (Adviser, district A, Digital Champion) is a strain on the eyes and inputting data is more difficult compared to using a keyboard and a mouse; and smartphones are relatively expensive, and they tended to be associated with younger people. Hence, they were viewed as appropriate only for a section of the claimant base.

Digital TV was seen by some staff and digital partners as a feasible medium since *'everyone is going to have that anyway'* (Adviser, district C) and *'more people use digital TV than they use broadband services'* (digital partner). However, a number of questions were raised. Firstly, there was a lack of clarity regarding how information is exchanged due to the use of a remote control instead of a keyboard and mouse. Secondly, there were concerns about privacy as digital TVs are likely to be shared with other household members. And finally, TV and games consoles were more likely to be considered as entertainment media.

Alternatives to accessing the internet on a PC could have advantages, and other departments have successfully incorporated such channels; for example, texts to mobile phones are currently used by the NHS. Jobcentre Plus could potentially remind claimants of their appointments by text and digital TV could be used to provide jobseekers with updates of new jobs available.

However, current behaviour and accessibility does not yet support these alternative media as feasible options. Overall, there was little enthusiasm for them from claimants, Jobcentre Plus staff or partners. They were said to be:

- expensive;
- lack privacy;
- used as entertainment tools rather than job searching tools; and
- unable to provide the comprehensiveness of using a full-size screen, a keyboard and a mouse to access and exchange information online.

3.3   Providing digital support to claimants through Jobcentre Plus

In addition to making Jobcentre Plus online services accessible, staff can provide support to claimants in a variety of ways. These include:

- digital assessments;

- providing training in PC and internet use;

- group sessions for digital service training;

- a helpdesk; providing specialist equipment for people with disabilities; and

- improving broadband in those areas without internet access.

These are discussed overleaf.

3.3.1   Digital assessments

There were divided views as to the merits of Jobcentre Plus staff providing assessments of claimants' digital abilities. Overall, while JSA claimants were generally enthusiastic they nevertheless had some reservations. These claimants were concerned that Jobcentre Plus staff would not have the resources or time available to undertake the assessments, resulting in a lack of available capacity and increased waiting times. If the resource issues could be adequately dealt with and providing some form of training followed, then for JSA claimants who are not internet-savvy the opportunity to be assessed is welcomed.

By contrast, IS, IB and ESA claimants who were already using the internet were on the whole not very interested in being assessed in the Jobcentre as it would mean, for them, an unnecessary journey. Those who were not using the internet already did not generally see the value of going online and so the offer of a digital assessment was of no value to them.

Claimants reported that advisers had asked them question about their familiarity with the internet at their initial interview. This is corroborated by Jobcentre Plus staff who report clarifying with claimants whether they go online, have access to a PC or whether they, have got an email address.

> *'Generally we ask* [claimants] *about their email, and if people say they haven't got an email then we start going further into 'do they use the internet at all' and job searching…If they are telling us they don't know or they haven't got access to the internet then we look at other means of being able to get them access to the internet.'*

> (Assistant Adviser, district A)

Jobcentre Plus staff were generally supportive of the idea of more formal digital assessments for claimants, providing the time and resources were made available. This was particularly apparent in one district where the whole idea of digital services seemed to have been embraced more enthusiastically than elsewhere.

3.3.2   PC, internet training and Jobcentre Plus digital services training

Interest in more general PC and internet training hinged on claimants' confidence when using a PC and surfing the internet. JSA claimants and a handful of IS, IB and ESA claimants expressed an interest in receiving training of this kind. Those who were more confident, mostly JSA claimants, wanted only additional useful 'tips' such as for job searching. Those with less confidence wanted more formal PC and internet training. Claimants who needed more training tended to be: IS, IB and ESA claimants; JSA claimants who had worked in manual occupations where PCs were not used; older claimants aged 50+ without children; and some very young claimants who were mobile phone literate but had limited experience of using a PC.

JSA claimants and a handful of IS, IB and ESA claimants expressed an interest in receiving training specifically related to Jobcentre Plus digital services. Accessing job search facilities and to a lesser extent checking a benefit claim were viewed as the most useful services to cover in training. There

was considerably less interest in CV-making and printing facilities as they felt they had already mastered these.

Where claimants saw a need for training, they mostly felt that day time group sessions overseen by a knowledgeable member of the Jobcentre Plus staff would be ideal. Some less internet-experienced claimants thought that one-to-one or one-to-two sessions would be more beneficial than a group training session. Claimants were realistic and recognised that due to the expense of one-to-one training, Jobcentre Plus may not be able to make such resources available.

> '...but I put my name down for a computer course but they didn't get back to me, never got back to me. [unclear] *the chap who runs it, there's just no funding.'*

> (ESA claimant, district C, 55-64 years old, six months to two years non-employed)

From the Jobcentre Plus staff perspective, if PCs were available in the office, more extended support such as demonstrations and training could be given, particularly to digitally-excluded claimants. A team leader at a Jobcentre Plus office suggested that this support would involve one-to-one, or at least personalised assistance.

> '*A person to help them* [to use online services], *not somebody on the other end of the phone and not somebody at the other end of a web chat, somebody to actually show them how to do it and even like a free course that they could attend to get taught how to use the internet.'*

> (Adviser, district C, Digital Champion)

Extended support could be provided by a staff member who, as an interviewee suggested, would book appointments specifically to deal with aspects relating to the use of online channels. These appointments could be made individually or in groups with claimants who were assessed and identified as needing further support.

> '*...maybe we can book* [claimants] *in for another appointment, maybe a day or two later, a week later and just come in for half an hour or perhaps maybe bring a few people in at one time and say look, this is the site were recommend, this is how you access them, any questions...'*

> (Adviser, district C)

An advisory services manager suggested that to increase the uptake of digital services, PC facilities could be organised as an in-house 'resource centre' where claimants could be trained.

> '*...a training suite where we have say six PCs in a room or in an area in the Jobcentre where people can come and they can practice, how to set up an email account, how to do a CV, how to open a Word document, how to look at an Excel document...'*

> (Team Manager, district A)

This arrangement may overlap with the services provided by external organisations and therefore provide an opportunity for external providers to deliver in-house training and support for claimants; this was already happening at some offices. For example, an ESA adviser commented that external providers worked with claimants at their Jobcentre Plus office using Jobcentre Plus owned laptops.

> '*...you could get UK Online centre staff to come and do a surgery in a Jobcentre sort of once a fortnight to help people who have got an issue with their laptop, not a technical issue, but in terms of a particular website and how they are using their computer.'*

> (Digital partner)

In conclusion, having PCs in Jobcentre Plus offices would provide advisers with resources to encourage claimants to use digital channels and to deal with potential barriers more efficiently.

Moreover, such a resource would raise further options in relation to how (and where) external organisations can work with claimants. A 'resource centre' of the type discussed above could provide alternative options to sending all claimants away to resolve their needs in relation to accessing and using online services. For claimants requiring more extensive support, other sources of help such as those provided by digital partners may still be more appropriate.

3.3.3   Helpdesk

Claimants who were interested in either using the internet generally or using Jobcentre Plus digital services, recognised that there would be a need for some form of specialised, easily accessible support such as a helpdesk.

> '…if they are going to expect people to use that service then they have to have a back up of some kind… because people do get mixed up with things.'

> (IB claimant, district C, 45-54 years old, more than three years non-employed)

In discussing what type of support facilities should be provided, claimants demonstrated a fairly limited awareness of the options available, particularly in terms of online help facilities. Currently, they were aware of face-to-face and telephone help facilities, primarily though accessing the benefits system. While online help facilities were raised with claimants, the lack of familiarity meant that they were unable to comment. However, they did say that if FAQs were similar to the paper guidance notes they received with their benefit applications then this would not be suitable as they found these difficult to understand. This was particularly challenging for those who had worked in manual occupations, had literacy problems or whose first language was not English.

Pop-up chat facilities were also discussed with claimants although very few were familiar with them. Their biggest concern was being able to properly explain their issue and they felt it would be easier to talk to someone rather than communicate by keyboard. Claimants were not averse to such a facility but could not judge how it would work or whether they would feel confident in using it.

Claimants voiced a preference for face-to-face and telephone support due to its familiarity and doubts about the effectiveness of digital support for digitally excluded claimants. It was thought that face-to-face support should be available during the day and telephone support should extend from early morning (around 7am) through to the evening (8 or 9pm) to allow for people who may have other commitments, such as training, part-time work or caring for a dependant, to access such support. There was no desire for a 24/7 help service, although limited Saturday opening hours would be welcomed.

From the Jobcentre Plus staff perspective there was a strongly held view that *we should always maintain a phone and an interview service of some description, but encourage people to use the electronic channels* (Adviser, district C). To this end, it was suggested that a helpdesk and telephone helpline would be useful for ensuring that claimants who experience difficulties do not get discouraged. As a team adviser suggested, these difficulties can be minor and relatively easy to resolve with one-to-one assistance.

> 'Because there's nothing worse if you are trying to do something and it's just not working and you don't know why…if you've got a helpdesk. Just could be something really silly, a minor thing that you just don't know and you are not doing.'

> (Assistant Adviser, district C)

With regard to the delivery of a helpdesk, there were a number of suggestions made about locating staffed helpdesks within local libraries. However, the staffing of such a helpdesk was a concern. One interviewee highlighted that, currently, their staff members had insufficient capacity in terms of

time and skills to provide such support. Therefore, further resources would be needed to facilitate a helpdesk or some sort of extended support.

In the same vein, a digital partner interviewed suggested that Jobcentre Plus should make the most of its relationship with public libraries by being *'more proactive in terms of providing information'* and, for example, doing *'presentations to public library staff to raise awareness'* (Digital partner). This would enable library staff to guide claimants using the online facilities in libraries.

Another suggestion in relation to resource for a helpdesk was to strengthen partnerships with other organisations.

3.3.4   Specialist equipment for people with disabilities

The types of disabilities that claimants in the study had were: mobility; heart problems; back problems; mental health issues; and visual impairments. In most cases these disabilities did not prohibit the use of a computer and no special facilities were required. In the case of people with visual impairments, they were all receiving specialised support from other organisations.

Both claimants and staff had a number of suggestions for how claimants with disabilities could be supported to use digital services, including:

• training at other venues should have wheelchair access; and

• Jobcentre Plus could pay for 'talking software' rather than it being provided, and paid for, by voluntary organisations.

However, it was felt that the provision of specialist equipment for people with disabilities was not a priority issue for Jobcentre Plus.

3.3.5   Improving broadband access

Broadband internet services are generally much more available than they used to be, even in rural areas. Aside from some minor connection issues, 'sometimes the internet goes down' (IS claimant, district D, 35-44 years old, less than three years non-employed), access was generally not a problem. Claimants did not think that improving broadband access was the responsibility of Jobcentre Plus; neither did they think Jobcentre Plus could influence the roll-out of broadband internet services.

3.4   Providing digital support to claimants through external sources

Support to claimants may be provided through a variety of sources. These include: friends and family; external providers; and organisations that are empowered to act on a claimants' behalf. These are discussed in turn in this section.

3.4.1   Friends and family

According to Jobcentre Plus advisers, it is not uncommon for digitally excluded claimants to mention that, although they do not access the internet themselves, they can rely on other members of their family or friends to carry out online transactions for them. For example, claimants were paraphrased by staff as saying things such as: *'I don't have a computer, but my sister does'* (Adviser, district C) or *'I'll get my grandson to print out my CV'* (Assistant Adviser, district C). Advisers encouraged this practice and felt that there was no need to formalise it.

Encouraging claimants to seek support from their immediate social networks does not preclude the need for further support. Even when there is help available from other members of the family or

friends, some issues might be too sensitive for reliance on others. In other cases, even when friends or relatives are eager to help, they may not have the requisite knowledge or skills.

> *'You will occasionally come across a claimant who says look I don't have internet access but perhaps my sister or my brother has got internet access...But again, some of them are saying, my brother, or whoever it is, is not too good on the computer, so there's still some sort of support out there for this sort of claimants.'*

> (Adviser, district C)

Claimants echoed the views of Jobcentre Plus staff stating that: family and friends could not always be relied upon to be available to provide the required help and support; they were reluctant to reveal sensitive issues, such as savings, to other members of the family or friends; and family and friends did not always have the knowledge or patience to help.

> *'I need someone who I don't know, yes....Because I will listen to them more.'*

> (IS claimant, district A, 45-54 years old, more than three years non-employed)

Claimants also commented that when it came to benefit claims, family and friends could often make incorrect assumptions and it was potentially dangerous to rely on them as they could then submit an incorrect claim. Finally, claimants felt that asking others to access digital services on their behalf would deny them the opportunity to learn to use them on their own.

3.4.2   External providers

External providers are defined here as organisations which provide IT support and training to digitally excluded claimants aimed at developing their skills and confidence. The courses offered by providers such as Learn Direct, Exchange Group and UK Online are free and provide training on IT skills which are useful beyond accessing Jobcentre Plus online services. Other organisations including colleges, libraries and voluntary bodies can also provide support to claimants. This support is not necessarily in the form of training but can range from providing internet access to advice and guidance in relation to accessing Jobcentre Plus services.

Few claimants, irrespective of the benefit they received, had been referred to external providers in the past. There were a handful of IS, IB and ESA claimants who did see the value of being able to use the internet more generally. For these claimants, the opportunity to access the services and facilities available through external providers was viewed as beneficial.

> *'Signposting other organisations that can provide support...would be...helpful....'*

> (IB claimant, district D, 35-44 years old, two to three years non-employed)

However, most other claimants, with the exception of JSA claimants, saw little value in accessing Jobcentre Plus digital services because they were not looking for work and had already made a benefit claim. With the exception of the few who were keen to find work, their perceived need for external providers to provide digital services was therefore minimal.

Typically, these claimants were unable to comment on providers such as UK Online due to their lack of familiarity with the services offered. However, they were aware that most libraries had PCs and internet access; some also thought that Local Authority offices offered internet access. For this group of claimants the key barriers were travelling distance and the absence of computer and internet skills. They therefore would use the internet: if it was locally available in libraries, local council offices or voluntary groups; the facilities were private; and they had the skills to use PCs.

There was a perception that many local libraries were closing down or reducing opening hours which meant that the provision of alternative local facilities was even more important.

From the perspective of Jobcentre Plus staff, external providers play an important role in assisting digitally-excluded claimants. In spite of this, as a Jobcentre Plus member of staff mentioned, referrals could be reduced if advisers had access to PCs in the Jobcentre office.

> 'Yes, we do quite a lot [of referrals to external organisations], *but that's more because we can't let them sit in the office and go online or anything like that, so they have to go to these other organisations. Because we don't supply the equipment to use the facilities we want them to use.*'

> (Assistant Adviser, district C)

As noted above, advisers saw external providers as offering a much needed service and expressed concern regarding the imminent closure of, or reduced resources for, external providers, due to funding cuts. Consequently, the role that external providers play in supporting Jobcentre Plus claimants would be expected to change in the future as a result of the effect of funding cuts.

3.4.3   Organisations empowered to act on a claimant's behalf

The research tested the following propositions with claimants:

* empower another organisation such as a Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) or local community organisations to interact digitally on the claimant's behalf; and

* the claimant to formally appoint someone they trust to access Jobcentre Plus services, including online services, on their behalf.

Although it was mentioned that 'lots of claimants go to these organisations' (Team Manager, district B), these specific propositions were seen as being relevant only to people who had severe disabilities or were housebound. In this respect claimants generally considered that they were sensible and useful facilities. However, none of the claimants in this study, even those in receipt of IB or ESA, considered that they were in such a position as to need, or want, such facilities.

Claimants who recognised that their disabilities may be increasing over time were also reluctant to consider these as options. In their view it would be a last resort if they had to divulge sensitive information (such as the nature of their disability or savings) to a third party. Although organisations such as the CAB are seen as highly reputable organisations, there was some concern that vulnerable people could be exploited by less reputable organisations.

> '*It's just the thought of having someone know all your business and knowing your details and everything rather than myself.*'

> (IS claimant, district B, 45-54 years old, more than three years non-employed)

3.5   Other means of moving claimants online

More extreme options for encouraging claimants to go online are to either restrict access to face-to-face and telephony support or to compel them to use digital services. Jobcentre Plus does not currently have plans to utilise these options.

Overall, claimants recognised that as Jobcentre Plus moves services online, the demand for face-to-face and telephone services would decline naturally. But it was strongly felt that such services should remain in place for: those who are not confident in using on-line facilities; those who find it easier to talk about an issue than write about it; or those who have a complex query that is more easily discussed by telephone.

An alternative option to restricting services is to compel people to use digital services by sanctioning their benefit if they fail to comply. Claimants overall were strongly opposed to this approach. They felt that compulsion was potentially unfair and may worsen some situations, for example for claimants suffering from depression.

> *'The last thing you want to do when someone's out of work and they're feeling down pretty much of the time is to make, you know, life a wee bit more unbearable which they could be if sanctioning you.'*

> (IB claimant, district C, 45-54 years old, two to three years non-employed)

> *'I don't think it would be fair because I'd think they'd need to try and get a lot of people a grant and to work the computer and they'd need to get them knowledgeable…'*

> (IS claimant, district C, 45-54 years old, more than three years non-employed)

A different objection to the idea of compulsion was mentioned by some of the more internet-savvy claimants. They recognised that: people's computers did not always have the most up to date software and web browsers; and websites, public sector websites included, occasionally fail to operate as expected, fail to save information, or connections are lost. They felt it would be morally wrong to compel people to use a digital system that could not be guaranteed to function perfectly all the time.

There was a mixed reaction in relation to making the use of online services compulsory by Jobcentre Plus staff, due to the widely varying needs, abilities, circumstances, and the resources of claimants. Even where in favour, staff were conscious that exceptions would have to be made and that making online services 100 per cent compulsory was not achievable. Moreover, there are claimants for whom Jobcentre Plus staff felt it would be inappropriate and to their detriment to restrict the channels through which services are offered.

> *'I can tell you now that we would have a good number of claimants in this office, talking about alcoholics, ex-drug users, all different types of claimants. I don't think you can say yes, it's compulsory to do this online.'*

> (Team Manager, district A)

Making use of online services compulsory would require Jobcentre Plus to provide the resources to ensure that all claimants have access to the relevant digital channels and were confident in doing so. Even if all claimants had access to online services, there will still be a need to offer the services through other channels as well for emergencies and sensitive situations.

> '[It should be the] *norm to claim online or change things online but I think most of our benefits would need to allow some sort of emergency procedure that would allow people not to claim online and those advising claimants would need to know what that emergency procedure was.'*

> (External Relations Manager (ERM))

For some groups of claimants, accessing services through the internet could be more costly than accessing Jobcentre Plus services by a traditional channel such as the telephone. A claimant with no internet connection at home, for instance, may be forced to spend time and money travelling to a library to be able to access the necessary online services. Although the cost of internet access has decreased, for jobseekers, and those depending on benefits, the fees and investment in equipment are not negligible. As an Assistant Adviser mentioned:

'Broadband is fairly cheap but if you are only taking home £65 a week once you've got your food and you've paid your bills are you really going to be able to afford the broadband connection or the transport to get somewhere where you can access the internet?'

(Assistant Adviser, district A)

As with the restriction of telephone and face-to-face support, other arguments against making using digital services compulsory were that, in some cases, there is a need for personal interaction. Additionally, some issues *'may be too sensitive…or too complicated to deal with on a computer'* (Adviser, district C).

However, this does not negate the importance of creating awareness of the benefits of being able to access online services; and that certain channels may cease to exist.

On the other hand, one adviser mentioned that, for a claimant who signed a jobseekers agreement, detailing the steps they would take to look for work, using online services was to some extent compulsory. He explained that on a typical jobseeker agreement, he would *'agree with the claimant that they will use the Directgov website for their job search and things like that…'* (Adviser, district C). So for these claimants, making it a requirement to search and apply for jobs online would not have so much of an impact. It is important to note that according to Jobcentre Plus regulations, this kind of requirement is only imposed where the claimant does have the IT skills and access to an online computer. The primary reason is to enable claimants to access the many vacancies advertised online.

There were those who offered arguments in favour of compulsion. For example, a lone parent adviser with claimants mainly on IS (predominantly women with young children) felt that the main barrier for not using the internet was a lack of interest.

'Very few [of the claimants] *are completely ignorant to what you can do with a computer, it's just that they haven't bothered and therefore haven't felt the benefits of using* [the internet] *themselves, so it's just a bit of encouragement as much as anything else.'*

(Adviser, district A, Digital Champion)

This view was also supported by a digital partner who highlighted motivation as the *'hardest barrier to deal with'* (digital partner). For these claimants, making online access compulsory could provide the encouragement needed. Nonetheless, the lone parent adviser interviewee also cautioned against restricting telephone services, at least at this time. In his view, claimants *'will only go online if it saves them time, saves them money or they are very confident doing it'* (Adviser, district A, Digital Champion).

Finally, the following two quotes highlight the divergent opinions expressed in relation to making use of Jobcentre Plus online services compulsory to claimants. In both cases, the opinions were expressed by digital partners. The first case suggests a 'bold move' while the second quote suggests a more cautious approach taking account of the circumstances, experience and objectives of a jobseeker for whom the digital services seemed largely irrelevant.

'There's no substitute for a bold move like just saying we're going to switch off other channels – the best thing Jobcentre Plus could do is just say right from this point we'll name a date this service is only going to be available online and there will be an option, a kind of exception that people who really can't can phone this number and somebody will talk them through it and fill in the details on their behalf.'

(Digital partner)

'That would be a challenge because let's face it, if I'm a steel worker…who reads the newspaper and does not use a computer and has never used a computer you know and I'm in my fifties that's going to be tough for that person, they've got to go through a process then of education when in fact all they really want is to get a job…we need to be very, very careful…we do not want to exclude anyone.'

(Digital partner)

Although the proportion of claimants who use online services can be increased, the consensus was that this cannot be made compulsory. Alternative channels will always need to be made available, with information being provided to the public as how to access them. However, this does not rule out the need for strong measures to encourage claimants to use digital channels.

3.6   Additional suggestions for supporting claimants

Most of the additional suggestions made for supporting Jobcentre Plus claimants have been discussed above. These included: the provision of training by Jobcentre Plus staff; more intensive training in the form of one-to-one sessions; introduction to online services through initial interviews with advisers; the issue of privacy in Jobcentres and other organisations; and access to IT training.

Claimants, Jobcentre staff and digital partners mentioned three additional ways in which claimants could be supported:

- providing an efficient and reliable online system;

- communicating about Jobcentre Plus digital services; and

- provision of support in alternative languages.

Claimants also suggested that some form of incentive should be given for interacting with Jobcentre Plus online. These are discussed below.

3.6.1   Providing an efficient and reliable online system

As discussed earlier, claimants with internet experience recognised that online systems that fail to work properly act as a disincentive to operate online. Claimants with little or no internet experience were aware of these issues. For them, concerns about systems failure compounds their lack of confidence and worry about causing damage if they press an incorrect key. Providing an easy to use, easily navigable, reliable online system was important for those tempted by the idea of going online.

From the Jobcentre Plus staff and digital partner perspective having an efficient, easy to use system that helps build up users' confidence is key for ensuring that, once claimants start using Jobcentre Plus online channels, they continue to do so. A personal adviser, who also had a Digital Champion role, summarised an efficient system as one that leads to immediate results rather than frustration. Such a system will also be marketed through word-of-mouth as users will discuss their positive experiences.

'So if the results that they get from using the online services [is] *a pleasant experience, and if it gives them an immediate result and it gives them what they are expecting then I think they will use it without hesitation, and they will promote it among themselves and promote it for their friends and relatives…'*

(Adviser, district A, Digital Champion)

'It's got to be easy, it has got to be user friendly, it has got to be accessible, it has got to be intuitive, you have got to earn the claimant's trust and you have got to reassure them, and you have got to say what the information is for and where it's recorded and why.'

(Digital partner)

3.6.2   Communicating Jobcentre Plus digital services

As discussed previously there was marked lack of knowledge about Jobcentre Plus online services. Claimants and Jobcentre Plus staff thought of a wide range of ways in which Jobcentre Plus could communicate and market its online services, of which paper-based suggestions were the most apparent.

Leaflets and other communication material were seen as important resources by Jobcentre Plus staff to assist them in informing and encouraging claimants in the use of online and other digital services. An Assistant Adviser mentioned that leaflets proved an opportunity *'to catch someone's eyes and then throw in the explanation along with it to let people decide for themselves'* (Assistant Adviser, district A).

In relation to the Jobcentre Plus business cards handed to claimants, it was suggested that they should be tailored to target claimants' needs. For example, business cards informing claimants about making new claims online are of little use if handed in to claimants at the Jobcentre who already have their claim set up. For these claimants, it would be more efficient and adequate to promote other services such as Directgov's job search facility or CV builder. It was also said to be important to inform claimants how to get online, what services are available and identify sources of help. From an adviser's point of view, it is important to *'decide really which services are most important and promote those'* (Assistant Adviser, district C).

A best practice example regarding making useful information available to claimants was provided by a staff member who noted that in the office where they were based a two-sided, A4 sheet with useful website addresses on it was *'handed out quite often'* (Adviser, district C, Digital Champion). This was useful for signposting claimants to Directgov, newspaper sites, local council websites, public and private jobs websites, and local employers vacancies websites. The local aspect of this communication material made it a useful tool for claimants.

However, there were comments from some of the JSA claimants highlighting the large number of pamphlets that are immediately disposed of. Therefore, while paper-based marketing material has its place, it is also clear that it may not be the most efficient method of communicating about Jobcentre Plus' digital services.

Claimants and Jobcentre Plus staff alike mentioned TV and radio adverts as a communication method, although not always recognising the costs involved. It was suggested that TV adverts would be most likely to reach Jobcentre Plus' target audience. An ERM also suggested that *'seeing it and hearing it around you makes a difference'* and made reference to the campaign about the digital TV switchover.

Other communication and marketing suggestions made by claimants and Jobcentre Plus staff included:

- business cards with relevant website addresses: Jobcentre Plus online; local recruitment agencies, etc;
- fridge magnet with the Jobcentre Plus online website address;
- a big poster in the Jobcentre and perhaps other places such as bus shelters;

- large TV screens in Jobcentre Plus offices displaying information ranging from the types of services offered online to notices about the latest jobs, similar to that seen in some Post Offices;

- advertising outside Jobcentre Plus since people visit the office by necessity and not by choice and they do not tend to want to stay around unnecessarily;

- advertising material needs to take into account the fact that the average reading age in the UK is that of an 11 year-old person and material needs to be written accordingly;

- marketing campaigns need to take advantage of partners' advertising campaigns, and have Jobcentre Plus icons on sites; and

- marketing through 'partnership working' with other organisations (NHS, government departments, local authorities).

3.6.3   Provision of online information and support in other languages

As mentioned, the levels of second language English speakers among Jobcentre Plus claimants are high and they are very likely to be digitally excluded. Those claimants in the study with English as a second language faced additional barriers to accessing online services. For example, an Urdu-speaking claimant was frustrated by her difficulty in communicating with Jobcentre Plus. She would welcome the opportunity to use an online translation service or have information available in Urdu.

> '[Translated by Urdu-speaking family member] *She is saying it's a good idea to do everything online for people like her, she is saying for her it has to be somebody there for her to make the best use of it so even if they had some information in her own language or maybe, you know something that maybe she could understand better rather than just English...it would be a great idea if they had something like that, like a translation thing online.*'

> (ESA claimant, district A, 45-54 years old, more than three years non-employed)

3.6.4   Incentives for interacting with Jobcentre Plus online

A small number of claimants thought that there should be an incentive for those without home-based internet access to go online. Individual mentions were made of: paying for a claimant's broadband connection; providing a laptop computer for those without home-based computers and who lived a long way from an internet access point; and providing an additional financial benefit for using digital services. One JSA claimant suggested that one could collect 'reward points' for using Jobcentre Plus digital channels that could be collected and used to purchase items online.

3.7   Summary

3.7.1   Views about digital services

- Claimants gave mixed responses to the notion of Jobcentre Plus digital services. Those who were uninterested in finding employment, did not feel that they could find employment because of their health or skill level, or had security fears about the internet had little interest in accessing Jobcentre Plus digital services.

- Of all the services, the online job search was the most welcomed, especially by JSA claimants. The ability to register online and access benefit information received mixed responses, primarily because of the functionality of these services. Tracking an appeal was welcomed by those experiencing this process.

- Responses to creating a claimant account and entering personal and financial information online were mixed, with some concerned about internet security.

- Changing personal details, reporting fraud, contacting advisers and better-off-in-work calculations were not seen as useful facilities as they were considered to be one-off transactions and therefore a low priority.

- Signing on-line was considered to be open to abuse.

3.7.2   Accessing digital services

- Of those claimants interested in accessing digital services, Jobcentre Plus based PCs were preferred to job points if they allowed greater internet connectivity and provided a reasonable degree of privacy.

- Jobcentre Plus services should be made more generally available online.

- Overall, there was little enthusiasm for digital channels other than via a PC, job point or kiosk located with an external provider. Smartphones were generally too expensive for this client group; receiving new job alerts by text was thought to be a useful service however. Games consoles were not generally connected to the internet and were seen as games machines rather than for internet surfing. There were also concerns about how one would input information without a keyboard; a reason also stated for not using digital television as a digital channel of choice.

3.7.3   Supporting claimants through Jobcentre Plus

- JSA claimants in particular were keen for assessment of their digital skills and training in using the Jobcentre Plus digital services. Depending on their internet skills, some would also welcome training in how to use a PC and general internet surfing. IS, IB and ESA claimants were less interested in training unless they had a definite aim of finding work as their goal.

- Both group and one-to-one training were viewed positively; however claimants with the least internet skills preferred the idea of one-to-one training. They recognised there may be resource implications.

- Help facilities would be required. A preference was expressed for telephone support by all but the most internet-experienced who thought that interactive on-line help would be valuable. Telephone help should be available from early morning to early evening, ideally with some weekend provision. On-line FAQs had limited appeal as they were felt to be too much like the paper guidance documents they received with their benefit claims.

- Claimants with disabilities did not generally require specialist equipment; if they required it, it had usually been provided by other organisations.

3.7.4   Supporting claimants through external sources

- Claimants were often supported by friends and family and there was thought to be no need to formalise this. This type of support was limited, however, by the skills and knowledge of those providing support.

- Claimants had little experience of receiving support through external providers but were not averse to doing so where they thought that learning about and accessing digital services would be of value to them.

- None of the claimants in this study thought that they needed a proxy to access Jobcentre Plus digital services on their behalf. They thought that they were sensible provisions, but of low priority to them. There were concerns about the possibility of vulnerable participants being taken advantage of by corrupt organisations.

3.7.5   Other means of encouraging claimants online

- A small number of claimants thought that there should be an incentive for those without home-based internet access to go online. These included: paying for a claimant's broadband connection; providing a laptop computer for those without home-based computers and who lived a long way from an internet access point; providing an additional financial benefit for using digital services; and collecting 'reward points' that could be used to purchase items online.

- Restricting telephone services was not seen to be a viable option by claimants or staff. The general view was that as people become more familiar with using the internet then the need for telephone services would naturally decline.

- An alternative option to restricting services is to compel people to use digital services by sanctioning their benefit if they do not do so. Claimants were strongly opposed to this and felt that compulsion could discriminate against those with limited experience, confidence or access to an online PC. Compulsion could also compound problems for those suffering depressions from being out of work. In addition, it was considered that unless an internet service can be guaranteed to operate perfectly, compulsion should not be used.

3.7.5   Additional suggestions for supporting claimants

- Claimants and staff considered that there were three additional areas in which Jobcentre Plus could support the move to digital services. These were: providing an efficient and reliable online system that was easy to use and reliable in its operation; providing support in additional languages; and raising awareness of Jobcentre Plus digital services through a variety of means including, business cards, novelty items such as fridge magnets, on site posters and television screens, local and national media advertising campaigns, social media and through partnership working with other government organisations.

4   Engaging digitally excluded Jobcentre Plus claimants

This chapter focuses on how to engage digitally excluded Jobcentre Plus claimants in using digital services. The chapter begins by distinguishing different types of claimants in terms of the barriers they face in using internet-based applications and the behavioural levers required to encourage them towards internet use. The chapter then considers the most appropriate support requirements for these different types of claimants.

4.1   A behavioural classification of digitally excluded claimants

As discussed in Chapter 2, the digitally excluded claimants participating in this study had a low level of internet experience and very limited awareness of Jobcentre Plus digital services. Chapter 3 demonstrated that there was some, limited, interest in particular types of digital services, mainly among JSA claimants as opposed to those on inactive benefits.

Ultimately, the take-up of digital services is dependent on changing the behaviour of individual claimants. This is shaped by the interplay between influencing and, or limiting, factors operating at three levels:

* **personal** – how beliefs about internet use held by claimants affect their choices;

* **social** – how claimant behaviour is shaped by the attitudes and actions of others, including staff, family and friends; and

* **environmental** – how systems in the wider context, such as the type of internet access systems currently used, and their location, dictate the choices available to them.

These are shown in Figure 4.1, together with a brief description of the factors influencing online behaviour.

Figure 4.1   Factors influencing online behaviour
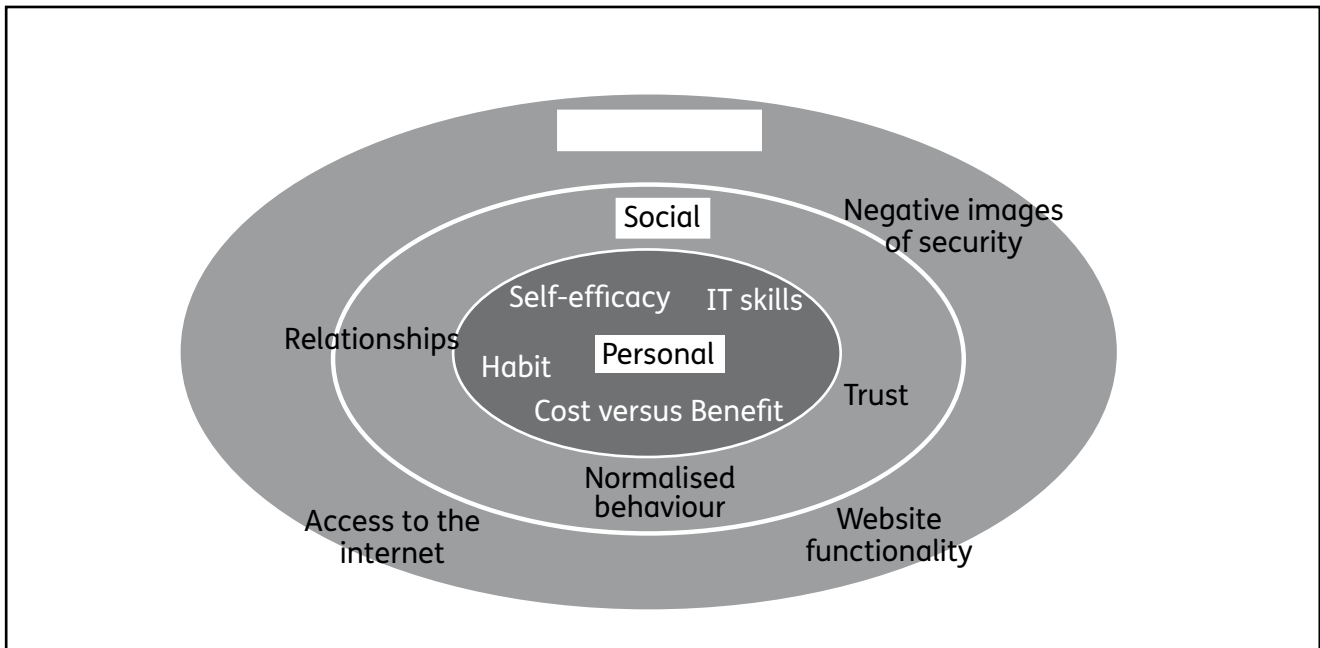
4.1.1   Personal factors

- **Self-efficacy** – eliefs about whether they will effectively manage to utilise the digital services.

- **Cost versus benefit** – Whether making the effort to learn how to use the internet adds value when compared to their current interaction with Jobcentre Plus.

- **Habit** – The tendency for staff and claimants to continue to interact as they always have done. Much of the reasons given for resisting change (e.g. that it is too difficult, time consuming or it brings little value) may be rationalisation for continuing with their habitual behaviours.

- **IT skills** – Low level of confidence or lack of skills in using the internet for informational and transactional services.

4.1.2   Social factors

- **Personal relationships** – The tendency to prefer face-to-face interaction.

- **Normalised behaviour** – The effect that social norms, that is, the behaviours perceived to be common practice by family, friends and staff had on claimants.

- **Trust** – A lack of trust in the security of websites generally; reluctance to enter personal information; and concern that changes made online may not have been changed in the system.

4.1.3   Environmental factors

- **Website functionality** – Websites that are difficult to use; difficult to navigate and that may 'go down' while in use.

- **Access to the internet** – Lack of easy access to the internet either at home or elsewhere.

- **Negative images of security** – Media portrayal of online fraud and the susceptibility of personal information leaked from online sites, including government websites.

Taking into account the personal, social and environmental factors described above, here are four primary behaviour change mechanisms:

• **educate** – to increase awareness of digital services;

• **persuade** – about the value of digital services for them;

• **design** – a digital service to allow ease of access and use;

• **control** – the use of digital services by compelling claimants to use them.

Clearly, the lack of awareness of Jobcentre Plus digital services by digitally excluded claimants indicates a need for education and general awareness-raising. However, this in itself would be insufficient to enable this group of digitally excluded claimants to use digital services; other behavioural levers are required.

A key focus of the interview process explored the barriers and potential facilitators for using digital services. Based on this information, digitally excluded claimants can be differentiated into four types:

• **unaware** – the lack of awareness of digital services is the key barrier to non-use of Jobcentre Plus digital services;

• **unready** – although there is some interest in using digital services individual barriers such as access, confidence and relevant internet skills hold this group of claimants back;

• **uninterested** – a marked lack of interest in using digital services, characterises this group of claimants;

• **unable** – for this group of claimants there are multiple barriers to using digital services, including internet access, internet skills, IT confidence, literacy skills and English language skills.

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, it is not possible to provide estimates of the proportion of claimants likely to fit into each group.

Across all of these claimant groups was an overarching concern about internet security, particularly in relation to entering personal and financial information into websites.

> *'...you've got to be reassured its 100 per cent safe.'*

> (JSA claimant, district A, 34-45 years old, two to three years unemployed)

> *'They would need to make it a wee bit more secure...For me to use it....I am not totally convinced, not yet.'*

> (IB claimant, district C, 45-54 years old, more than three years non-employed)

The four claimants groups are summarised in Figure 4.2 and will be described in detail in Section 4.2.

Figure 4.2   Digitally excluded claimant groups
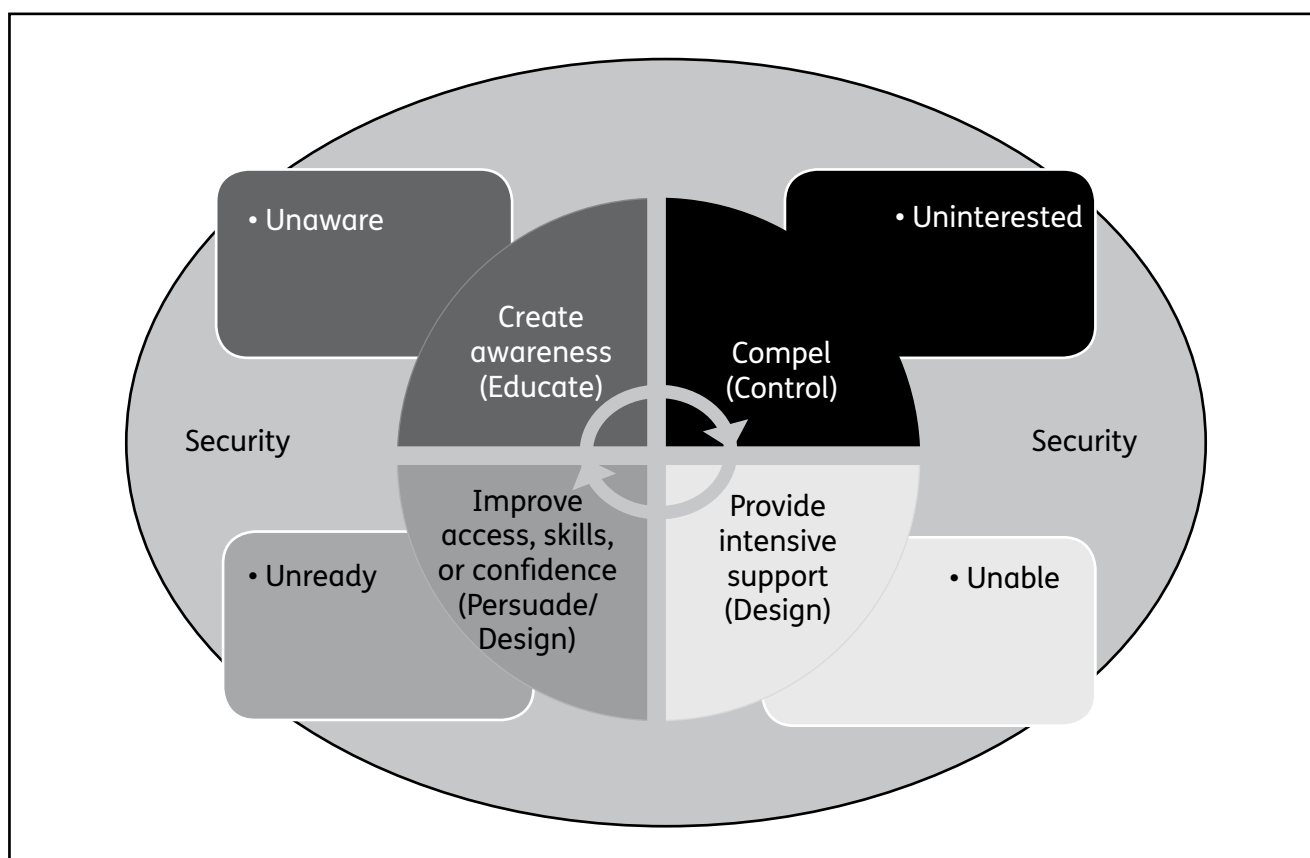
4.2   Engaging digitally excluded claimants with digital services

4.2.1   **Unaware**

The Unaware group of claimants tended to already have some internet skills developed either at school, through browsing the internet as a hobby or through employment. They also tended to be more recently unemployed (within six months) and receiving either JSA or Employment Support Allowance (ESA). Some claimants had PCs at home, although for cost reasons they may not have had a broadband subscription; others were aware that they could use their local library for internet access. Some of this group were actively looking for work, with some using the internet for job searching, either through a search engine to find vacancies or through accessing recruitment sites such as DirectGov, Monster and Jobfit[8]. However, **none of these claimants were aware of the full range of digital services offered by Jobcentre Plus and the potential benefits of these services**.

For example, one claimant used the computers at his local library and had attended two job-search training courses. When first asked, he denied having heard about the Jobcentre Plus webpages, however, with further probing he remembered being made aware at an external provider. He had little idea of what it could offer:

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[8]   For comparative purposes, this group of claimants are similar to the 'Ready, willing and able' group identified in the automated service delivery (ASD) take-up research.

'Oh yes, you just reminded me of something. Since I have been unemployed I have also been on, because when you have signed on for so long the Jobcentre sends you to various places, one being this CSV and the one before that was Remploy, they have computers there obviously and they [showed me] *this* [Jobcentre Plus] *website.'*

(JSA claimant, district A, 55-64 years old, six months – two years unemployed)

Another claimant stated:

'Whenever I go and sign on they tell you they want you to look in the Jobcentre and all that, they never tell you about any of this.'

(JSA claimant, district B, 45-54 years old, six months to two years unemployed)

For this group of claimants, there is a primary need for **education and awareness-raising** about Jobcentre Plus digital services. Apart from those who had internet security concerns this group of claimants would readily use Jobcentre Plus digital services if they knew about them.

4.2.2   Unready

The Unready group of claimants tended to be those with the longest duration on benefits, with unskilled occupational backgrounds and in receipt of JSA, with some recently moving to JSA from ESA. They do not generally use the internet, partly because they do see the value in accessing online information or services and partly because of a lack of internet skills[9]. They are behaviourally similar, in many respects, to the Unaware claimant group; they are not aware of Jobcentre Plus digital services, but there is some interest in using them. However, for these claimants there is usually one key barrier that prevents their use of digital services.

For most of these claimants the key barriers were a lack of easy access to the internet, having insufficient IT skills to use a computer and browse the internet, and lacking the confidence to do so.

Access*: 'If I had one* [computer] *it would improve my life a lot...so many things you can do on it.'*

(IS claimant, district A, 45-54 years old, more than three years non-employed)

Sufficient IT skills*: 'I don't personally use it because I don't know my way around it. Sometimes if I go to a friend, they will help me and they will look and they will get me numbers.'*

(JSA claimant, district D, 25-34 years old, less than six months unemployed)

Confidence*: 'I'd rather look at my leaflets that tell you about things...because I...get absolutely uptight sitting in front of a computer...It's like putting a red rag to a bull putting me in front of a computer. I get anxiety.'*

(ESA claimant, district B, 55-64 years old, two to three years non-employed)

One claimant, for example was fairly computer literate, but lacked confidence in her ability to perform online transactions without reassurance from a more knowledgeable user.

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[9]   For comparative purposes, this group of claimants are similar to the 'Infrequent, nudgeable' and Unconfident and concerned' groups identified in the ASD take-up research, although while these comprise only JSA claimants the Unready group comprises JSA and ESA claimants.

'…online you could be completing a wrong form or looking at the wrong information that kind of thing, so when you see somebody it confirms, so I would say the best thing is to go online and then to do as much as you can and if there's certain things you can't find then go and speak to somebody.'

(ESA claimant, district D, 25-34 years old, six months to two years non-unemployed)

Access to the internet, either via a Jobcentre Plus PC, or a kiosk in a supported environment, would provide sufficient access opportunities for this group of claimants, especially as they are in regular contact with the Jobcentre. For these claimants there is a need to **design appropriate training and support services**. In order for them to develop IT skills and feel confident in using online services, **training is required that addresses basic skills including operating a computer, using an internet browser, and accessing online services**. Group training sessions would generally be sufficient, although some of the least IT-confident may require more intensive training. Confidence is built through experience, having sufficient support and help facilities. In this respect, these claimants would require **sufficient time to develop IT skills through training and the use of a Jobcentre Plus PC or external kiosk with face-to-face support readily available and a helpdesk as a backup**.

For some of this group of claimants there is also a need to **persuade them of the value of using the internet generally and Jobcentre Plus online services**. In this respect, training sessions demonstrating the range of facilities available through the internet will be essential. Previous research (Thomas, 2002) has shown that one of the best ways to engage people in using the internet is to relate it to their own personal interests and hobbies. Once this has been recognised people tend then to gain confidence and expand the range of uses to which they use the internet.

4.2.3   Uninterested

Uninterested claimants tended to be of three types: long-term unemployed, in receipt of JSA, with an employment background in manual occupations; older JSA claimants who were only a few years away from the State Pension age and felt that it was unlikely they would find work; and JSA, ESA, Income Support (IS) or Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimants who considered that their health problems were such that it precluded them from most types of work. A typical example of the latter type of claimant was a middle aged man in receipt of IS who had not worked for over 20 years and suffered from arthritis and depression.

Invariably they had no, or minimal, experience of using the internet, although some had internet-connected computers at home. They had no interest at all in using the internet or Jobcentre Plus online services. They could not see the relevance of online services for them: either because they considered that if they were to look for work they were more likely to find it through means other than Jobcentre Plus; or that they could not conceive of themselves ever working again[10].

'I suppose I didn't think that any of it would be of relevance to me personally.'

(IS claimant, district B, 55-64 years old, more than three years non-employed)

'…lots of phone calls, through the papers, in the beginning I was walking around and going to different areas, I've got mates that live in all different areas, go to their areas, then I'd just have a wander round see the building sites and stuff like that and ask, the good old fashioned way.'

(ESA claimant, district D, 35-44 years old, six months – two years non-employed)

In discussing the internet and digital services with these claimants it was very clear that they could not see any benefit in the internet and were quite resistant to even trying it out. For these claimants

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[10]   There is no comparable claimant group in the ASD research.

the only way to get them using online services was to compel them and provide the means for them to do so. A change in behaviour will only occur if the claimant is able to see the value of the internet, has ease of access, and is supported throughout. This is likely to require **personalised support** as a means of finding the 'internet hook' that grabs the claimant's attention. This 'hook' might be: searching the internet about their hobby or interests; making friends; contacting relatives by email, social networking or Skype for example; paying bills online; or researching a family tree. Once interest has been established, then the provision of easy internet access, training, support and guidance will be required for as long as it takes for the claimant to recognise both the benefits of online services and their confidence in using them. Throughout this time, compulsion through sanctioning benefits or restricting telephone services may well be required.

4.2.4   Unable

The claimants who considered that they were unable to use the internet and Jobcentre Plus online services were all long-term non-employed and in receipt of IS, IB or ESA. Among these claimants there was little evidence of home-based computer or internet access. Internet skills were extremely limited and confined to only a few claimants[11].

Whereas the Unready group are likely to experience one barrier, the Unable group are likely to experience multiple barriers to internet use including: no, or limited, internet access; limiting health problems; poor literacy or English language skills; lack of computer and internet skills and lack of confidence about returning to work and using the internet.

> *'Well because of my age I am sort of used to doing things face to face, not like my kids and stuff, they grow up with computers from school, where with me we didn't, when I was going to school there was no such thing.'*

(IS claimant, district D, 55-64 years old, more than three years non-employed)

> *'I don't think I...am capable of learning.'*

(IB claimant, district D, 35-44 years old, more than three years unemployed).

> *'Well who's having difficulties one spelling and reading and things like that but it isn't, it's not for people like me, it's for people that's like clued up, in the know, know everything about the computer, for the people who's never been on it it's a kerfuffle it really is, even just to turn the thing on.'*

(IS claimant, district D, 45-54 years old, six months to two years non-employed)

Engaging these claimants with Jobcentre Plus digital services is likely to require intensive, personalised support, comprising:

• understanding the relevance and usefulness of the internet;

• easy access to a computer and internet services;

• basic computer training, internet browser training, email training, etc.;

• literacy and/or English language training; and

• continued computer and internet support.

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[11]   For comparative purposes, this group of claimants are similar to the 'Intensive support' and 'Multiple barriers' groups identified in the ASD take-up research, although while these comprise only JSA claimants, the Unready group comprises IS, IB and ESA claimants.

5 Supporting Jobcentre Plus claimants in their migration to digital services

This chapter describes how staff may support customers in their migration to digital services by Jobcentre Plus staff and digital partners. There were no observable variations of opinion between regions.

5.1 Supporting claimants in their migration to digital services

5.1.1 The provision of support by staff

Frontline staff played a crucial role in **creating awareness** and encouraging the use of online channels among claimants. As a Jobcentre Plus member of staff put it, *'advisers have got to get* [claimants] *interested'* (Adviser, district A, Digital Champion). Staff will be required to play a more active role in encouraging the use of digital channels among claimants and will need to be *'confident in the handling of that message now'* (Team Manager, district B).

In addition, staff highlighted the importance of providing information and **reassurance** about the risks and benefits of Jobcentre Plus online transactions, particularly in relation to ease of use and website security. This was done through 'talking to claimants and making sure they understand the process correctly' (Adviser, district A, Digital Champion) and, 'explaining [to the claimant] that the site is secure and telling them what to look for in the browser to prove that the sites are actually secure' (Assistant Adviser, district C).

Alongside this awareness raising and reassurance, it was felt that, for many claimants, without further ongoing **support** there was little chance they would utilise the online services.

> *'Well, one claimant in particular was looking to apply for a job and the application was apply online only and he said, "I can't use the internet". So I basically showed him how to* [do it] *on my computer. I advised them to go on to the library and follow the steps and wrote them down…because otherwise he couldn't have applied for the job.'*
>
> (Adviser, district C, Digital Champion)

Given concerns expressed by staff about their capacity to provide additional digital support to claimants when their own skills were inadequate; **staff training and development** were viewed as essential (see Section 5.2 for detailed discussion).

There was a general perception that with training and development, Jobcentre Plus advisers could potentially provide claimants with guidance on accessing the internet and using relevant websites such as Directgov. However, in situations where more intensive support was required, such as for digitally excluded claimants, advisers felt they should continue to refer to **external providers** to: *'do very basic to more complicated IT courses…so* [claimants] *actually gain the knowledge in how to do it themselves'* (Adviser, district C, Digital Champion).

5.1.2   Digital Champions

In every Jobcentre Plus office there was a Digital Champion, whose role was to promote the use of online services to claimants, and keep staff informed of relevant digital developments. Digital Champions were chosen from the staff at each office and either volunteered or were approached. They continued to fulfil their primary duties, but ten per cent of their working time was allocated to the role. Most had only been in their role for a couple of months before the interviews and were still settling in.

There was some confusion about the precise remit of the Digital Champion when it was created; for example, some staff had initially thought that their role was to solve IT issues for staff, and one commented that other staff kept asking him if he could fix the printer. According to one adviser, the role will be defined more explicitly when new guidelines are published.

> *'I think at the minute it is just as much and as little as you want to do on the role, whereas I think if there was something more defined obviously people would be more aware of what they should and shouldn't be doing.'*
>
> (Team Manager, district A)

However, these initial misunderstandings appeared to have been dealt with, as most staff now perceived the purpose of the role as transferring knowledge and expertise effectively to all members of staff; for example, through ensuring staff were kept up to date about the digital services offer. In another Jobcentre Plus office, an adviser for JSA claimants mentioned that their Digital Champion assisted claimants by booking them in for one-hour appointments to show them *'how to go online and what is on offer'* (Adviser, District B).

Overall, the Jobcentre Plus staff valued the Digital Champion role and felt it would provide a vital source of support for both staff and claimants when more digital services were rolled out.

5.1.3   Digital partners' role in helping Jobcentre Plus support claimants

The digital partner organisations that participated in the research included: those providing general advice and information services to claimants and other members of the general public; as well as specialist digital organisations providing online services relating to learning opportunities, employment and skills.

Specialist digital partners have a specific remit to support the Government in increasing take-up of digital services. They are expected to form part of the network of service providers that will facilitate 'assisted digital services' for digitally excluded claimants (Cabinet Office, 2011). As stated by the Cabinet Office, 'assisted digital' forms part of the strategy for providing agile, personalised and responsive digital services which are directly concerned with digitally excluded claimants:

> *'For those for whom digital channels are less accessible (for example, some older or disadvantaged people) the Government will enable a network of 'assisted digital' service providers, such as Post Offices, UK online centres and other local service providers.'*[12]

This role involves working closely with government departments. For example, in January 2011, one Digital Partner ran a marketing campaign in collaboration with Jobcentre Plus which consisted of producing and delivering information packs *'telling people about the kind of services available through Jobcentre Plus and referring them to UK online services to get support using them'* (Digital partner).

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[12]   http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/government-ict-strategy

In spite of this working relationship, the support which digital partners can provide is constrained by the fact that their staff are not necessarily directly employed and therefore the partner organisation cannot guarantee security in terms of processing financial information. As a digital partner mentioned, this has implications for the type of support such staff can provide; in practical terms it means that they would not be able to process information on claimants' behalf.

To ensure that digital partners are fulfilling their role of '...*encouraging as much digital online take up as possible*', Jobcentre Plus staff and partners highlighted a number of services which they should be providing including:

• '*free or low cost support and access in using the internet*';

• longer term, more intensive support;

• advice and information to assist users in finding their next job or developing their career;

• allowing users to search for jobs;

• support with creating a CV;

• support with self-checking their skills;

• support with identifying training opportunities; and

• making links to the full range of Jobcentre Plus digital services more explicit on websites. As a digital partner put it: '*we need staff to be advocates for* [Jobcentre Plus online] *services*' (Digital partner).

However, in the face of public spending cuts and reductions in opening hours of some partner organisations' services, the capacity of digital partners to provide ongoing assistance at currently prevailing levels or to increase help provided was questioned.

Given the potential of digital partners' advice and support services for jobseekers, there is scope for Jobcentre Plus and partners to combine efforts in identifying and reaching out to digitally excluded claimants. However, it was felt that for partners to be able to provide specific support in using Jobcentre Plus online services, the relationship and communication exchange between Jobcentre Plus and digital partners needed to be strengthened.

For example, even though digital partners may be trusted partners of the Department for Work and Pensions, they do not have direct access to the Department's online systems and cannot assist claimants in this respect. This would be necessary if they were to undertake Jobcentre Plus transactions on behalf of claimants.

Alongside this, it was suggested that a more structured system of referrals could make support more effective, particularly in cases where there is a need to follow up the claimant's progress. These referrals can range from providing claimants with the details on how to contact partner organisations to making a formal transfer of personal information. However, these types of referrals require '*some arrangement to be in place with the partner organisation*' (Digital partner) and assumes an ongoing dialogue about digital services and about partner organisations' resources to provide help.

This would be facilitated by Jobcentre Plus strengthening their relationship and ongoing dialogue with digital partners. It would be helpful to ensure that, as far as possible, Jobcentre Plus representatives are involved in beta testing of digital partners' new web-based products and services. Digital partners also indicated the need for Jobcentre Plus to make presentations to digital partners' staff on changes and developments to their online systems and services to be able to assist claimants in this respect.

5.2 Enhancing capability of Jobcentre Plus staff through training

Jobcentre Plus staff displayed a range of knowledge and differing levels of confidence about discussing digital services with claimants. Whereas some of the members of staff interviewed talked confidently about ICT and using online services, others commented that they were not *'exactly brilliant at them'* (Adviser, district B) or were not *'digitally minded'* (Adviser, district B). There was therefore a need expressed by staff for some further in-house training.

> *'Because I wouldn't feel confident like I said before, I wouldn't feel confident having a claimant in front of me now and telling them how much better the digital service was because I don't really know enough about it to promote it.'*

> (Adviser, district A)

Suggestions for enhancing the capabilities of staff included:

- training on digital channels and websites;

- an objective on 'digital awareness' in their development plans;

- training to provide reassurance to claimants about the security of Jobcentre Plus online services; and

- information to understand the implications of the changes on their role.

5.2.1   Training on digital channels and websites

Staff were largely unaware of any formal existing IT training and many felt that this would be useful either for them or for colleagues. One member of staff commented that there are *'a lot of people that don't use the internet and a lot of staff that are digitally excluded themselves'* (Adviser, district C, Digital Champion). However, they did mention a number of ways, formal and informal, through which they learned about the digital services:

- adhoc 'troubleshooting' advice from colleagues;

- advice from the Digital Champion; and

- formal emails with information about upcoming services and how services work, with links to more detailed information.

If staff are expected to be advocating a digital service, then it would seem to be a minimum requirement for those staff to have experience of using that service. Advisers mentioned that this was useful for their day-to-day business, yet the user-friendliness of the website was questioned by some as it was found to be difficult to navigate.

One adviser thought that training would be useful to confidently deal with claimant queries.

> *'I suppose yes, for someone like myself because I am not that well up on it all, it might be a good thing for us all to have an insight into it. If a claimant did come in and ask then we don't look silly and we've got the knowledge to answer the questions.'*

> (Assistant Adviser, district C)

As an example of the comments made in relation to training, an adviser indicated a preference for training to be offered in-house to provide *'a more personal service'* (Adviser, district B) rather than directing people elsewhere. This would enable Jobcentre Plus offices to gather feedback and information about the relevance and impact of the training. Another interviewee believed that staff should be given awareness sessions where they could gain 'hands on' experience in using online services: *'if you have done something then you can sell it better'* (Team Manager, district B).

5.2.2   An objective on 'digital awareness' in their development plans

The inclusion of digital awareness in staff development plans was suggested, not only to promote greater digitalisation, but also to ensure that all staff received standardised, formal instruction and information about digital services. One of the DWP External Relations Managers (ERM) mentioned the existence of *'a sort of inherent assumption'* (ERM) about staff skill levels and felt this may lead to a fear among staff about admitting any need for IT training.

> *'…less likely that our advisers will actually hold their hands up and say "I don't really know what I'm doing here", or "I am not really comfortable with it". So maybe to build in as part of our new operational year, in fact we do a sort of baseline exercise with advisers, but make sure that we create a culture where it's not about people feeling uncomfortable and that.'*
>
> (ERM)

Another ERM suggested that this was something which was happening currently, and this was part of an ongoing process of identifying training requirements.

> *'We have really robust staff, people performance arrangements in place and line managers should be looking at that and addressing it all the time. What I think will help again on that is that I understand this year we're going to have digital, in every staff member's objective, so there will be something around the digital vision, the channel shift vision and I think that will help because line managers will be able to access directly any training needs and take them forward.'*
>
> (ERM)

5.2.3   Security

Generally, staff felt that Jobcentre Plus sites were secure, or as secure as any other major organisation which holds details of individuals. However, staff were often unable to provide precise details about the levels of security and the implications of these. Furthermore, some staff had their own fears around website security and, in relation to providing personal identification information and details online, a respondent mentioned that, *'I am not exactly comfortable with that myself'* and imagined that many claimants would feel the same way (Adviser, district B).

This is one area which could be addressed quite easily so that, when asked, advisers would be able to give a standard answer regarding the security levels, and refer claimants to a leaflet or a website with further information. Besides providing staff with relevant information, training would also contribute to increasing staff's level of confidence in this respect.

5.2.4   Information to understand the changes on the staff role

Not only did most of the staff feel a need to be technically proficient and knowledgeable of the various software and platforms, and sensitive to the concerns or reluctance which might affect some claimants, they also need to be attuned to the benefits of digitalisation. To that end, it would help staff to know more fully the safeguards which will be in place regarding claimant service, the implications for staff numbers, and how their duties might alter with greater digitalisation.

5.2.5   Dissemination of information pertaining to digital services

In general, staff felt that they received a lot of information about services and it would be useful for priority information to be highlighted. Linked to this idea of prioritising the most important messages, some expressed the view that emails were perhaps not the best way for Digital Champions to communicate, as messages could easily be overlooked or deleted.

'…but sending out an email with a bit of information in it you may as well just pin a notice on the toilet door really. They are just going to delete it. So anything important like the diagnostic tool which we had recently, I actually have to take the time. I emailed it, but before I emailed it I actually went round the office and told everyone that I wanted to use it.'

(Adviser, district D, Digital Champion)

An important point was made by an ERM who suggested that the Digital Champion role is not a substitute for involvement of all staff in changing the way in which things are done.

'…I would think that the Digital Champions could all say "if I had a bit more time I could do more", but I think the idea is we're trying to contain it, trying to make sure that it's not just their responsibility. It's trying to instil that; it's every member of staff's responsibility to know more about where we're going to channel shift, to be able to advise claimants, or in terms of like myself and other partnership managers, be in a position to know which partners we need to get on board to help us with this as well.'

(ERM)

5.3   Summary

The role that staff play in encouraging claimants to use and engage with Jobcentre Plus digital channels was highlighted both by members of Jobcentre Plus staff and digital partners. Staff, especially Digital Champions, were said to be well positioned to help claimants build their confidence in using online channels and realise the direct and even indirect advantages of doing so. Besides providing them with training to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to support claimants, Jobcentre Plus staff need to have access to the resources they and their claimants need. For claimants requiring more intensive, ongoing support, digital partners were perceived as a vital resource and should therefore be working closely with Jobcentre Plus.

6   Recommendations

Digitally excluded claimants have a wide range of barriers to accessing the internet and using Jobcentre Plus digital services. Claimants also vary considerably in their 'distance' from the internet, the amount of support they will need, and the amount of time it will take before they can become digitally active. The recommendations made in this report for encouraging digitally excluded claimants to use digital services are, therefore, based on the amount of support and the type of services required and have been separated out into short, medium and long-term strategic goals. These take account of the needs of different customer groups identified in Chapter 4. Figure 6.1 provides an overview of the recommended strategies to increase the take-up of digital services by digitally excluded Jobcentre Plus claimants.

Figure 6.1   Recommended strategies

Short term					
Create awareness of Jobcentre Plus digital services	Reassure about digital service stability and security	Create online support – helps menus and FAQs	Increase staff IT confidence	Teach staff to act as digital advocates	Create simple advertising and marketing materials

Meets needs of unaware group

Medium term					
Increase internet training support to claimants	Set up one-to-one/group training sessions for claimants	Train staff to demonstrate the value of the internet (persuasion)	Train staff to act as floor-walkers/ support on-site PC users	Set up PCs in Jobcentre/ external sites	Train staff to run intensive IT training to claimants

Meets needs of unready group

Long term		
Provide personalised, intensive support to the most digitally excluded	Provide literacy/English language training	Consider implementing compulsion for the most digitally resistant

Meets needs of unable and uninterested group

6.1   Short-term strategy recommendations

A short-term, 'easy win', strategy would be to focus on embedding the digital message with claimants who regularly use the Jobcentre. This could be achieved by raising the profile of Jobcentre Plus digital services through: local and national marketing campaigns; focusing on limited digital services and channels; increasing Jobcentre Plus staff confidence in their ability to talk about digital services by providing initial training; and teaching all staff to become 'digital advocates' with the help of the Digital Champions. Jobcentre Plus need to mobilise resources to address the issues.

All of the digitally excluded claimants need to be made aware of the full range of Jobcentre Plus online services, including those who are already using the job search facility. At a local level the following would help to raise awareness of the digital message:

- mention of the digital services and security measures at the time of signing;

- reference to the digital services and website security on signing cards;

- posters inside and outside the Jobcentre;

- TV screen adverts in the Jobcentre;

- novelty advertising in the form of key rings, fridge magnets and pens; and

- A4 sheet listing relevant websites and local facilities in relation to job search, and accessing services.

If sufficient resources were available, a national advertising campaign could raise overall awareness of Jobcentre Plus online services, especially for non-active claimants receiving Income Support (IS), Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA) who have relatively little contact with Jobcentre Plus.

In terms of the digital services that should be available in the short term:

- a focus on online job search facilities that better meet the needs of claimants was the most important facility; and

- registering online, creating a claimant account and making and tracking a benefit claim or appeal were all of interest, providing claimants could be reassured about the security of the online system and that their personal information was 'safe'.

As there was little interest in the use of other digital platforms such as games consoles and digital television, the focus for this claimant group should be on providing ease of access to the internet on Jobcentre Plus sites. New job updates to mobile phones would be welcomed, but as few claimants had smart phones, there was little interest in the provision of other digital services using this channel.

Reassuring claimants about the security of Jobcentre Plus digital services was paramount. Claimants were frequently wary about entering personal information online in case the information is lost or there is a security breach; media reporting was a frequent source of such fears. This requires a three-pronged approach:

- an online system that is stable and does not 'go down' while claimants are using it, resulting in information loss;

- an online system that is known to be safe from being hacked; and

- informing claimants to look for the secure padlock sign on the website and remembering to log out when using public access points. To support this, a training task that would need to be undertaken by Jobcentre Plus staff, digital partners and staff in other centres where access points are located.

Without active engagement from staff, digitally excluded claimants are unlikely to become aware of Jobcentre Plus digital services. However, given that staff themselves may be concerned about the move to digital services and the possible effect on their jobs, and when their own internet skills are inadequate, training and development are important:

- staff need to understand the role that digital services play in everyday life generally and the role they can play in enhancing the job search process and experience;

- staff need to be trained to use the digital services available and be an 'advocate' of the services to claimants, with an objective of 'digital awareness' in their development plans; and

- staff require cheap and simple marketing materials to help promote digital services, such as posters and leaflets about where to go for further information.

Due to its focus on creating awareness, this strategy would be likely to encourage the Unaware group, made up of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and ESA claimants who had some knowledge or experience of the internet (see Section 4.2.1), to utilise the digital services. This group of claimants are unlikely to need any form of internet training or continued support from Jobcentre Plus staff, other than an occasional reminder to use Jobcentre Plus digital services.

6.2   Medium-term strategy recommendations

A medium-term set of goals that are likely to require a more resource intensive strategy would be to: increase the range of access points for claimants to use Jobcentre Plus digital services; provide IT training to digitally excluded claimants; and train selected staff to provide IT training to claimants. The Unready group[13] (see Section 4.2.2) would be the focus of a medium term strategy. This strategy would require easy access to internet-enabled services and some support from Jobcentre Plus staff or digital partners.

For claimants regularly attending the Jobcentre the key requirement is for an internet-enabled Personal Computer (PC). While these may be bookable, claimants were keen not to have to wait around to use them. Privacy was also paramount, especially where claimants were willing to enter personal information.

For inactive claimants that do not attend the Jobcentre very often there is a need to make Jobcentre Plus digital services widely available. Locations such as libraries, council offices, digital providers and other local organisations were all acceptable to claimants, providing the access points were private. Help and support would be required. Telephone and online support would generally suffice, but for claimants with lower levels of confidence in using the internet, face-to-face support would be required.

Claimants would require more wide-ranging and intensive support in the form of:

- a basic understanding of how to use a computer;

- how to access the internet;

- using a web browser;

- how to access and use Jobcentre Plus digital services;

- persuasion about the value of the internet – to read the daily news, keep up to date with sport or provide further information about a hobby or pastime may be the 'hook' that engages these claimants in digital services;

- reassurance about the safety of entering personal information and about the security measures in place; and

- sufficient time in a supported environment to build up their confidence in using the internet with face-to-face support readily available and a helpdesk as a backup.

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[13]   JSA and ESA claimants with little or no internet experience who have difficulty seeing the relevance of digital services but are not totally averse to learning about the internet.

In terms of digital services, creating, saving and printing CVs were of generally low priority and should be a medium-term goal for implementation. This service was only of interest to those for who work might become a possibility in the future. Changing personal details online, reporting fraud and contacting advisers were seen as 'one-off' transactions and, therefore, also low priority. Although there was some interest in an on-line better-off-calculator, the general view was that this was very complicated. It was felt to be more appropriate if carried out by an adviser, and, therefore, of low priority for implementation.

Jobcentre Plus staff would require additional training to support these developments and provide a useful service to claimants:

- selected staff need to be trained to run IT/internet training sessions for claimants;

- where PCs are implemented into Jobcentre Plus sites, staff floorwalkers trained to troubleshoot claimants needing help and assistance would be required.

The support that digital partners can currently provide is constrained by their limited access to Jobcentre Plus services and a view that the relationship and communications between Jobcentre Plus and digital partners needs to be strengthened. To do this there needs to be:

- enhanced partnership working;

- mutual understanding of the digital services that are being developed by Jobcentre Plus and digital partners;

- a more structured system of claimant referrals;

- more effective follow-up of claimants that have been referred by Jobcentre Plus;

- access to Jobcentre Plus digital services so that claimants can be assisted by digital partners.

6.3 Long-term strategy recommendations

The longer term, more resource intensive strategy would need to be focused on addressing the needs of claimants with multiple barriers, such as the Unable claimants (Section 4.2.4) who require long-term support, as well as the disinterested claimants requiring persuasion or compulsion before they will use digital services.

Claimants with multiple barriers to internet use are likely to need intensive, personalised support, addressing:

- literacy and language skills;

- access to the internet. As these claimants tended to be receiving IS, IB or ESA and have less opportunity to visit the Jobcentre; internet facilities will be required more locally;

- basic computer training; and

- training in the use of internet browsers and email.

These claimants will require sufficient time in a supported environment to build up their confidence in using the internet with face-to-face support readily available.

The more extreme of the disinterested group of claimants (see Section 4.2.3) have a total lack of interest, almost resistance, to using the internet as they see no value in it at all. If Jobcentre Plus wanted to move all of these claimants onto the digital services, it is likely that they would need to be compelled, providing they are also given the means to access the internet and have no personal

barriers to usage. As many in this group of claimants receive IB or IS and do not regularly attend the Jobcentre, it would be necessary to ensure that internet access is easily available in their local community; either through libraries, council offices, digital partners or other local venues. Compulsion might be in the form of a requirement to use the internet to access specific Jobcentre Plus digital services during a signing period, with the threat of a benefit sanction for non-use.

Given the long-term and intensive nature of the support required for these claimants, Jobcentre Plus staff would need to develop strong relationships with digital partners to ensure adequate provision that is suitably managed and monitored.

Appendix A
Recruitment and sampling

Recruitment

Claimant recruitment was conducted by TNS-BMRB's in-house field team using a sample provided by Jobcentre Plus. Claimants were sent an opt-out letter (translated into Welsh for all the claimants living in Wales). Following this they were invited to take part in the research by telephone and, using a screening questionnaire to determine their demographic characteristics, level of digital exclusion and eligibility for inclusion. Interview appointments were arranged at their convenience and took place at their home or a venue of their choice. A gift of £20 was offered as an incentive. Appointments were confirmed by letter and a reminder call was made the day before the appointment.

Jobcentre Plus staff, the External Relations Managers (ERMs) and partner organizations were initially sent a courtesy letter informing them of the research. This was followed up with a recruitment telephone call by the research team to arrange a time for a telephone interview. Letter or email confirmations were provided.

One hundred per cent recruitment validation checks were undertaken with ten per cent checks conducted on the quality of the interviews themselves, the transcription process and the analysis of each interview.

Achieved samples

The following tables show the number of Jobcentre Plus staff interviewed by grade across each study district and the full demographic breakdown of the sample of Jobcentre Plus claimants.

Table A.1   Jobcentre Plus staff achieved sample

	District				
Jobcentre Plus staff role	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**Total**
Band B (assistant advisers)	3	1	0	1	5
Band C (advisers)	4	3	3	2	12
Band C (digital champs)	1	1	2	2	6
Band D/E (Jobcentre Plus Manager)	2	2	1	2	7
Total	10	7	6	7	30

Table A.1   Jobcentre Plus claimant achieved sample

Claimant quota	Total
Age	
16-44 (spread across the range)	19
45-54	34
55-64	27
Length of unemployment	
Less than six months	9
Six months – two years	18
Two to three years	14
Three years and over	33
At least three years	6
Location	
London	24
District A	24
District B	15
Scotland	17
Health	
Poor health/disabled (including range of illnesses and disabilities)	29
Benefit type	
Income Support (IS)	18
Incapacity Benefit (IB)	10
Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)	30
Employment Support Allowance (ESA)	22
Previous employment	
Manual	51
Non-manual	23
Never been employed	6
Housing tenure	
Privately renting	21
Social renting	44
Home owner	15
Children	
No dependent children at home	58
Dependent children at home	22
Ethnicity	
White British	68
Black and Minority Ethnic (BME)	12
Overall total	80

Our ref: xxxx

Your ref: (Resp. serial)

March 2011

Respondent Name

Respondent Address

Dear

Jobcentre Plus research on internet usage

We are writing to you to ask for your help in a research study that has been commissioned by Jobcentre Plus. The aim of this research is to explore how to increase the awareness and use of Jobcentre Plus online channels, such as the internet, among Jobcentre Plus claimants. Your name has been selected randomly and we are contacting you for research purposes only.

The research is being conducted on behalf of Jobcentre Plus by TNS-BMRB. TNS-BMRB will be gathering views from a wide range of claimants regarding their use of online channels and we hope you would be willing to participate.

As Jobcentre Plus has contracted TNS-BMRB to conduct the research on our behalf, Jobcentre Plus is allowed to provide them with customer contact details (further information can be found at http://www.dwp.gov.uk/privacy-policy).

Please be assured that your involvement is completely voluntary and will not affect any benefit you receive, now or in the future, or any dealings you have with Jobcentre Plus or any government department or Agency.

6 More London Place
London
SE1 2QY
United Kingdom

t+44 (0)20 7656 5000
f+44 (0)20 7656 5005
www.tns-bmrb.co.uk

Everyone who participates in an interview will be given a gift of £20, as a small token of thanks.

A recruiter from TNS-BMRB may be in touch with you in March – April 2011 to ask if you are willing to participate in a face-to-face interview. If you are not contacted please assume that in this instance, your help is not needed. The interview would last about one hour and you would not need to prepare for it. With your permission, the discussion would be audio recorded but everything that is said would be treated in the strictest confidence by TNS-BMRB and personal details would not be quoted or revealed in any of the report findings. The final report will contain anonymised data only and will be published on the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) website. TNS-BMRB are strictly independent from DWP and Jobcentre Plus. All information gathered by TNS-BMRB is covered by the Data Protection Act.

If you have any questions about the research or if you do not wish to take part in an interview, please let Victoria Campbell-Hall at TNS-BMRB know as soon as possible by email at Victoria.campbell-hall@tns-bmrb.co.uk or by freephone number 0800 051 0884 or by returning the slip below to the freepost address.

Your contribution will provide Jobcentre Plus with valuable information that will help us to review the services and support provided to customers. We hope that you decide to take part.

Yours sincerely,

Faye Clitheroe

Senior Research Officer, Jobcentre Plus

✂———

I do not wish to be contacted to take part in this research (Ref xxxx).

Name:

———

Please return to:

Victoria Campbell-Hall,

TNS-BMRB

GBCC895

FREEPOST RSHK-KETY-TECS

6 More London Place

SE1 2QY

Appendix B
Analysis and behavioural insight of qualitative material

The analysis process used for this research has combined a systematic content analysis using TNS-BMRB's proprietary analytical method – **'Matrix Mapping'** together with a **social marketing approach to explore the behavioural mechanisms** required to change Jobcentre Plus claimant behaviour. **Matrix Mapping** begins with a **familiarisation stage** which includes an executive researcher's initial review of the data. Based on the coverage of the topic guide, the researchers' experiences of conducting the fieldwork and their preliminary review of the data a **thematic framework is constructed**. The analysis then proceeds by **summarising and synthesising** all the verbatim transcripts according to this thematic framework. When all the data have been sifted the analyst begins to **map the data and identify features within the data:**

- defining concepts;

- mapping the range and nature of phenomenon;

- finding associations; and
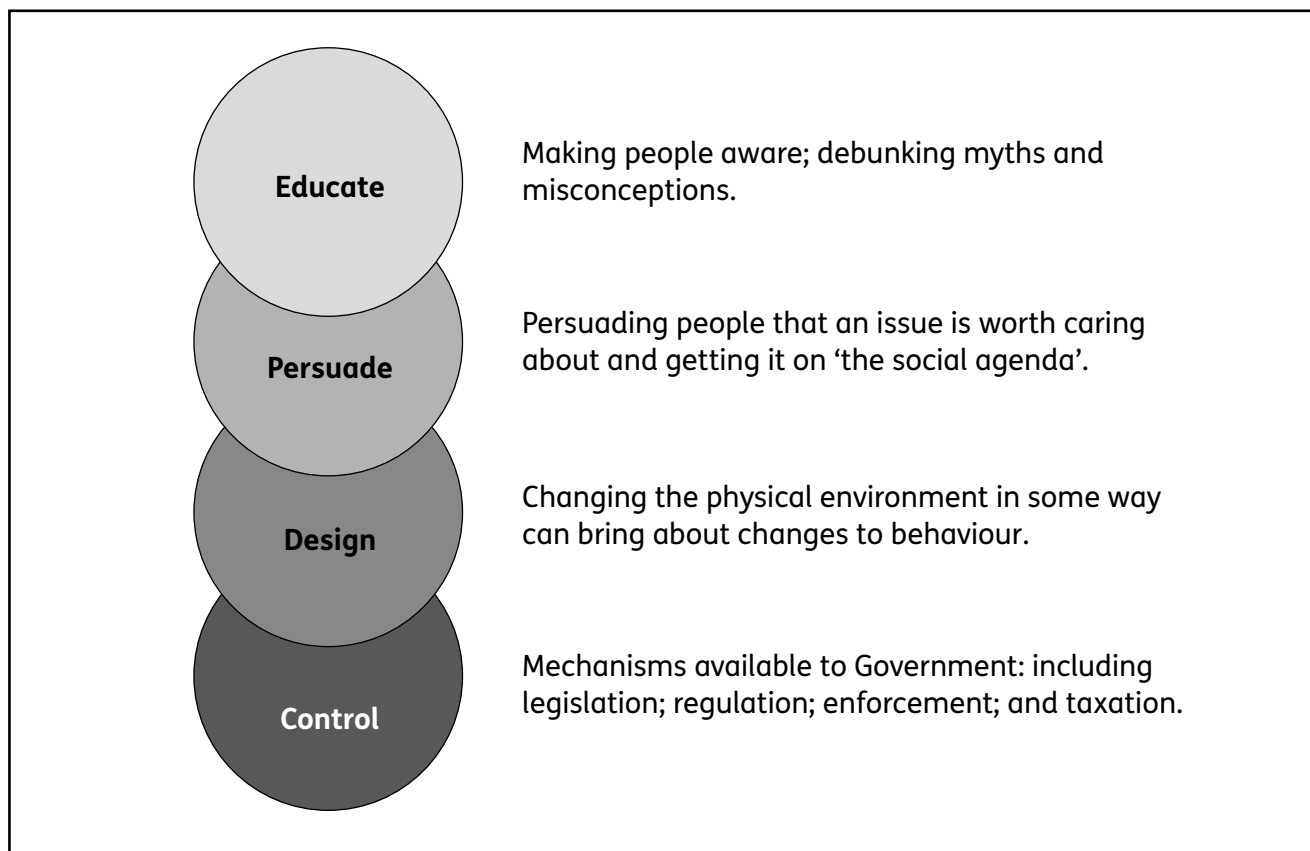
- providing explanations.

The analyst reviews the summarised data; compares and contrasts the perceptions, accounts, or experiences; searches for patterns or connections within the data and seeks explanations internally within the data set. Piecing together the overall picture is not simply a case of seeking a multiplicity of evidence, but of searching for structures within the data that have explanatory power.

A social marketing framework has then been used to:

- understand the person's environmental context, including any barriers and facilitators to their behaviour;

- determine the needs that claimants have and whether these can be usefully grouped into a behavioural segmentation; and

- consider the most effective digital services and solutions for each segment, based on the barriers they face.

This framework is based on four primary mechanisms to change peoples' behaviour; these are outlined in Figure B.1.

Figure B.1   Social marketing mechanisms

Making people aware; debunking myths and misconceptions.

Persuading people that an issue is worth caring about and getting it on 'the social agenda'.

Changing the physical environment in some way can bring about changes to behaviour.

Mechanisms available to Government: including legislation; regulation; enforcement; and taxation.

Such an approach offers an effective means of delivering actionable insights that effect real behavioural change and is used to determine which behavioural strategies and digital services would be the most effective for different groups of digitally excluded claimants.

Appendix C
Topic guides

Topic guide – customers

Aim:

To explore how Jobcentre Plus customers who experience digital exclusion can be encouraged to use Jobcentre Plus digital channels.

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
3 minutes	**Background** • TNS-BMRB independent research agency; working on behalf of Jobcentre Plus • Purpose of the interview – to explore how Jobcentre Plus customers who do not regularly use online services can be encouraged and supported to use Jobcentre Plus online services. • Recording interviews; explain recordings are only available to the research team. An explicit informed consent question is required for recording the interviews – yes/no answer • Confidential – their views will be used, but not identifiable • They can stop the interview at any time. • Duration of interview (not more than one hour). • Check they are happy to take part in the interview. Yes/No (Record answer)	

3 minutes	**Introduction**
	
	• Participant to introduce her/himself:
	  – About themselves; household composition; working or not; when last worked; last job/preferred type of work.
	• How do you usually contact Jobcentre Plus?
	• Which of the Jobcentre Plus services do you prefer (focus on non-digital)?
	  – Telephone.
	  – Offices.
	  – Online.
	  – Other.	

8 minutes	**Current online usage**
	
	• How often do you use the internet?
	  – When, number of hours.
	  – Has this changed recently? E.g. within the last six months? Why?
	  – For ex-users of the internet – (ie used to use it but no longer to so) Why do you no longer use the internet? Bad experience? What would help you get over this?
	• Where do you use the internet?	

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
	– Home, work, library, friends computer, internet café, community centres.	
	– Phone, Personal Computer (PC), digital TV.	
	– Is there sufficient communal access to computers in your community?	
	• How confident do you feel about using the internet? (spontaneous) **Then probe: Does it depend on what you are doing/who you are with?**	
	What do you feel comfortable using the internet for? Probe:	
	– information gathering, social networking, transactions;	
	– searching for a new job;	
	– social network sites such as Facebook or Twitter;	
	– online shopping/banking;	
	– finding out about government services;	
	– buying a TV license/car tax disc online;	
	– claiming benefits online;	
	– using Google search engine;	
	– looking for a holiday online;	
	– booking a holiday online;	
	– using Wikipedia.	
10 minutes	**Attitudes towards use of Jobcentre Plus online services**	
	Researcher note: The Directgov website has some information about Jobcentre Plus services and benefits (informational use) as well as the option to apply for Jobseeker's Allowance online (transactional use). For this, customers have to enter their personal details:	
	• If you wanted to access Jobcentre Plus's online services, do you know what website you would need to access? (Don't probe – see if they are aware that Jobcentre Plus web pages are hosted on the Directgov website.)	Use screen shots stimulus
	• Do you currently use any **online services** offered by Jobcentre Plus? E.G.s to discuss Benefits Adviser Service; applying for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) online, online job searching, job searching 'app' for smartphones, using Jobcentre Plus social networking sites, e.g. Facebook. (Use screenshots if necessary.)	
	– Why/why not?	
	– Has this changed over time? Why?	
	– Explore any differences in views between the transactional services and information services.	
	– What would convince you to use/help you to use websites such as these?	
	– PROBE on use and views about different platforms:	
	– internet on PC;	
	– smartphone apps;	
	– mobile internet;	
	– jobpoints – **Note to interviewer: jobpoints are not currently internet enabled – can only be used for jobsearch purposes. It would be good explore whether customers would find it valuable for jobpoints to be internet-enabled and to be able to perform other functions.)**	

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
	• If not currently using – Have you ever thought about using Jobcentre Plus online services?	
	– Why/why not?	
	Researcher note: Introduce pen portraits and discuss the differences between the two stories.	
	• Do you share any of the concerns mentioned in the first story?	
	– Why/why not?	
	• Do you have any additional concerns that were not mentioned?	
	– Cost of computer/internet access at home.	
	– Just not interested.	
	– Lack of time.	
	– Friends/family do this for me.	
	– Broadband speed locally.	
	– Already use the internet enough.	
	– Put off by the complexity.	
	– Other – really need to probe this.	
	• Which is the main barrier you experience?	
	– How could this be dealt with?	
	• Would you be comfortable using the online services as in the second story?	
	– Why/why not?	
	Labour market	
	– Registering a jobseeker profile and receive matched vacancies.	
	– Jobcentre Plus social networking site.	
	Benefit functions	
	– Applying for JSA or other benefits online.	
	– Creating a customer account. (Use screenshots if necessary.)	
	– Declaring changes in circumstances such as method of payment/ change of address or declare earnings from work.	
	– Reporting suspected fraud.	
	• What Jobcentre Plus services would be least comfortable using online?	
	– Reasons why.	
	– What would make you more comfortable in using Jobcentre Plus online services?	
	• Please list the top three Jobcentre Plus services you would want to use online.	
	– Explore reasons.	
	• What do you see as the potential benefits to you?	
	• What would be the downsides.	
	– How might these be dealt with.	
	• What about if Jobcentre Plus services were available through different devices such as digital TV and games consoles?	
	– Would you use them; which ones?	
	• If you began using Jobcentre Plus online services, what would encourage you to continue using them?	
		Continued

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
	• What would make you stop using digital channels?	
	• What would you do if certain Jobcentre Plus services were made compulsory to use on line? **Probe on level of comfort the customer would experience.**	
40 minutes	Possible interventions to encourage use of Jobcentre Plus online services.	
	Researcher note: Most important section of the interview.	
	Using the pen portraits once again.	Use pen portraits
	Refer to screen shots if necessary.	
	• What would it take to move someone from being unable or unwilling to use Jobcentre Plus online services, as in the first story, to being able and willing to use these services, as in the second story?	
	• Can you suggest some possible actions that Jobcentre Plus could take to support and motivate customers?	
	Researcher note: Probe spontaneous suggestions with prompts below. Then show cards with additional Jobcentre Plus suggestions and probe with prompts below.	Use showcards
	Showcards	
	• Read through the options for interventions to encourage use of Jobcentre Plus online services.	
	– Probe on views of the interventions/solutions; barriers; facilitators; other suggestions.	
	– Ask them to identify which ones they find most appealing/the best ideas. Then for those solutions, explore:	
	– Why is it appealing?	
	– What are the advantages of the solution(s)?	
	– Would it help them to feel less digitally excluded?	
	– Do they think these interventions would mean they would be less likely to contact Jobcentre Plus in other ways? E.g. on the telephone or in person at a Jobcentre.	
	– If the solution worked and they were able to use Jobcentre Plus's digital channels in future, what benefits would it bring to them?	
	– Then ask them to identify the solutions that they find least appealing/ the worst ideas. For these solutions, ask:	
	– Why isn't it appealing?	
	– What are the main disadvantages of the solution(s)?	
	– Can they think of anyone it would appeal to?	
	• Have you heard of UK Online Centres (switch to Learn Direct Wales or Skills Development Scotland for customers outside of England)? Have you ever attended one? If so to do what? How useful did you find it?	
	• Have Jobcentre Plus staff recommended particular websites/online training? Do you think it would be useful if Jobcentre Plus recommended particular websites, etc?	
	• Have they attended computer training courses in the past? E.g. Age UK, UK Online courses, college courses.	

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
5 minutes	**Communication and marketing**	
	• Have you received any information about Jobcentre Plus services and your benefits? Where from? How did you know where to look?	
	– Staff.	
	– Jobcentre Plus offices.	
	– Online.	
	– Media.	
	– Leaflets.	
	– Other.	
	• Where did you get information about Jobcentre Plus online services (if relevant)?	
	– Staff.	
	– Jobcentre Plus offices.	
	– Online.	
	– Media.	
	– Leaflets.	
	– Other.	
	• Do you think it would be useful to be given a business card from the Jobcentre that gives details about JSA Online and the Benefits Advice Service on-line? (Can refer to screenshots if necessary).	
	• Have you seen any national or local campaigns on Jobcentre Plus online services?	
	– (National – BBC Connect First Click http://www.bbc.co.uk/connect/campaigns/first_click.shtml; Go ONline, Financial Times article.	
	– Local – Online themed services week in week commencing 27 September 2010 (in Jobcentres); joint campaign between Jobcentre Plus and UK Online – Go ON.	
	• The Government are keen to make more of Jobcentre Plus services available online. One reason for doing this is makes the Jobcentre Plus services less expensive. Another is to make Jobcentre Plus's services better – for example to offer 24/7 jobsearch support. What do they think about this idea? Why?	
	– Likely views of other customers.	
	• What do you feel would be the most effective way to encourage customers to use Jobcentre Plus online services	
	Anything else they would like to add?	
	Are they happy for us to use their interview? Yes/No (Record answer)	
	THANK AND CLOSE	

List of interventions

Make more Jobcentre Plus services (e.g. applying for benefits, accessing a customer account where you can register changes of circumstances) available on a job point/kiosk/PC in the office. Aspects to consider:

– providing job points in a secure/private area;

– make job points/kiosks available in more convenient locations such as Local Authority offices/libraries/community centres. – so can conduct job search in other venues that may be more convenient.

Make services (e.g. job search, applying for benefits, accessing a customer account where you can register changes of circumstances) available through other digital channels:

– smartphone apps for different areas such as a 'customer account' app or a 'better off in work calculator' app.

– digital TV;

– games consoles.

Provide specialist equipment (such as braille computer workshop materials) for people with disabilities.

Tackle a lack of broadband in certain areas.

Create a helpdesk available for extended support (telephony/on-line, virtual/videos).

Demonstrations on how to search and apply for jobs, check progress of claim and report changes in circumstances:

• by advisers/Jobcentre Plus staff;

• provide support from external organisations available on-site.

• What if demonstrations included how to check the information is entered correctly and how to correct mistakes.

Signposting to other organisations (external to Jobcentre Plus) that can provide support in using computers.

Encourage customers to seek support from friends, family or other networks

Enable someone else to act on the customer's behalf digitally:

- empower another organisation such as Citizens Advice Bureau or local community organisations to interact digitally on a customer's behalf;
- enabling a customer to formally appoint someone they trust to access Jobcentre Plus services, including online services, on their behalf.

Jobcentre Plus or partners to conduct assessments on customers to identify their level of digital exclusion and identify the next steps to help.

Information on website security protection.

Requiring people who are looking for work to search and apply for jobs online, and sanctioning benefits if they do not (without a good reason).

Restricting access to telephone services.

Jobseeker's Allowance : Directgov - Money, tax and benefits - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/BenefitsTaxCreditsAndOtherSupport/Employedorlookingforwork/DG_10018757

directgov jsa

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Friday, 7 January 2011

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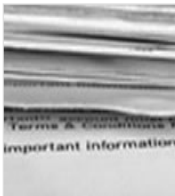
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Money, tax and benefits

Jobseeker's Allowance

Jobseeker's Allowance is the main benefit for people of working age who are out of work or work less than 16 hours a week on average. If you're eligible, it is paid while you're looking for work. Find out more, including how to apply online.

Who can get Jobseeker's Allowance?

To get Jobseeker's Allowance you must be:

- available for, capable and actively seeking work
- aged 18 or over but below State Pension age
- working less than 16 hours per week on average
- in Great Britain

Jobseeker's Allowance isn't normally paid to 16 or 17 year olds, except in special cases.

If you're a man who has reached the Pension Credit qualifying age, you may be able to claim Pension Credit. Contact Jobcentre Plus for advice. The Pension Credit qualifying age is gradually increasing for men and women from 60 to 65 between April 2010 and 2020.

▸ Find your local Jobcentre Plus office

▸ Benefits for young people (young people section)

▸ Understanding Pension Credit (pensions and retirement planning section)

How it works

There are two types of Jobseeker's Allowance, 'contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance' and 'income-based Jobseeker's Allowance'.

Contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance

You may be entitled to claim contribution-based Jobseekers Allowance if you have paid enough National Insurance contributions. Jobcentre Plus can pay this for up to 182 days. Generally, self-employed contributions will not help you qualify for contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance.

Claim Jobseeker's Allowance online

Jobseeker's Allowance
Claim online

▸ Claim Jobseeker's Allowance

Search for a job

Search for a job
Online

▸ Search for a job

Done   Internet   100%

start   Inbox - Microsoft Out...   Topic guides   220849 DWP digital e...   Jobseeker's Allowanc...   EN   10:00

Jobseekers Allowance Claim: Directgov - Windows Internet Explorer

https://www.dwpe-services.direct.gov.uk/portal/page/portal/jsaol/lp?_piref37_34755_37_34754_34754.__ora_navig=action%3Dquestion%26pageno%3D3   Live Search

File   Edit   View   Favorites   Tools   Help

Jobseekers Allowance Claim: Directgov   Page ▾ Tools ▾

Directgov   Accessibility ┊ Help using this service

Jobseeker's Allowance Online

Eligibility

Questions marked with a * are mandatory

Getting started

* Your date of birth
Enter date as DD MM YYYY.
You must be aged 16 years or over to claim JSA.
Please check the date you have entered is correct as it cannot be changed
later

Day [   ]   Month [   ]   Year [   ]

* Your sex

○ Male ○ Female

* Do you have a partner?
Partner means a person you are married to, have a civil partnership with
(including same-sex marriage), or live as a couple with and:
  • is age 16 years or over, and
  • is a member of the same household, and
  • may temporarily not be living at the same address

○ Yes ○ No

* Do you have any dependent children aged under 20 living with you?
This includes any child or young person in full-time education up to and
including GCE A levels, Scottish Certificate of Education Higher Level or
equivalent. In addition, the dependent child must be the responsibility of
any adult you are claiming for

○ Yes ○ No

*** Are you claiming Jobseeker's Allowance because Employment & Support
Allowance stopped since 7 December 2010?**

○ Yes ○ No

▸ Need help with the meaning of 'Employment & Support Allowance Stopped'

Continue ➡

Done   Internet   100%

start   Inbox - Microsoft Out...   Topic guides   220849 DWP digital e...   Apply for Jobseeker's...   Jobseekers Allowanc...   EN   10:01

Directgov
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Money, tax and benefits

Beginner's guide to benefits

▸ How to find out if you qualify for benefits

Work out if you're able to get any State Benefit assistance particularly if you are sick, have a low income or dependent children

▸ Jobcentre Plus payday changes

Find out about changes to the day on which most people receive their working age benefits

▸ Understanding the benefits system

An overview of the benefits system, including how payments are made and how to make a claim

▸ How benefits and pensions are paid

Information about Direct Payment and how benefits and pensions are paid directly into a bank or building society account

▸ The difference between Direct Payment and 'direct payments'

How Direct Payment of benefits and pensions is different from 'direct payment' by social services to enable you to buy the help you need

▸ Applying for a National Insurance number

How to get a National Insurance number, when you'll need one, and what to do if you don't receive it or forget or lose it

▸ How to claim benefit

Find out which department you need to contact in order to claim a benefit - and how to do it

▸ Changes that affect your benefit

Make sure you are always getting what you are entitled to - know what changes affect your benefits

▸ What to do if your benefit is overpaid

Benefit overpayments - why you might be paid too much benefit, whether you'll have to pay it back and how you'll repay it

▸ How to appeal against a benefits decision

Appealing against benefits decisions including Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and Child Benefit

▸ Claiming benefits in Europe

Claiming benefits, tax credits or other financial support abroad in the European Economic Area (EEA) and other countries that have social security arrangements with the UK

See also...

▸ Your money (parents section)

▸ Financial support (disabled people section)

▸ Benefits (Britons living abroad section)

Benefits advice online

Benefits
Advice online

Get benefits advice by using this online tool to answer questions about your situation

▸ Benefits adviser

Do it online

▸ Appeal against a benefit decision (leaflet GL24)

▸ Apply for Housing Benefit or Council Tax Benefit (form HCTB1)

▸ Claim Child Benefit online

▸ Report benefit fraud

Useful contacts

▸ Money, tax and benefits contacts

Done   Internet

Start   B..

Topic guide – Jobcentre Plus staff

Aim:

To explore how Jobcentre Plus customers who experience digital exclusion can be encouraged to use Jobcentre Plus digital channels.

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
5 minutes	**Background** • TNS-BMRB independent research agency; working on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). • Purpose of the interview – see above. • Recording interviews; explain recordings are only available to the research team. • Confidential – their views will be used, but not identifiable • They can stop the interview at any time. • Duration of interview (not more than one hour). • Are they happy to continue with the interview? Yes/No (Make sure their answer is recorded).	

5 minutes	**Introduction**
	
	 • Participant to introduce her/himself:
	  – Role.
	  – Day-to-day responsibilities.
	 • What online channels do you have experience with using?
	  – Mobile phone, smartphone, computer, digital TV.
	  – Note: May need to describe difference between standard and smartphones.
	  – How confident they feel **using** digital media (note differences in confidence with different media).
	  – How confident they feel **discussing** different digital media (note differences in confidence with different media.	

10 minutes	**Current context** • What do you know about the Jobcentre Plus online services? (spontaneous and then probe): – DirectGov, JSA online, benefits adviser. • Do you know what the current Jobcentre Plus policy is regarding informing and supporting customers to use Jobcentre Plus online services? Do you know what customers can do and are expected to do digitally? Do you feel that customers should develop their digital skills? Why/Why not? • Have you received any training regarding the new services Jobcentre Plus provides/has introduced online? E.g. introduction of JSA online applications; Benefit Adviser Service web pages (for information gathering on benefits). Is guidance available on the intranet for you? Do you know where to look for guidance? Do you know where to find the on-line services? (Web links, etc.) • What do you know about forthcoming Jobcentre Plus digital services such as JSA On-line and Transforming Labour Market Services (TLMS)? **(Note to interviewer – TLMS is still being developed so staff may not know much about it.)**	

Continued

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
	• Jobcentre Plus is keen to enable customers to use digital services. Some of these customers may be 'digitally excluded'. Are they familiar with the term? (Explain if not familiar.) Would you be able to recognise customers who are digitally excluded? How?	
	• What do you feel you are allowed to do with customers in relation to on-line services when you meet with a customer, e.g. are you allowed to spend time searching websites with them, are you able to email their CV to employers, are you able to access the websites you need to be able to access (or does the DWP IT firewall stop you accessing certain websites?) Etc.	
	• If you have previously encouraged a customer to use online services, what was their reaction? Please describe the situation. What did you do to encourage them?	
	• Have you ever handed out the Jobcentre Plus business cards with details of JSA Online and the Benefits Adviser Service website links on them? **(These are marketing tools that offices may have used.)** Have you handed out any other forms of marketing relating to Jobcentre Plus's online services? If so what.	
	• Have you ever received any feedback from customers who have used any Jobcentre Plus online services? How was this viewed?	
	• Do you know if there are any leaflets to give to customers who wish to use online services? If so, what?	
	• Do you know if there is any support available for customers who wish to use online services? If so, what? Probe for UK Online/other partners, and for campaigns, e.g. Go ON campaign	
	• Do you use any online services on behalf of customers (proxy use)? E.g. do you access Jobcentre Plus's jobsearch pages for them?	
	– What services?	
	– Why/why not?	
	– Whether scope for doing more of this with additional services being brought online.	
	• What are you allowed to do on behalf of customers in the digital space?	
15 minutes	**Attitudes towards use of Jobcentre Plus online services**	
	• What would you see as the potential impact of increasing digital services/channel use among customers on your work? **List the services as they may not be aware of what these changes are:**	
	– benefits;	
	– costs;	
	– disadvantages. (E.g. less face to face contact? Is this a problem?)	
	• What would you see as the potential impact for customers of increasing the digital services available? **Spontaneous and then probe specifically for digitally excluded customers:**	
	– benefits;	
	– costs;	
	– disadvantages.	
	• What would you see as the potential impact for staff of promoting digital services/increasing the digital services available? **(Note to interviewer – staff may have concerns about impact on future job roles and numbers of staff required.)**	

Continued

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
	• Do you think the drive to use online services will impact on customer service? If so, how? **Probe for positives and negatives.**	
	• In your opinion, how will the online services enable you to do things differently with customers at Fortnightly Jobsearch review (FJR)/adviser interviews.	
	• Do you know what security measures are in place for Jobcentre Plus online services? E.g. JSA On-line:	
	– How informed?	
	– Whether sufficient?	
	• What kinds of things do you think may be personally problematic?	
	• Are there any aspects of online services that you feel you would need additional resources or training for? If so, what. How this can be addressed?	Ranking exercise
	• Which Jobcentre Plus services do you think would be most useful to have available online for customers?	
	– Searching/applying for vacancies.	
	– Registering a jobseeker profile and receive matched vacancies.	
	– Creating a customer account.	
	– Making or changing appointments with advisers.	
	– Carrying out better off calculations.	
	– Creating and saving a CV.	
	– Printing CV.	
	– Applying for JSA or other benefits online.	
	– Making enquiries about own claim and payments.	
	– Declaring changes in circumstances such as method of payment/change of address or declare earnings from work.	
	– Reporting suspected fraud.	
	– Jobcentre Plus social networking website.	
	• How effectively do you think you would be able to support a customer in doing these digital transactions?	
	• Are there any services that should not be made available online?	
	– Why/why not.	
	– **Here it is important to tease out whether it is a customer or a staff issue.**	
	• Please rank these services in order of importance.	
	• Do you think that all customers will feel confident using online services rather than other methods such as face-to-face or telephone? Why?	
	– If not, how can Jobcentre Plus ensure that no customers are excluded during this process?	
	– Do you feel confident in knowing and identifying vulnerable customers who wouldn't use digital online channels?	
	• If customers began using Jobcentre Plus online services, what would encourage them to continue and not go back to using other channels like face-to-face or telephone?	
	• What would be the likely reaction of Jobcentre Plus customers if it was made compulsory to use Jobcentre Plus online for certain services?	

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
	• In your opinion, how can Jobcentre Plus staff convince digitally excluded customers to use DWP's digital channels?	
	• How do you think digital exclusion should be defined? E.g. this project has defined it as accessing the internet less than three times a month.	
	Security questions	
	• How secure do you feel Jobcentre Plus's online services are?	
	• Do you feel confident in recommending online services to customers in terms of their level of security?	
	• Have you seen the guidance on the intranet reassuring staff that Jobcentre Plus Digital Services have security levels similar to those used by banks online? (States that it is fully protected and accredited to Cabinet Office standards.)	
	Role of Digital Champions	
	For non-Digital Champions	
	• Do you know if your office has a Digital Champion?	
	Researcher note: If so – continue. If not – ask whether a Digital Champion is a good idea and what their role should be. NB: All offices should have a Digital Champion:	
	• What are the responsibilities of the Digital Champion?	
	• Do you feel the Digital Champion has adequate time to provide support to staff?	
	• In your opinion, is the information provided by Digital Champions adequate and up to date?	
	• Has your Digital Champion provided support to you? If so, how/what?	
	• Have you learned new knowledge/changed your working practices as a result?	
	• How could Digital Champions best provide support for:	
	– Jobcentre Plus staff;	
	– Jobcentre Plus customers.	
	• How can Digital Champions help create a climate of interest and trust in digital channels such as the internet?	
	For digital champs	
	• What are your responsibilities as a Digital Champion?	
	• Did you volunteer for the role? If so why?	
	• Do you feel you have adequate time to dedicate to your Digital Champion role? **(NB: Bearing in mind that the role is only intended to take up ten per cent of their FTE time.)**	
	• What would be your thoughts on having more than one Digital Champion per office?	
	• What training have you received for the role? Do you feel technical training would be useful?	
	• Who do you go to if you have a question/query regarding your role as Digital Champion? Is there a focal person you can go to with thoughts, suggestions and questions? If not, would this be useful?	
	• Do you currently provide support for:	
	– Jobcentre Plus staff; what?	
	– Jobcentre Plus customers (generally).	

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
	– What support? For example:	
	– Verbal advice?	
	– Written guidance?	
	– Signposting?	
	– Do you: give demonstrations?	
	– Do you carry out one-to-one tutorials with staff?	
	– Do you ensure accurate information about Jobcentre Plus online digital services is provided in Back To Work and group sessions with customers?	
	– Do you promote digital campaigns? (E.g. Go ON campaign, BBC 'First Click' campaign.)	
	– Have you developed a list of local partners who can provide digital support?	
	– Have you collected ideas about how to promote digital services to customers from staff?	
	• Could this support be improved? If so, how/what?	
	• Have you thought specifically about how to support customers (directly or indirectly) who are digitally excluded? If so how?	
	• If you had the opportunity, what else would you like to be able to do to increase digital take up by customers and to increase staff awareness?	
	• Have staff learned new knowledge/changed their working practices as a result of your support?	
	• There is a 'Digital Champion' intranet webpage. Do you access and use this intranet site? How useful is it? How often do they use it? What is most useful on the site? Do you access/take part on the Digital Champion discussion group page?	
	• There was a 'Your Call' on-line event on 1 February with Martha Lane Fox, and two of the Jobcentre Plus directors – did you take part? If so how useful was it? Did you submit a question? Was it answered? If not had you wanted to join in? **(NB: only a limited number of places were available.)**	
	• How can Digital Champions help create a climate of interest and trust in digital channels such as the internet?	
	• Are you in touch with local partners like UK Online/Skills Development Scotland/Learn Direct Wales?	
	• For **greater acceptance** of digital service provision (by Jobcentre Plus customers and staff), what would have to change	
	• Do you know what Jobcentre Plus's future plans are regarding meeting the needs of digitally excluded individuals?	
17 minutes	Possible interventions to encourage use of Jobcentre Plus online services	
	• What did you think could be done to encourage digitally excluded individuals to use Jobcentre Plus online services? (Spontaneous views.)	Interventions exercise – see stimulus material
	• Read through the options for interventions to encourage use of Jobcentre Plus online services (on stimulus sheet).	
	– Probe on views; barriers; facilitators; other suggestions.	
	• Rank solutions – or identify ones they think would work best in practice.	
	• Are different solutions better for different customers? (E.g. with different reasons for digital exclusion – access, training/confidence, security, etc.) Fully explore.	
		Continued

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
8 minutes	**Communication and marketing**	
	• Where do you get information about changes to Jobcentre Plus services and benefits?	
	– Staff (line manager, colleagues, Digital Champion).	
	– Online.	
	– Jobcentre Plus intranet.	
	– Media.	
	– Leaflets.	
	– Other.	
	• Where do you get information about changes to Jobcentre Plus online services?	
	– Staff (line manager, colleagues, Digital Champion).	
	– Online.	
	– Jobcentre Plus intranet.	
	– Media.	
	– Leaflets.	
	– Other.	
	• Are you aware of any current or previous Jobcentre Plus marketing campaigns (including for online services)? E.g. Go ON campaign running from 17 January to 14 February:	
	– Where seen?	
	– Views about impact.	
	• In light of the recent government spending cuts, what do you feel would be the most effective communication and marketing techniques to encourage customers to use Jobcentre Plus online services (spontaneous and then probe)?	
	– Public awareness campaign.	
	– Letter from Jobcentre Plus.	
	– Encouragement and information from adviser.	
	– Through call centre.	
	– Other.	
	Do you have anything to add?	
	Remind them that the interview is confidential and anonymous.	
	Are you happy for us to use your interview as part of the research? Yes/No (Record answer)	
	THANK AND CLOSE	

Topic guide – External Relationship Manager

Aim:

To explore how Jobcentre Plus customers who experience digital exclusion can be encouraged to use Jobcentre Plus digital channels.

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
5 minutes	**Background** • TNS-BMRB independent research agency; working on behalf of Jobcentre Plus (Jobcentre Plus). • Purpose of the interview – see above. • Recording interviews; explain recordings are only available to the research team. Gain explicit informed consent for this. • Confidential – their views will be used, but not identifiable. • They can stop the interview at any time. • Duration of interview (not more than one hour). • Check they are happy to take part – explicit informed consent	

5 minutes	**Introduction**
	
	• Participant to introduce her/himself.
	  – Role.
	  – Day-to-day responsibilities.
	• What online channels do you have experience with using?
	  – Mobile phone, smartphone, computer, digital TV.
	  – Note: May need to describe difference between standard and smartphones.
	  – How confident they feel **using** digital media (note differences in confidence with different media).
	  – How confident they feel **discussing** different digital media (note differences in confidence with different media.	

10 minutes	**Current context** • What role do you play in relation to Jobcentre Plus digital services? • What is the current Jobcentre Plus policy regarding informing and supporting customer to use Jobcentre Plus online services? – DirectGov, JSA online, benefits adviser. • Do you know where to source information about online services? • Does Jobcentre Plus have any support available for customers who wish to use online services?	
15 minutes	**Attitudes towards use of Jobcentre Plus online services** • Jobcentre Plus is keen to enable customers to use digital services. Some of these customers may be 'digitally excluded'. Are they familiar with the term? (Explain if not familiar.) Would you be able to recognise customers who are digitally excluded? How? • Who (in your area) do you see as the **most important external partners** in helping DWP achieve greater use of digital channels (digital partners, employers, third sector, local authorities)? Why?	

Continued

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
	• To your knowledge, have external partners been informed of Jobcentre Plus's digital plans? (e.g the drive to encourage as many customers as possible to use digital services) If so, how? **(I don't think there has been any external communications yet but useful to ask.)**	
	• Are you aware of any plans for co-ordination with other organisations focused on digital inclusion such as UK Online. If yes, what? What other steps are planned? E.g. Go ON campaign in England.	
	• How receptive to providing assistance to Jobcentre Plus customers in switching to use of digital channels do you expect external digital partners to be?	
	• Do you work with Digital Partners? If so who? If not are there plans to? Does anyone else in the District/Region work with them?	
	• Do you see yourself as having a role in working with digital partners to encourage more customers on-line?	
	• What links do you have with office level Digital Champions?	
	• What are the greatest challenges in working with external partners?	
	• Would you say that Jobcentre Plus's plans to encourage digital usage among its customers fit with the objectives of external partner organisations? If not, what is the impact; how can this be addressed?	
	• Given resource pressures, do you think external partners will have the **capacity** to assist Jobcentre Plus in achieving objectives for expansion of use of digital services?	
	• What roles should the **private** sector play (if any) in helping digitally excluded individuals embrace the use of digital channels?	
	• What roles should the **third** sector play (if any) in helping digitally excluded individuals embrace the use of digital channels?	
	• What changes and advantages do you think moving towards delivering our services digitally will bring to your work?	
	• Would you say that the drive to use digital platforms will impact on customer service? If so, how? Pros/cons.	
	• In your opinion, how important is staff engagement to convince digitally excluded customers to use Jobcentre Plus's digital channels? Why?	
	• How do you think digital exclusion should be defined? E.g. this project has defined it as accessing the internet less than three times a month.	
17 minutes	**Possible interventions to encourage use of Jobcentre Plus online services**	
	• What did you think could be done to encourage digitally excluded individuals to use Jobcentre Plus online services? (Spontaneous views.)	Interventions exercise – see stimulus material
	• Read through the options for interventions to encourage use of Jobcentre Plus online services (on stimulus sheet).	
	– Probe on views; barriers; facilitators; other suggestions.	Ranking exercise
	• Identify those solutions they feel would be most useful, for different types of digitally excluded customers (access, training/confidence, security, etc).	
8 minutes	**Communication and marketing**	
	• Do you share information about changes to Jobcentre Plus services with external partners? Who (digital partners, employers, Local Authorities)? If so, how?	
	• Do you share information about changes to Jobcentre Plus services with colleagues? If so, how?	

Continued

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
	• Can you tell me about any current or previous Jobcentre Plus marketing campaigns (including for online services)? e.g. Go ON campaign, others?	
	– Where?	
	– Views about impact?	
	• In light of the recent government spending cuts, what do you feel would be the most effective communication and marketing techniques to encourage customers to use Jobcentre Plus online services (spontaneous and then probe)?	
	– Public awareness campaign.	
	– Letter from Jobcentre Plus.	
	– Encouragement and information from adviser.	
	– Through call centre.	
	Do you have anything to add?	
	THANK AND CLOSE	

Topic guide – Digital partners

Aim:

To explore out how Jobcentre Plus (Jobcentre Plus) customers who experience digital exclusion can be encouraged to use Jobcentre Plus digital channels.

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
5 minutes	Background	
	• TNS-BMRB independent research agency; working on behalf of Jobcentre Plus (Jobcentre Plus).	
	• Purpose of the interview – see above.	
	• Recording interviews; explain recordings are only available to the research team.	
	• Confidential – their views will be used, but not identifiable.	
	• They can stop the interview at any time.	
	• Duration of interview (not more than one hour).	
5 minutes	Introduction	
	• Participant to introduce her/himself:	
	– Role.	
	– Day-to-day responsibilities.	
10 minutes	Current context – QUESTIONS FOR ALL PARTNERS	
	• Do you know what the current Jobcentre Plus policy is regarding informing and supporting customer to use Jobcentre Plus online services?	
	DirectGov, JSA online, benefits adviser.	
	• Have you ever received any feedback from customers who have used any Jobcentre Plus online services? How was this viewed?	
	• Do you have any information materials to give to customers who wish to use online services? Probe specifically for Jobcentre Plus online services.	
	• Do you have any support available for Jobcentre Plus customers who wish to use online services?	

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
	• Do you/your organisation use any online services on behalf of Jobcentre Plus customers (proxy use)?	
	– Why/why not?	
	– Whether scope for doing more of this with additional services being brought online	
15 minutes	**Attitudes towards use of Jobcentre Plus online services QUESTIONS FOR ALL PARTNERS**	
	• What impact do you think Jobcentre Plus's increase in digital/online services would have on your work/your organisation's work?	
	• What impact do you think Jobcentre Plus's increase in digital services would have on customers? **Spontaneous and then probe specifically for digitally excluded customers.**	
	• Will the drive to use digital platforms have any impact on customer service? If so, how?	
	• Do you know what security measures are in place for Jobcentre Plus online services?	
	– How informed/found out.	
	– Whether sufficient.	
	– Awareness of customers' views	
	– Security in place for customers using their computers.	
	– Actions to raise awareness of being secure online.	
	• Which Jobcentre Plus services do you think would be most useful to have available online for customers?	
	– Searching/applying for vacancies.	
	– Registering a jobseeker profile and receive matched vacancies.	
	– Creating a customer account.	
	– Making or changing appointments with advisers.	
	– Carrying out better off calculations.	
	– Creating and saving a CV.	
	– Printing CV.	
	– Applying for JSA or other benefits online.	
	– Making enquiries about own claim and payments.	
	– Declaring changes in circumstances such as method of payment/ change of address or declare earnings from work.	
	– Reporting suspected fraud.	
	• Please rank these services in order of the importance of having them online.	
	• Are there any services that should not be made available online?	
	– Why/why not?	
	• Do you think Jobcentre Plus should aspire to get all customers, without exception, using digital services or whether a segmented approach that directed some of the highly digital excluded to non-digital would be more effective?	
	• Do you think that all customers will feel confident using online services rather than other methods such as face-to-face or telephone? Why?	
	– If not, how can Jobcentre Plus ensure that no customers are excluded during this process?	

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes
	• What would you see as some of the potential barriers faced by customers when using Jobcentre Plus online services?	
	– Cost of computer/internet access at home.	
	– Lack of knowledge/skills.	
	– Lack of support.	
	– Concern about privacy or security.	
	– Just not interested.	
	– Lack of time.	
	– Friends/family do this for me.	
	– Broadband speed locally.	
	– Already use the internet enough.	
	– Other.	
	– None.	
	• Based on your knowledge of customers, please identify the most pertinent barriers?	
	– Explore reasons for ranking.	
	• How do you think Jobcentre Plus could address these barriers?	
	– Training; support; public computers; funding; additional security measures, etc.	
	• If customers began using Jobcentre Plus online services, what would encourage them to continue?	
	• What would be the likely reaction of Jobcentre Plus customers if it was made compulsory to use Jobcentre Plus online for certain services?	
	• In your opinion, how important is Jobcentre Plus staff engagement to convince digitally excluded customers to use Jobcentre Plus's digital channels?	
	• How do you think digital exclusion should be defined? E.g. this project has defined it as accessing the internet less than three times a month.	
	Role of digital partners – QUESTIONS FOR DIGITAL PARTNERS ONLY	
	• What do you see your role as being? Elaborate – role within what?	
	• How effectively do you think your organisation is able to reach out to digitally excluded customers? (Check their understanding of digital exclusion.) How can this be improved?	
	• How can digital partners ensure that the information they provide is accurate and updated?	
	• What organisations/initiatives do you think digital partners should be networking with and through which channels? **Do we have any probes here?**	
	• How can digital partners create a climate of confidence in the use of digitally provided services?	
	– For staff.	
	– For customers.	
	• How would you suggest digital partners should be partnering with Jobcentre Plus? Include in both local and national environment.	
	• What would you view as the best means of assisting Jobcentre Plus staff in identifying the needs of the customer?	

Approximate timing	Key questions	Notes

	• How could digital partners best provide support for:
	  – Jobcentre Plus staff;
	  – Jobcentre Plus customers.
	• Do you know what your organisations future plans are regarding meeting the needs of digitally excluded individuals? (Including plans for the expansion of vacancies advertised online.)	

17 minutes	Possible interventions to encourage use of Jobcentre Plus online services QUESTIONS FOR ALL PARTNERS • What did you think could be done to encourage digitally excluded individuals to use Jobcentre Plus online services? (Spontaneous views.) • Read through the options for interventions to encourage use of Jobcentre Plus online services (on stimulus sheet). – Probe on views; barriers; facilitators; other suggestions. • Identify those solutions they feel would be most useful, for different types of digitally excluded customers.	Interventions exercise – Read through stimulus material that has been sent beforehand Ranking exercise

8 minutes	Communication and marketing QUESTIONS FOR ALL PARTNERS
	• Do you receive any information about changes to Jobcentre Plus services and benefits? Where from?
	  – Staff.
	  – Online.
	  – Media.
	  – Leaflets.
	• Do you receive any information about changes to Jobcentre Plus online services? Where from?
	  – Staff.
	  – Online.
	  – Media.
	  – Leaflets.
	• Are you aware of any current or previous Jobcentre Plus marketing campaigns (including for online services)?
	  – Where seen.
	  – Views about impact.
	• In light of the recent government spending cuts, what do you feel would be the most effective communication and marketing techniques to encourage customers to use Jobcentre Plus online services?	

	THANK AND CLOSE	

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Qualitative research was commissioned to develop an actionable approach to encourage digitally excluded claimants to use Jobcentre Plus digital channels, by increasing Jobcentre Plus' understanding of:

• how to address the barriers to digital service usage;
• the behavioural strategies required to encourage digitally excluded claimants online;
• the types of services that claimants might value (which involved presenting claimants with examples of potential digital services); and
• the role of Jobcentre Plus staff and digital partners in supporting the migration of claimants to online services.

For the purpose of this research, 'digitally excluded' claimants are defined as individuals who never access the internet, or do so no more than three times a month, and lack confidence in their internet skills.

Between April and June 2011, 80 face-to-face interviews with digitally excluded Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Income Support (IS), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimants, 35 telephone interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff and five telephone interviews with external digital partners were undertaken and analysed thematically (further details are presented in Chapter 1).

If you would like to know more about DWP research, please contact:
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http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrs-index.asp

DWP Department for Work and Pensions