



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

# The Jobcentre Plus Offer: Final evaluation report

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November 2013

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# Summary

Launched in April 2011, the new Jobcentre Plus Offer was designed to change the way that Jobcentre Plus operates by placing an increased focus on outcomes rather than procedural targets. To achieve this there has been a move away from nationally mandated processes towards flexibility at the local level, with Jobcentre Plus staff being given the flexibility to provide tailored support which will best move claimants towards and into paid work.

This mixed-method research study considered the implementation and delivery of the Jobcentre Plus Offer, as well as the effect of the Offer on staff and claimants. The evaluation covered a two-year period, following the introduction of the Offer in April 2011.

The research consisted of:

- interviews with all District Managers, at the start of the evaluation, to provide contextual information for the research;
- detailed case studies in six Jobcentre Plus district areas, involving site visits and depth interviews with staff and claimants, in both year one and year two of the evaluation;
- a survey of new Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants, who were first interviewed in the early stages of their claim (once they had taken part in a New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) or New Joiner's Work Focused Interview (NJWFI)) and, then again, as they off-flowed from the Offer either into work, onto the Work Programme or another destination (or around the 12-month point if they were still on the Offer) to consider claimants' experiences of the Offer and the support they received;
- a 'boost' survey of a number of groups of claimants (those with a criminal record, a drug or alcohol dependency, who were homeless and lone parents on Income Support with a youngest child aged 3 or 4) to examine their experiences of the Offer in more detail.

This is the final evaluation report. A report on findings from the first year of the evaluation was published in November 2012: (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-jobcentre-plus-offer-findings-from-the-first-year-of-the-evaluation-rr814>).

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# Glossary and abbreviations

<b>Assistant Adviser (AA)</b>	Supports claimants in finding work through job search reviews and taking forward the decisions agreed between the participants and their Personal Adviser.
<b>Advisory Services Manager (ASM)</b>	Jobcentre Plus manager responsible for overseeing the work of all Personal Advisers and Customer Engagement Team Leaders.
<b>Advisor Team Managers (ATMs)</b>	Jobcentre Plus manager with responsibility over the advisory team within individual Jobcentre Plus offices.
<b>AWRT</b>	Access to Work-Related Training
<b>Customer Assessment Tool (CAT)</b>	A profiling tool used during advisory interviews to record the evidence about key attributes (such as skills) found to give customers the best chance of finding work.
<b>CRB</b>	Criminal Records Bureau
<b>CSCS</b>	Construction Skills Certification Scheme
<b>Customer Service Operations Manager (CSOM)</b>	Jobcentre Plus manager responsible for monitoring one or more offices within a Jobcentre Plus District.
<b>Contract Package Areas (CPA)</b>	Geographical territory within which a provider delivers contracted employment provision.
<b>CV</b>	Curriculum Vitae
<b>DAS</b>	Developing our Advisory Services
<b>Disability Employment Advisers (DEA)</b>	Specialist advisers responsible for providing support to customers who may need additional help in finding and retaining work and supporting development due to their disability or health condition.
<b>Disadvantaged claimants</b>	For the purposes of the Jobcentre Plus Offer, main survey claimants were categorised as ‘disadvantaged’ if they had a long-term health problem or disability, if they were carers, ex-offenders or homeless, if they revealed a drug or alcohol dependency, or they were formerly in the armed forces.
<b>DM</b>	District Manager
<b>Decision Making and Appeals (DMA)</b>	Decisions on whether to sanction benefit are made through this process.

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<b>District Provision Tool (DPT)</b>	Menu of local information on providers and the sorts of provision available in the area. The information is tailored by each Jobcentre Plus District in order to meet local needs and is available to all Jobcentre Plus offices to help advisers refer claimants directly to the most appropriate provider.
<b>DWP</b>	Department for Work and Pensions
<b>Enhanced Joint Working (EJW)</b>	Scheme introduced in 2009 to areas not operating Integrated Employment and Skills trials to facilitate the number of Jobcentre Plus customers being referred to careers advice and skills provision. EJW is comprised of skills screening; referral and signposting to skills services; and building on existing links to strengthen joint working between employment and skills services.
<b>ESA</b>	Employment and Support Allowance
<b>ESF</b>	European Social Fund
<b>ESOL</b>	English for Speakers of Other Languages
<b>Flexible Support Fund (FSF)</b>	Introduced in April 2011 to support the flexible delivery of the Jobcentre Plus Offer. It is a fund of previously targeted budgets amalgamated into one to support the need of the individual and the local labour market as determined appropriate by Jobcentre Plus.
<b>Freedom and Flexibilities</b>	An approach that encourages innovation and supports the most effective way to design and deliver Jobcentre Plus services that meet local labour markets and help more people into work. An operational framework is in place within which Freedoms and Flexibilities operates, providing guidance to districts in using Freedoms and Flexibilities.
<b>GBW</b>	Get Britain Working (measures)
<b>GCSE</b>	General Certificate of Secondary Education
<b>Incapacity Benefit (IB)</b>	Benefit paid to people under State Pension age who cannot work because of an illness or disability. IB was replaced by ESA in October 2008, and since then no new claims for IB have been accepted. People on IB are currently being reassessed to see if they are fit for work or eligible for ESA.
<b>ICT</b>	Information and communications technology
<b>IES</b>	Integrated Employment and Skills

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<b>Income Support (IS)</b>	Benefit paid to people on a low income who are working less than 16 hours a week, in a defined client group, consisting of mainly lone parents, people on parental leave, or carers and certain sick or disabled people. Since October 2008, ESA has replaced IS paid on the grounds of incapacity for new claimants.
<b>Jobsearch Reviews</b>	Jobsearch reviews must take place face to face at least once every two weeks for the duration of JSA claim. They ensure that the conditions of benefit are still being met by the claimant and that the claimant is doing everything expected of them to move into work.
<b>JSA</b>	Jobseeker's Allowance
<b>Jobseeker's Agreement (JSAg)</b>	Document signed by new JSA claimants in their New Jobseeker's Interview which records the steps they have agreed to take to search for work and the types of work they will look for.
<b>Lone Parent Obligations (LPO)</b>	Introduced in November 2008. Since then, based on the age of their youngest child, lone parents have lost entitlement to Income Support solely on the grounds of being a lone parent. From May 2012, the age of the youngest child was lowered to five and over. Lone parents who are no longer eligible for IS are able to claim another benefit such as JSA, or ESA if their ability to work is limited by a health condition.
<b>Long Standing Illness (LSI)</b>	Physical or mental health conditions or illnesses expected to last for 12 months or more.
<b>Low Value Provision (LVP)</b>	Intended to provide opportunities for occupationally relevant training that will help job-ready or close to job-ready customers into work, where no other suitable DWP contracted or non-contracted training is available.
<b>More Frequent Attendance (MFA)</b>	Interviews introduced when the customer's Personal Adviser (PA) feels that either the job seeker is not making sufficient effort to find employment or there are suspicions that the JSA claimant could be committing benefit fraud. MFA requires the customer to be interviewed more frequently than the standard fortnight, and interviews can be called at short notice.
<b>Mandatory Work Activity (MWA)</b>	Scheme launched in May 2011 to support Jobseeker's Allowance claimants who need extra help to develop the disciplines and behaviours associated with employment. This involves a mandatory four week work placement of 30 hours per week with a not-for-profit organisation.
<b>MI</b>	Management Information

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<b>New Jobseeker Interview (NJI)</b>	Interview undertaken by new JSA claimants with an adviser to discuss and agree realistic and achievable job goals and job search activities that will offer the best chance of finding work.
<b>New Joiner's Work Focused Interview (NJWFI)</b>	Interview undertaken by new ESA claimants to help the adviser determine the claimant's ability to find work and discuss the support they need to move closer to work.
<b>Personal Adviser (PA)</b>	Based in Jobcentre Plus offices and offer advice and support to job seekers. They are the primary point of contact for job seekers and assess the individual customer's needs and requirements.
<b>Performance Management Framework (PMF)</b>	Framework launched in April 2011 in Jobcentre Plus to assess performance by outcome. This replaces the previous targets structure used by Jobcentre Plus and complements the introduction of the Jobcentre Plus Offer.
<b>Performance Team Leader (PTL)</b>	Responsible for monitoring performance across a team within individual Jobcentre Plus offices and ensuring levels meet DWP's targets.
<b>Sanctions</b>	A sanction involves a reduction or loss of benefit for failing to fulfil the responsibilities expected of a claimant. There are three levels of sanction: higher level, intermediate level and lower level; and the period of a sanction can range from four to 156 weeks.
<b>SDA</b>	Severe Disablement Allowance
<b>Work Capability Assessment (WCA)</b>	Questionnaire and health assessment introduced in October 2008 to assist in assessing entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance.
<b>Work Focused Interview (WFI)</b>	Regular interviews with advisers undertaken by Income Support claimants and ESA claimants in the Work-Related Activity Group.
<b>Work Programme (WP)</b>	Welfare-to-work programme for the long-term unemployed launched in June 2011 and delivered by a range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations contracted by DWP.
<b>Work Programme Referral Interview (WPRI)</b>	Interview conducted at Jobcentre Plus offices with the intention of assessing the potential for transferring the claimant to the Work Programme.

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<b>Work Related Activity (WRA)</b>	Targeted at ESA claimants in the WRAG. WRA can be a single or several defined activities that enable the claimant to move into work, remain in work or move closer to the labour market. It involves work preparation activities that give the claimant the best possible prospects of moving into work when they are able.
<b>Work Related Activity Group (WRAG)</b>	Category of ESA claimants who have been assessed as having limited capability for work and require support to prepare for work in the future.
<b>Work Together</b>	A nationwide initiative to encourage all unemployed people to consider volunteering as a way of improving their employment prospects while they are looking for work.

# Executive summary

## Introduction

Launched in April 2011, the new Jobcentre Plus Offer was designed to change the way that Jobcentre Plus operates by placing an increased focus on outcomes rather than procedural targets. To achieve this there was a move away from nationally mandated processes towards flexibility at the local level, with Jobcentre Plus staff given the flexibility to provide tailored support which will best move claimants towards paid work.

The Jobcentre Plus Offer has been evaluated over a two-year period to find out how it was implemented and delivered, as well as the effect it has had on staff and claimants. The evaluation involved two main strands. The first was a longitudinal survey of new Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants (in the 12-month Work Related Activity Group (WRAG)), initially interviewed shortly after starting the Offer (following a New Jobseeker's Interview (NJI) or a New Joiner's Work Focused Interview (NJWFI)) and then again as they off-flowed into employment, the Work Programme or another destination. In addition to this, separate cross-sectional surveys were conducted with claimants in a number of 'disadvantaged' groups (those with a criminal record, drug and/or alcohol problems and the homeless) and lone parents on Income Support (IS) with a youngest child aged three or four, to examine their experiences in detail.

The second strand involved case studies in six Jobcentre Plus districts with ethnographic site visits and depth interviews with staff and claimants. These case studies aimed to assess how far flexibility had been devolved; how delivery was working on the ground; and how support was flowing for claimants, including how specific elements of the offer were working and being used – core interventions, advisers' flexibility, flexible menu of support.

## Organisational perspective

As the Offer embedded over time, ongoing changes and developments to working practices highlighted that flexibility had been embraced across the case study offices. Variations in how the Offer was being delivered within and between districts were identified in the first year, and these continued to evolve over the second year. In particular, it was clear that senior managers were making the most of the increased flexibility to experiment with different ways of structuring support that provided the best outcomes. This resulted in different delivery models, comprising a range of approaches that were either more or less structured for frontline staff. Over time, there appeared to be a slight shift in favour of more structured approaches within offices, underpinned by a stronger emphasis on monitoring claimant progress across the journey and focusing support at key off-flow milestones.

Alongside the increased variation in delivery of the Offer, it was clear that districts became increasingly focused on understanding and disseminating best practice. Managers cited a number of mechanisms for learning from the numerous pilots and initiatives taking place across the case study districts, although in practice this did not always filter down to frontline staff. There were also ongoing concerns about how well advisers were adapting to new ways of working, and how they were coping with the sense of continual change and evolution of working practices. In particular, staff sought greater evidence to understand how and why practices could be made to work within local settings.

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There were limited changes to the way offices delivered core interventions across the two years of the evaluation of the Offer. Any developments, such as changes to handling new claims or timings of core interventions, were predominantly associated with making the best use of staff time and resources to maximise off-flows.

One of the key areas of change highlighted by staff was the effect of the Offer on flexible adviser support. Offices had utilised multiple delivery models, which suggests that this is an area where managers have been able to tailor provision in order to meet off-flow targets. This has resulted in approaches that were either more or less structured, and involved greater or lesser degrees of adviser discretion. Whilst flexibility around format and duration of meetings continued to increase across offices and districts, decisions around claimant prioritisation were increasingly driven by the widespread use of cohort management tools to determine the nature and intensity of adviser contact. Variations in how flexibility had been devolved were additionally influenced by the skills and experience of advisers and resources available to advisers (for example, diary management).

The flexible menu of support provided a wide range of programmes to support more personalised provision. Staff identified the main benefit of the new menu as being the reduction in restrictions around when claimants are eligible for different types of support. Over the course of the evaluation, the flexible menu of support became more strongly embedded in advisers' awareness and improvements were noted in relation to the delivery and operation of key support options. However, there remained a number of significant gaps in provision, particularly for claimants with complex and/or multiple needs (for example – English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), basic numeracy/literacy, tailored 50+ support and information and communications technology (ICT) skills).

In addition to the individual elements of the Offer, it was clear that the work of Jobcentre Plus offices was influenced by a number of wider national initiatives, including the new sanctions regime, the digital agenda, the Youth Contract and expansion of the Freedom and Flexibilities (see Section 2.3 for more details). In addition, offices were beginning to look to the impact of future changes to welfare provision (principally through the introduction of Universal Credit) and the return of the first cohort of claimants who had completed the Work Programme. Reactions to these initiatives tended to involve further development and evolution of day-to-day working practices, and in many cases the introduction of greater structure at either district or office level in terms of how advisers handled affected claimants.

Overall, the Offer was viewed by staff as a positive shift towards greater flexibility and tailoring of support for claimants. It was assumed that the Offer had had a positive effect on off-flows, by allowing greater managerial freedom to make decisions about how best to structure support within a local context. However, there remained concerns that the extent to which flexibility had been devolved was constrained by a greater push at district level in implementing measures and directives to meet targets and expectations (for example, off-flows and referrals to key support provision). There was also an ongoing concern that the Offer placed an emphasis on mainstream JSA claimants to the detriment of more vulnerable groups, such as ESA claimants and people with more complex needs.

## The destinations of claimants who experienced the Offer

JSA claimants were far more likely than ESA claimants in the 12-month WRAG group to off-flow from benefit over the course of the 12 months. Nearly three-quarters of ESA claimants were still in receipt of their benefit after 12 months compared to just a quarter of JSA recipients. Off-flows were particularly low for JSA claimants who were nervous about the prospect of paid work, who were 'disadvantaged', had a physical or mental health condition or lacked qualifications. Off-flow rates amongst ESA claimants did not vary by whether or not they were looking for work or by their confidence levels and nervousness about work at the start of the claim.

Only two in five JSA claimants who were still on the same claim after 12 months (and might be expected to have moved onto the Work Programme) had actually started on the Work Programme. ESA claimants in the 12-month WRAG group were not mandated to the Work Programme, and only a quarter of those still on the same claim a year after their NJWFI had moved onto the Work Programme.

Three-fifths of all JSA claimants stopped claiming their benefit in order to start a job. This was more common for claimants aged 25 to 49, who had higher qualifications and had received limited support through the Offer. JSA claimants who had moved into work received less support throughout their claim: this reflects the fact that they probably required less assistance, and suggests that support is being directed to those who need it most. For ESA claimants with a 12-month or greater prognosis the focus of the Offer is to provide help to move closer to the labour market (rather than, necessarily, into employment), but five per cent did in fact off-flow into work. Those who moved into work were more likely to be people who were looking for work at the start of their claim, had been employed within the past five years, and had positive attitudes to work and job searching at the start of their claim.

One in seven of the claimants who off-flowed into work said that they found their job 'through Jobcentre Plus'. People who said this were more likely to have had an adviser who tried to find suitable jobs for them and offered suggestions for where to look for job vacancies, and they were more likely than other claimants to have received work experience support from the flexible menu.

Around a fifth of JSA claimants and ESA claimants who were looking for work closed their claim at some point in the 12 months after starting on the Offer, but did not start a new job directly after off-flowing. A quarter of ESA claimants who were not in search of work did the same. Over a third of JSA claimants and one in twenty ESA claimants who did this subsequently made a new benefit claim (without finding a job in the interim) or entered into training or education. Closing the claim in order to look after family or children was equally likely amongst claimants receiving the two benefits.

## Attitudinal change

When they started on the Offer most JSA claimants were highly motivated and wanted to be in work. The picture was more mixed for ESA claimants: a majority felt they would be happier in work, but just over half said that the thought of being in paid work made them nervous. Maintaining the motivation of JSA claimants and reducing anxiety among ESA claimants were therefore the main challenges for Jobcentre Plus in terms of attitudes.

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For ESA claimants who remained on their benefit for 12 months there was evidence that between their initial interviews, at the start of their claim, and their second interview 12 months later, there was a decrease in anxiety levels. Even more encouragingly, ESA claimants who were looking for work showed dramatic increases in confidence for all aspects of their job search activities.

For JSA claimants who remained on their benefit for 12 months the picture was more mixed. As the claimant journey progressed there were negative shifts in attitudes, with more claimants feeling they were being put under too much pressure to find work and fewer feeling confident that they would find a job that suits them. However, it could be argued that a negative shift on this last point is only to be expected, given that these are people who had not managed to find work after 12 months. As with ESA claimants, there was a net positive shift in attitudes with regards to anxiety about paid work, and this was particularly marked for the youngest claimants in the 18 to 24 age category.

## **Adviser support**

Outside of regular review meetings, JSA claimants saw advisers more frequently than ESA claimants. The majority of claimants felt that the time they spent with advisers was about right, with fewer than one in ten claiming that some of that time was unnecessary, and around twice as many believing that the time spent with advisers was insufficient for their needs. Notably, amongst ESA claimants looking for work, there was a shift in perceptions as their claim progressed, with more reflecting that they did not have enough time with their adviser later in their claim.

Around three-quarters of ESA claimants and three-fifths of JSA claimants saw the same adviser every time. The dominant view amongst both types of claimant was that it did not matter which adviser they saw, though many added the proviso that the adviser they met with should know a bit about their circumstances. This requirement seemed to become more important at later stages of the claimant journey.

Between six and seven in ten claimants agreed that advisers they had come into contact with during their claim understood their circumstances. The proportions reduced over time, suggesting that claimants felt there was less understanding from advisers the longer their claim continued. Claimants' views were partly contingent on whether they saw the same adviser throughout their claim, and varied in line with their perceptions of the time and support they received from their advisers.

Nine in ten JSA claimants were offered some sort of job search advice from their adviser, though views on some of the support received – for example, CV writing courses and recommendations for specific vacancies – indicate that the support was not always felt to be appropriate or useful. ESA claimants who were looking for work were much less likely to receive suggestions for where to look for job vacancies or advice regarding CVs, applications and interviews.

## **Flexible menu of back-to-work support**

For JSA claimants the most common support options discussed related to skills assessment and training or work experience. ESA claimants tended not to be directed towards this kind of support and instead were more likely to have discussed possibilities around volunteering.

Two-fifths of JSA claimants discussed the opportunity to develop some work experience, and a third of those who discussed these opportunities went on to attend a placement. Even when this did not result in a job, claimants tended to benefit from positive attitudinal shifts, feeling more confident they could do well in interviews and less nervous about the prospect of paid work. A year into their claim, they were also less likely to feel 'under too much pressure to find work'.

A quarter of JSA claimants discussed skills support with an adviser and two-thirds of these claimants went on to take up some support, most commonly a course in a local college or private provider. Educational attainment made no difference to whether or not claimants attended a skills assessment or course, which is perhaps surprising, given that many of the courses on offer relate to the development of basic skills. This may indicate insufficient use of discretion on the part of advisers when referring claimants, or perhaps that claimants were being referred to courses that they did not need.

Fewer than one in ten discussed self-employment support, with discussions mostly focused on older JSA claimants and those with a degree. Of those who were offered self-employment support, a quarter went on to take up some form of support.

A third of JSA claimants and half of ESA claimants discussed the possibility of volunteering, but only a small proportion of ESA claimants went on to take up a voluntary position. The large gap between the proportion being signposted and taking up a voluntary position may partly stem from advisers' reluctance to 'push' ESA claimants or follow up on their progress after initial signposting, and could potentially be a beneficial area of support to expand.

Half of ESA claimants and a quarter of JSA claimants with a disability or health condition discussed health support options with their adviser. The discussions did not always cover the potential suitability of particular types of jobs for claimants. This may indicate a lack of confidence or relevant knowledge on the part of advisers when interacting and advising claimants with health needs.

Half of JSA claimants and one in ten ESA claimants were signposted to a work club; a fifth of JSA claimants with children were offered some type of childcare support; and a quarter of JSA claimants and around half as many ESA claimants were offered financial assistance.

The levels of take up indicated above reflect both awareness and barriers towards take up by particular groups. Younger JSA claimants had a good awareness of the provision available to them through Jobcentre Plus, possibly stemming from recent policy changes such as the introduction of the Youth Contract which has increased provision of support to the under-25s. By contrast, older JSA claimants, as well as ESA claimants, more generally had limited knowledge of support options. In the case of ESA claimants this may be because of their limited contact with Jobcentre Plus.

At the same time there were factors preventing the take-up of some of the support on offer, with some claimants – particularly those with multiple and complex needs – feeling that their needs had not been correctly identified and that the support they were offered was not appropriate for their needs. Specific categories of claimant also felt that there was no support available that would suit their needs and circumstances, for example, the fact that they had a criminal record, health conditions or ESOL needs.

Most claimants gave a positive assessment of the support on offer by Jobcentre Plus, in terms of satisfaction with the service provided by Jobcentre Plus in helping them find

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employment, being offered 'the right amount of support', and being offered advice and support which matched their personal needs and circumstances. The proportions giving a positive assessment was higher amongst those who were offered options from the flexible menu of back-to-work support, suggesting that support options are generally being deployed for the right people at the right time. However, ESA claimants who were looking for work, disadvantaged JSA claimants, and JSA claimants with a disability (particularly those with a mental health condition) were less likely to feel that the support on offer was tailored to their requirements. A future area of development for the Offer may therefore lie in addressing the particular needs of these claimants.

## **Claimants on JSA or ESA who had a criminal record, a drug or alcohol dependency, or who were homeless**

Claimants in these three groups expressed attitudes indicating that they want to work. Their motivation was as high as that of claimants who were not in one of these three groups, but there were also high levels of anxiety about the prospect of being in paid work. This was true of ESA claimants in general, but anxiety was especially common amongst ESA claimants with a criminal record or a drug or alcohol dependency.

Ex-offenders and homeless claimants shared similar reservations about succeeding in their job search and finding a suitable job as JSA claimants who did not have a criminal record or were not homeless. Claimants with a criminal record had particular concerns around the currency of their skills and whether employers would want to offer them interviews. Meanwhile, claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency were less confident than JSA claimants without a dependency about most elements of their job search.

Substantial minorities of claimants in all three groups felt that the advice and support they received from Jobcentre Plus had increased their confidence in finding a job they could do and their motivation to find work, and improved their perceived job prospects. Positive views were as common amongst claimants with a criminal record as those without; the same was true of claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency and those without.

Advisers discussed a range of topics with claimants in the three groups, including issues to do with the specific challenges they were facing; discussions on specific job search-related issues were also very common. Notably, the range of topics covered by advisers in discussions with ESA claimants with a criminal record or a drug or alcohol dependency were more limited than in discussions with other ESA claimants.

Three-fifths of claimants with a criminal record or with a drug or alcohol dependency, and a half of homeless claimants felt that they had the right amount of contact with advisers. Satisfaction was not as high as amongst other claimants. While the majority of claimants with a criminal record or a drug or alcohol dependency felt that advisers understood their particular circumstances, there was variation between the views of JSA and ESA claimants, with the latter less likely to feel their circumstances were understood. Meanwhile, homeless claimants were less likely than claimants in the other two groups to indicate that advisers appreciated their circumstances; this may be linked to the fact that few had actually discussed their housing circumstances with advisers.

JSA claimants in the three groups were offered a similar range of options from the flexible menu of back-to-work support as other JSA claimants. By contrast, ESA claimants who had a criminal record or a drug or alcohol dependency were less likely than other ESA claimants to receive most types of support.

When it came to assessing the support on offer by Jobcentre Plus, JSA claimants with a criminal record or dependency gave similar ratings of the support they were offered as other JSA claimants. Around three in five in each group gave a positive assessment of the amount of support they were offered; the tailoring of the support to their personal needs and circumstances; and their satisfaction with the service offered by Jobcentre Plus in helping claimants find employment. A positive assessment was less common amongst ESA claimants, and especially so amongst ESA claimants who had a criminal record, while ESA claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency were less likely than those without a dependency to perceive the support they were offered as personalised. The less positive views held by ESA claimants in the three groups may tie in with the high levels of anxiety amongst these claimants about the prospect of being in paid work; the limited range of topics discussed by such claimants in their discussions with advisers; the tendency of ESA claimants in the three groups to view advisers as less understanding; and the differences in terms of what they were offered from the flexible menu of support compared to other ESA claimants (and of JSA and ESA claimants who were in each of the three groups).

## **Lone parents on Income Support whose youngest child was aged between three and four**

Lone parents on IS with a youngest child aged three or four expressed a strong commitment towards work, although only around one in three were currently looking for work. These lone parents have distinctive constraints to working, notably in relation to caring commitments and childcare, but also other barriers such as low qualifications and lack of recent work experience.

Only three-quarters of respondents had attended meetings with an adviser in the previous 12 months. Where respondents had attended meetings, they discussed a range of topics, including work options and caring responsibilities. There was also some discussion of job search activities: over half said they received advice about looking for work online.

While the majority (74 per cent) said that the amount of time spent with advisers overall was about right, one in six said that they did not spend enough time with advisers. Views regarding the amount of time spent with advisers were less positive among lone parents who were looking for work, who were more likely than those who were not looking for work to say they did not spend enough time with advisers.

Three-quarters agreed that Jobcentre Plus advisers understood their particular circumstances and that they were offered the right amount of support by Jobcentre Plus. However, respondents who were looking for work were again less positive than those not looking for work.

One in four lone parents on IS were offered information or help with childcare, while around one in six were advised about volunteering. Otherwise, very few lone parents were offered support options (such as skills assessment, training or work experience).

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Overall, most lone parents on IS were satisfied with the support they received, and the majority felt that the support was appropriate to their needs and circumstances. Lone parents who were looking for work were less likely than those not looking for work to say that the support they were offered matched their personal needs and circumstances or that they were satisfied with the service that Jobcentre Plus offers in helping find employment. This suggests that current support may be more tailored to preparing lone parents for an eventual move into work (when they move onto JSA as a result of Lone Parent Obligations) rather than identifying and actively supporting those who want to move into work earlier.

The other consistent pattern was that lone parents on IS who had more frequent adviser meetings, and those who saw the same adviser all the time, were more positive towards the support they received than other lone parents.

Comparisons with lone parents receiving JSA indicate that those on IS tended to be more positive about the support they were receiving, but acknowledged that it was less likely to increase their chances of finding suitable work.

## **Conditionality and sanctions**

Nine per cent of JSA claimants said they were not given an adequate explanation of the conditions associated with JSA, while 13 per cent said they were never told by an adviser that their benefit would be affected if they did not agree to certain conditions. Around one in three ESA claimants said they were never told by an adviser about the repercussions of failing to agree to the conditions.

Seven in ten JSA claimants and six in ten ESA claimants who were aware their benefit could be reduced or stopped if they did not comply with certain conditions felt this information made them more likely to follow the rules, but lower proportions said it made them more likely to look for work or take steps that would move them closer to work. The effect of this knowledge on JSA claimants aged 50 or above and those who had been in work within three months of starting their claim was minimal, suggesting these groups were likely to follow the rules anyway.

Around one in five JSA claimants said that their benefit had been stopped at some point in their claim, while six per cent said that it had been reduced. The figures for ESA claimants were very similar (21 per cent and eight per cent respectively). Among lone parents with a youngest child aged 3 or 4 who were claiming IS, nine per cent said that their benefit had been stopped at some point, and 10 per cent said it had been reduced.

The most common reason given by JSA claimants for benefits being stopped or reduced was missing a signing-on appointment, while by far the most common reason given by ESA claimants was that they were no longer entitled to ESA (though this would not be considered a sanction).

Among claimants whose benefit had been stopped or reduced, 23 per cent of JSA claimants said they were told about hardship payments, and 13 per cent applied for one. The proportions of ESA claimants were lower (13 per cent and six per cent respectively).

# 1 Introduction

Launched in April 2011, the new Jobcentre Plus Offer was designed to change the way that Jobcentre Plus operates by placing an increased focus on outcomes rather than processes. To this end, Jobcentre Plus staff were allowed greater flexibility in the support that they provide to claimants which could be tailored to suit individual needs rather than following a nationally determined structure.

## 1.1 Evaluation aims and objectives

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) commissioned TNS BMRB to evaluate how the Offer had been implemented and delivered, and the perceived impact it was having on staff and claimants. In particular, the evaluation aimed to understand how:

- the programme was implemented;
- delivery was working on the ground;
- far flexibility had been devolved – whether there was real flexibility and whether advisers had the resources locally to provide support;
- advisers were managing the new system – whether they were using flexibility effectively, whether they felt they had the right skills, how they made key decisions and how it helped advisers to support claimants;
- support was flowing for claimants, including how specific elements of the Offer were working and being used – core interventions, flexible adviser support, flexible menu of support;
- claimants experienced the Jobcentre Plus Offer and how this differed by claimant type and why;
- the Jobcentre Plus Offer had impacted different claimant types in terms of both claimant experience and outcomes.

It is important to note that any evaluation findings relating to the impact of the Offer are based on respondent perceptions. The evaluation did not include a formal impact assessment, so is unable to quantify the impact of the Offer on off-flows from benefit and movement into work.

## 1.2 Approach

The evaluation approach comprised a longitudinal and multimode research design.

There were three main elements:

- **Developmental stage** – This involved consolidation of previous research and scoping interviews with all District Managers (DMs) across the UK. Interviews with DMs were carried out by telephone between December 2011 and January 2012, lasting approximately 15 minutes. The aim was to obtain a broad understanding of the national picture and to ascertain the varied characteristics of the districts in order to select six districts for case studies in the second stage of the research.

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- **Case studies** – Ethnographic site visits and depth interviews with staff and claimants were carried out across six case study districts. The case studies strand comprised of two waves, with the first conducted in early-mid 2012 and the second taking place in February to March 2013. This aimed to provide in-depth understanding of the Jobcentre Plus Offer end-to-end at district level. In each of the districts, two offices were selected to take part in the research. The case study approach included three elements:
  - **Ethnographic site visits** – Adviser interviews were observed, comprising interviews with claimants at different ‘touch points’ along the claimant journey, as well as across a range of benefit streams (Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Income Support (IS)). Following observations, claimants were asked to take part in a short follow-up interview to discuss their views on the adviser interview and other aspects of the Jobcentre Plus Offer where relevant. In addition, informal discussions with advisers took place throughout the site visits regarding their perspectives of observed interviews, and their experiences of the Jobcentre Plus Offer more broadly. In Wave 2, telephone depth interviews were also carried out with DMs for each of the six districts.
  - **Staff interviews** – Jobcentre Plus staff at all grades were interviewed using a range of qualitative techniques including; group discussions, mini groups, paired depths, depth interviews. This varied in composition according to staff grade and how the districts were organised. A more detailed breakdown of the approach is provided in the appendices.
  - **Claimant interviews** – Qualitative interviews were undertaken across the two waves of research, following the case study fieldwork. In the first wave, telephone interviews with 169 claimants were carried out across the six districts, between April-June 2012. Participants were purposively sampled to include: a range of benefit streams (JSA 18-24, 25-49, 50+; ESA Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) three-, six- or 12-month prognosis, ESA voluntary, and IS voluntary); different touch points along the customer journey; disadvantaged claimants<sup>1</sup>; sanctioned claimants; early entry JSA stock<sup>2</sup>; and a mix of demographic characteristics. The second wave of claimant research was conducted in March to April 2013 and involved a similar approach with 95 telephone interviews with claimants. The sample included claimants towards the end of their ‘Offer journey’<sup>3</sup>: JSA 18-24 (at nine-month off-flow); JSA 25-49 and 50+ (at 12-month off-flow); and, ESA WRAG 12-month prognosis; disadvantaged claimants; sanctioned claimants; JSA and ESA WRAG lone parents; JSA from ESA as a result of a Fit for Work Assessment; and a mix of demographic characteristics. The changes to the sample in the second wave were also intended to help explore issues with particular claimant groups of interest following the first year findings and any changes in policy since the wave one interviews were carried out.

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<sup>1</sup> Disadvantaged claimants were defined as: those with a drug or alcohol dependency, ex-offenders, and homeless claimants.

<sup>2</sup> Claimants who have been on JSA for 22 out of the last 24 months or have been moved onto JSA from Incapacity Benefit and are referred to the Work Programme after three months.

<sup>3</sup> ESA claimants in the three-, six- and 12-month WRAG groups, ESA voluntary, and IS voluntary claimants were not included in the sample for Wave 2 in order to focus primarily on claimant groups who had greatest exposure to the main elements of the Offer. The focus was therefore on JSA claimants aged 18-24, JSA claimants aged 25-49, JSA claimants aged 50 or above, and ESA claimants with a 12-month prognosis.

Please note, the report outlines how findings differ across the range of benefit streams, staff grades and other variables discussed above. Where there is no reference to this, this is because no variations were noted. To ensure the anonymity of the staff and claimants observed and interviewed, the case study districts and offices are not included in this report. Staff quotes are attributed to staff grade only; and claimants' quotes are attributed using both benefit stream and gender. Furthermore, vignettes included throughout chapters 2 and 3 are anonymised; and, where this relates to claimants, we have changed people's names and any potentially identifying features.

- **Claimant surveys** – There were two separate surveys conducted as part of the evaluation.
  - **Longitudinal survey** – Claimants were first interviewed as they started on the Jobcentre Plus Offer and then again at the end of their experience as they off-flowed into employment, the Work Programme or another destination. Those who did not off-flow were interviewed after a year on the Offer. The first telephone interviews took place between mid-May and late June of 2012 and comprised 1,749 interviews with JSA claimants and 1,285 interviews with ESA claimants. Over the course of 25 minutes, information was collected about the claimants' early experiences of the Jobcentre Plus Offer, including the initial meeting they attended with an adviser and the support options they had been offered and which they had taken up so far. The second telephone interviews ran from September 2012 until June 2013. In total 1,069 JSA claimants and 676 ESA claimants were included as part of the Wave 2 survey findings – these totals comprise claimants who had off-flowed before the first survey interview as well as those interviewed in the second survey interview.
  - **Boost survey** – JSA and ESA claimants with a criminal record, with a drug or alcohol dependency and those who are homeless would not appear in sufficient numbers in the main longitudinal survey to allow for robust analysis. An additional cross-sectional survey was undertaken to boost sample numbers for these three groups of claimants. In total, the survey yielded 228 interviews with ex-offenders, 182 interviews with claimants who had a drug or alcohol dependency, and 68 interviews with homeless claimants. In addition, interviews were conducted with 341 lone parents claiming IS whose youngest child was aged between three and four. Although participation in the Offer is voluntary for lone parents in this group, they would be expected to experience increased adviser contact and exposure to the Jobcentre Plus Offer as they approached the end of their eligibility for IS.

This is the second (and final) report from the evaluation. It brings together findings from the longitudinal and boost survey of claimants and the case study research with Jobcentre Plus staff and claimants. This report builds on interim findings from the first year of the evaluation, including a specific focus on how the Offer had been embedded over time and to what extent issues highlighted in the first year had been addressed.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Coulter, A., Day, N., Howat, H., Romanou, E and Coleman, N. (2012). *The Jobcentre Plus Offer: Findings from the first year of the evaluation*, Chapter 3, DWP Research Report No. 814.

## 1.3 Notes on the report

- Significance testing has been carried out at the five per cent confidence level. All comparative data described in the report text are statistically significant unless otherwise stated.
- The figures presented in this report have been weighted to take account of the sample design and non-response. Details of the weighting applied are provided in Appendix A. All bases given in the tables or charts are, however, unweighted.
- A \* symbol in a table signifies a value between 0 and 0.49, while a – symbol signifies a zero.
- Some tables display data based on a very small number of respondents. Where the base size is 50 or below, the percentages in tables are displayed in italics and the findings are discussed in the text in terms of (unweighted) numbers of respondents rather than percentages. Such data must be treated with caution.
- Throughout the report, percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number (figures are rounded up from .5, and rounded down below this). Percentages in the tables and charts do not always add to 100 per cent due to rounding. In cases where a number of responses have been grouped together ('netted'), the proportion of respondents who gave a 'netted' response may not always equal the sum of the individual responses, again due to rounding.

## 2 Jobcentre Plus staff and management

This chapter explores how the Offer was being delivered from an organisational perspective and aims to pull out differences in delivery between, and within, Jobcentre Plus districts. The findings are based on case study research over two years across 12 Jobcentre Plus offices (comprising two offices in each of six case study districts). This chapter builds on the findings from the first year of the evaluation<sup>5</sup>, further exploring how the Offer had embedded over time, as well as identifying any changes to delivery. This will then provide context as to how the Offer has been experienced by claimants, which is the focus of subsequent chapters.

### 2.1 How the Offer has been embedded

Two important issues were highlighted in the first year of the evaluation – first, that the Offer had resulted in a range of delivery models emerging across the case study districts and offices; and second, that there were fairly limited and unstructured approaches to share understanding and learning from these new models. A key concern of the second year of the evaluation was therefore to understand how these issues had developed over time, as the Offer became more embedded within the case study districts and offices.

#### 2.1.1 Variations in delivery of the Offer

As noted in the first year, variations were observed in how the Offer was being delivered both within and between districts, and even within individual offices. These included differing approaches to how offices were structured, how claimant flows were managed and handled by advisers, as well as decisions regarding resource allocation related to local conditions. At the very least, these differences highlighted that the principle of greater flexibility had been embraced at district and office level.

During the second year of evaluation, it was clear that further flexibility and more localised approaches had been employed across the districts. These were demonstrated by ongoing tweaks and refinements to both office structures and working practices; for example, changes to team structures and case-loading approaches to handle claimant flows (explored in more detail in Section 2.2).

It was also apparent that differences remained in the extent to which flexibility had been devolved beyond senior managers; specifically in light of differing levels of adviser autonomy and discretion. For example, while in some offices advisers were given freedom to make decisions about how to support the claimants they worked with, other offices had much more structured approaches (explored in greater depth in Section 2.2).

As before, variations in the extent to which flexibility had been devolved highlighted differing views at management level of the best way to meet local priorities. In particular, senior managers talked about three factors which they felt were driving approaches to working practices:

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<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

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- the need to achieve off-flow targets;
- local area characteristics (for example, local labour market conditions and claimant on-flows);
- staff resources (both in terms of staff numbers and skills) and the impact of new initiatives (for example, the Youth Contract, changes to the sanctions regime, and the digital agenda – these are explored in greater detail in Section 2.3).

The interplay between these priorities and how flexibility has been devolved are further explored in Section 2.2.

### 2.1.2 Sharing best practice

The second issue raised in the first year of the evaluation was whether Jobcentre Plus districts and offices were sufficiently learning from each other and sharing best practice, particularly in light of increasing variations in how the Offer was being delivered. In the second year of the evaluation, this was also something that managers seemed to be more focused on. Across the districts, regular forums and channels were increasingly used to review and disseminate best practice. District level forums enabled office managers to discuss models of delivery and innovative ways of working. For example, one district had introduced a business development forum which allowed new support and employment provision to be filtered down to all the offices in the district. However, these district-led forums were mainly aimed at senior and middle managers, and there were some frustrations at adviser level around not receiving information about how the Offer was working in other offices.

*'You know for me, there must be offices that are doing well so why don't we know what they are doing well? How is it working and why and what has changed to make it work?'*

(Adviser)

At office level, delivery and adviser approaches were shared through general team meetings, the use of development forums, case conferencing, one-to-one meetings between advisers and Performance Team Leaders (PTLs) or Adviser Team Managers (ATMs), as well as opportunities for advisers to shadow staff with recognised best practice skills.

Despite this focus on reviewing and sharing best practice, from a manager's perspective it was felt that there remained issues around the variability of adviser skill levels in adapting to greater flexibility and changing working practices. In many offices, ATMs provided one-to-one support in working with advisers. However, it was acknowledged that there were limits to the time and effort that could be spent on addressing these gaps, and some advisers were simply seen as lacking the skills for adapting to new ways of working.

Overall, it was clear that as the Offer has embedded over time, the case study offices have continued to embrace new ways of working. Managers were able to adapt office structures and working practices to best meet the priorities, whether these were driven by the internal needs of specific Jobcentre Plus offices and their local context, or external district or national level initiatives. This had resulted in growing variations between offices, and alongside this, an increased focus on ways of reviewing and sharing best practice. These variations in delivery are explored in greater depth in the following section.

## 2.2 How the Offer is delivered

As noted above, the move away from the previous process-driven regime has led to variations in how offices were delivering the Offer. Variations were observed both between and within districts, and had increased over time as the Offer bedded in. This section explores these variations in greater detail, initially in relation to how offices were structured to manage claimant flows, and subsequently in relation to each of the key strands of the Offer – core interventions, flexible adviser support, and the flexible menu of support.

### 2.2.1 Managing claimant flows

Key variations in how individual offices managed claimant flows were identified in the first year of the evaluation; specifically relating to differing approaches towards team structures and the use of case-loading. Variations in these areas were once again observed during the second year of the evaluation, with a number of developments and refinements, which are outlined below.

**Team structure** was an area that had seen most development over the two years of the evaluation, with changes to how frontline staff were organised being observed in many of the case study offices. Typically, offices were split into teams of advisers focusing on specific groups of claimants; for example, focusing on certain benefit types (Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) 18-24, JSA 25+), stages in the JSA claimant journey (weeks 0-4, 5-13, 14-25, 26+), or simply by alphabet (JSA claimants with surnames beginning A-K, and L-Z). This is not to say that offices had not previously organised their staff in these ways, but rather that there seemed to be a process of continually reviewing and changing how teams were structured across these distinctions.

When questioned about why these changes were made, managers referenced a number of factors:

- **Maximising off-flows** – Primarily, managers cited the need to organise staff resources in a way that maximised claimant off-flows and made best use of staff skills and experience. This perhaps explains the state of flux in many offices, with managers repeatedly experimenting with different team structures in order to identify what worked best. For example, there were shifts both towards and away from the use of case-loading (see below), and the introduction of the 'plumber and mate' approach which requires Assistant Advisers and Personal Advisers to work closely together in triaging and sharing caseloads (see case study – Office 1).

*'Well we've got the Plumber and Mate [approach] ... it is closer working together with the adviser, assistant adviser ... you would have one of them being the plumber's mate so they wouldn't actually do anything in depth with the customer, they would pass it onto the plumber.'*

(CSOM)

### Cast study: Office 1

#### What are they doing?

- Re-organisation of JSA advisers into teams split by customer journey stages – New Claims; 0-13 weeks and two 13+ weeks teams for 18-24 and 25+.
- Introduction of the national ‘plumber and mate’ approach, with Personal Advisers and Assistant Advisers located together (except for new claims team).
- ‘Cohort management’ system introduced to allow advisers to monitor support at key off-flow points.
- All advisers are allocated case-loading time in their diaries to manage their own time with claimants.
- The appointment of a Provision and Quality Manager who works with providers and employers and actively monitors support provision and provides feedback to advisers.

#### Why are they doing this?

- District-led policy to remove use of split New Jobseeker Interviews (NJIs) and move to a core focus on earlier support and diagnostics at 0-13 weeks.
- Restructured teams to enable better communications regarding Jobsearch Review meetings and case-loading meetings to better understand claimants needs and progress.
- Cohort Management system and advisers managing their own diaries were introduced to encourage greater responsibility of advisers, whilst ensuring their activities are monitored.
- Appointment of new role to monitor support provision driven at district level to provide greater feedback and drive off-flow performance.

- **Greater freedom to change working practices** – Increased ability to restructure offices was cited not only in reference to the Offer, but also in relation to the greater flexibility offered by the Freedom and Flexibilities initiative (see Section 2.3 for more details).
- **New initiatives and policies aimed at certain claimants** – In particular, the introduction of the Youth Contract, which specified more frequent contact and active management of JSA 18-24 claimants. Despite this initiative being introduced with additional resources to aid delivery, several office managers described the change as a reason for reorganising their adviser teams to make better use of existing resources. Furthermore, changes to Lone Parent Obligations (LPO) and Income Support (IS) eligibility (linked to the age of youngest child) had prompted offices to integrate specialist IS advisers into mainstream JSA adviser teams. A benefit of this was greater shared learning amongst advisers, although there were concerns that this might dilute the specialist knowledge of lone parent advisers. Indeed, one office had retained the use of lone parent advisers for both JSA and IS claimants as they felt this provided a more tailored approach.

*'The advisers know that there's somebody on the team not far from them that they can go to [get] help if they have an issue that arises during the interview and somebody they can ask for help from. I mean on our team the lone parent adviser has been doing a lot of coaching with the other advisers and just skilling them up and dealing with lone parents in general.'*

(ATM)

As noted above, across the evaluation period there were shifts both towards and away from the **use of case-loading**. In the first year, considerable differences were observed between offices – with some offices case-loading claimants to individual advisers throughout their claim, whilst others limited case-loading to certain stages of the claim or not at all. These variations continued into the second year of the evaluation, with further changes being driven by a combination of local and national pressures. For example, one office had replaced individual case-loading with adviser teams focusing on different stages of the journey so the office could allocate better skilled advisers to support harder to help claimants who were still claiming benefits after a prolonged period.

Another office cited the introduction of the Youth Contract as a driving force for removing case-loading from all but JSA 18-24 claimants and replacing it with a 'taxi-rank' system (see case study – Office 2). This involved claimants being allocated to a team and then seeing any adviser within that wider team on the day of their 'signing-on' appointment if they were assessed as needing additional support. It was felt that this approach allowed the office to manage their resource effectively so that adviser support was only offered when appropriate and resources could be used more flexibly. However, staff acknowledged that this approach had the potential to create queues or bottle necks to claimants receiving support.

*'The big change was the way that we actually deal with the customers and how we control our interviews with the customers and contact with the customers. So on the 18-24 team... they are still very structured towards a diary system where advisers have diaries and, as part of the Youth Contract remit, they have to try to put in weekly contact, whether that's face-to-face or over the phone ... Now for the 25+ customers we are not tied to that type of regime, what we do have is we have, for want of a better word, is taxi ranking ... So they come in every fortnight to sign and that is obviously a given and that's our chance to actually then see them face-to-face, whether with an adviser or a signing clerk. If there are things that we need to then, support the customers with, or we want to check that the customer is doing actually what they should be doing around looking for work, then we will then call them in on their off-cycles if you like, so not their signing days.'*

(ATM)

### Case study: Office 2

#### What are they doing?

- Office restructured from teams dealing with all JSA claimants (split by alphabet) through one-to-one adviser case-loading, and replacing this with two approaches for JSA claimants: JSA 18-24 (single point of contact and diary system) and JSA 25+ (taxi-rank) teams.
- A Skills Adviser is now in charge of provider liaison and keeping advisers up-to-date with feedback about support options, such as statistics demonstrating their effectiveness.
- The office has a suite of Information Adviser Devices (IADs) which claimants can use for online jobsearch, including Universal Jobmatch.
- Continued use of the split NJI to free up adviser time for diagnostic meetings.
- Ongoing use of case conferences and staff presentations to share best practice.
- Reduction in staff visits to and presentation from providers due to limited time available for staff to be released from seeing claimants.

#### What is underpinning change?

- Extension of Lean initiative to Freedom and Flexibilities, which has continued the culture of reviewing practices and piloting changes to working practices.
- Taxi-rank system was introduced after it was successfully rolled out via another Jobcentre Plus office in the region with increases in off-flow for key cohorts.
- The introduction of Youth Contract has led to the implementation of a dedicated team focused on JSA 18-24 claimants.
- High awareness of support options due to ongoing communications.
- Increased use of a digital approach as result of the digital agenda.
- No longer use a 'RAG' system for categorising claimant work readiness but rather a combination of adviser decision making and cohort management system.

As noted during the first year of the evaluation, variations in how offices were managing their claimant flows were broadly influenced by three factors – prior experience of initiatives (such as Freedom and Flexibilities) that promote flexibility; local area characteristics (relating to local labour market conditions, as well as local Jobcentre Plus staff and capabilities); and, the extent to which off-flow targets had been devolved within offices (see The Jobcentre Plus Offer: Findings from the first year of the evaluation – Chapter 3).

Further developments in these areas were observed in the second year of the evaluation:

- **Experience of initiatives that promote flexibility:** In the first year of the Offer there were a number of initiatives operating concurrently which had a complementary focus on promoting flexibility; for example, the Lean continuous improvement techniques and Local Autonomy pilot. This meant that some offices had a head start in embracing flexibility and were therefore primed to take advantage of the increased freedoms within the Offer. By the second year of the evaluation, this had largely evened out through the national roll out of Freedom and Flexibilities (see Section 2.3 for more detailed discussion).

Despite this, there was still variation in the extent to which flexibility had been devolved within districts, particularly whether this reached adviser level within offices. One office cited the Freedom and Flexibilities initiative as the driving force behind allowing individual adviser teams to develop their own approaches to managing claimant caseloads. The range of approaches included a move to email and phone contact, open diaries for all appointments (apart from new claims and rapid re-claims), and developing specialisms within their teams for focusing on JSA customers across different age groups – 18-24, 25-49 and 50+ (see case study: Office 3).

*'Freedom and Flex is all about working more efficiently and that's what we have tried to do all the way along is look at the best ways of working. Part of the performance exercise that we just did for all the [advisers] we included questions on what they thought about how we are currently working and their suggestions for improvements and that's what we have taken on board when we've tried to give them a bit more freedom and restructure and change things.'*

(ATM)

However, this degree of adviser discretion was not the norm, and many offices adopted a more structured approach led by office managers and ATMs (see below).

- **Local area characteristics:** Managers continued to make decisions about how best to structure services based on the local labour market. It was important for offices to be able to respond to the changing size and nature of the local claimant base so that they could focus resources where this would produce the best outcomes. Decisions around restructuring teams were often discussed in relation to meeting the needs of the local claimant base. For example, one office had re-allocated ESA staff resources to JSA claimant teams in response to an increase footfall in JSA 25+ claimants.
- **The extent to which off-flow targets had been devolved within the district:** Off-flow targets continued to influence delivery of the Offer across the two years of the evaluation, and approaches to meeting these targets specifically interacted with adviser flexibility. In particular, a key factor was how senior management viewed the best approach to achieving off-flows and whether that was largely by managed flexibility or adviser discretion. The former approach involved stronger monitoring and more structured working practices designed to achieve off-flow targets which in turn led to reduced adviser discretion over how to handle their caseloads. The second approach focused on allowing advisers to use their skills and experience to determine how best to support claimants, in the belief that this will result in better results. Over the course of the evaluation, there was a notable shift towards more structured approaches within offices, which seemed to be largely driven by decisions at district level. Several districts implemented a cohort monitoring tool which allowed managers to track the claimant journey in line with key off-flow points across office, team and adviser caseloads (see case study – Office 4). One District Manager discussed how they had introduced the tool because it was believed that increased flexibility had diluted the focus of offices on achieving off-flow targets.

*'By having too much freedom, they've lost a tracking process of knowing when their customers are at which stage and what they were eligible for. So, that is now a core of [name of District] performance management, and they have to do it.'*

(District Manager)

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Overall, it was clear that while greater flexibility had been implemented across the case study districts, this was predominantly at senior management level, with more variable degrees of discretion and autonomy for frontline staff. Furthermore, while there was still an emphasis on process, this appeared to be more aligned with meeting district and local office needs (claimant base and office resources) and more focused on outcomes, rather than driven by a national focus on inputs.

### Cast study: Office 4

#### What are they doing?

- JSA adviser teams re-organised from benefit type (JSA 18-24, JSA 25+) to stages of customer journey (1-12/13-25/26+ weeks).
- A continued structured approach towards support provision and conditionality for each stage of the customer journey:
  - Stage 1 (wks 1-12): Support limited to CV writing and basic skills training (where relevant);
  - Stage 2 (wks 13-25): Access to wider provision and increased attendance at Jobcentre Plus;
  - Stage 3 (wks 26+): Mandatory Work Activity (MWA) and daily contact with claimants.
- Introduction at stage 3 of a skills assessment group exercise for 18-24 to support job search.
- Cohort approach to prioritising customers, whereby advisers focus on claimants approaching specific off-flow targets (weeks 13, 26, and 52 of the claim).
- Increased flexibility to adviser diary management, with flexibility in booking different lengths of interviews.
- Case conferencing and ATM oversight used to manage adviser interactions.

#### What is underpinning this?

- Large size of customer base driving need for journey split and more structured approaches to adviser support
- Staged approach allows effective off-flow monitoring and strategic use of adviser resources at key critical points of the journey
- Focus on effective office systems and practices through experience of the Lean Offices pilot

### 2.2.2 How the Offer is delivered – Core interventions

Over the course of the evaluation, there was limited change as a result of the Offer on the following core interventions:

- New Jobseeker Interviews for JSA claimants;
- Jobsearch Review Meetings for JSA Claimants;
- Work Focused Interviews for ESA and IS claimants.

This is to be largely expected, as the Offer was not intended to modify the delivery of existing core interventions. However, a few changes were observed and these are outlined below.

### **New Jobseeker Interviews (NJIs) for JSA claimants**

As observed in the first year of the evaluation, the main change identified in the core interventions was the introduction of the split NJI. These were introduced in many offices to separate the conditionality and diagnostic elements so that they could be undertaken at different times, whilst still meeting the requirement to complete the conditionality element within a specified period. The diagnostic element could then be completed up to four weeks later, allowing more flexible use of frontline staff.

In the first year, all but one case study district had implemented split NJIs. The main change in the second year was that one district had reverted back to combining the two elements into a single NJI. This change was driven by the decision to undertake early diagnosis, which in turn was hoped to increase early off-flows. This reflects staff concerns raised in the first year that delaying the diagnostic element had potential implications for claimants not getting the support they needed early on, and therefore also on advisers' ability to meet their week 13 off-flow targets. There were also ongoing concerns about the quality of JSAs produced via split NJIs; specifically, that this resulted in duplication of work at the diagnostic stage because advisers did not trust that the Jobseeker's Agreements (JSAs) accurately reflected all the details and needs of their claimants.

*'We would all prefer I am sure that they all attended the New Jobseeker's Interview with the adviser they were going to see forever because a lot of the diagnostic interview is taken up with re-doing what happened the week before in the New Claims Interview.'*

(ATM)

In the first year of the Offer there was a general expectation that split NJIs would benefit off-flow targets, by allowing offices to refocus staff resources on diagnostic interviews later on in a claimants' journey and therefore not waste support on people who would naturally off-flow early in their claim. Over time this was recognised as being less beneficial, being offset by delays to identifying support that could be provided early on in a claim that might help to improve off-flows. In spite of this, there were still felt to be advantages with the split approach – specifically, that this allowed time to put the claimant at ease with the process, by separating the discussion about the details of their claim from focusing on how to get them back into work.

*'I think for the customer it's a better service, and I think if we can separate the issues, so by the time they come to the diagnostic, the benefit is on its way, or it is virtually done and dusted and it will be coming to them. So they've got rid of those worries then and we can just talk about actually how are we going to get you back into work?'*

(ATM)

### **Jobsearch Review Meetings for JSA claimants**

There was little change to this process directly as a result of the Offer (discussed in detail in *The Jobcentre Plus Offer: Findings from the first year of the evaluation*, Chapter 3). Where there had been developments, these related to altering the length of meetings in response to

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staff resourcing issues and the introduction of Universal Jobmatch<sup>6</sup>. For example, one office had reduced the length due to limited Assistant Adviser availability and increased pressure of rising claimant registers. This altered the interviews so that they were focused on basic conditionality checks of the JSAg with no time to discuss job search activities or job leads in detail. Similar changes were observed across a number of offices, signalling a move towards a more 'sign and go' process in which the focus was on conditionality rather than back-to-work support. Conversely, another office had increased the length of the Jobsearch Review meeting to allow more time for discussion of Universal Jobmatch, which was seen to take more time to go through with claimants.

*'Well we do ten minutes FJR [Jobsearch review] interviews whereas others maybe do shorter. What we felt is the ten minutes gave the Assistant Advisers a bit more time, a bit more of a quality intervention and I think especially with Universal Jobmatch it's essential, you know, what can you do in four minutes?'*

(ATM)

### Work Focused Interviews for ESA and IS claimants

There was ongoing uncertainty amongst staff about how to support ESA claimants. In the first year of the evaluation, it was clear that ESA advisers were taking a 'light touch' approach, involving fairly infrequent contact and minimal support (discussed in detail in *The Jobcentre Plus Offer: Findings from the first year of the evaluation*, Chapter 3). After the first year, changes were applied to the ESA customer journey meaning that claimants with a prognosis of 12 months or under were immediately referred to the Work Programme. This further limited the involvement of Jobcentre Plus advisers, who were now largely focused on providing support for those with a longer term prognosis; in theory those who were furthest from returning to work.

There had been limited change to these meetings over time, with the focus still on discussing achievable steps back into work. Since year one, some offices were looking at developing more structured journeys for ESA claimants to provide greater clarification and guidance to advisers on the type of support that they may offer.

*'The [ESA] group themselves work slightly separately to the JSA group, they may lose some of the [support] elements that other people are entitled to or could take up as part of the Offer and we've got to a stage where we are now revisiting our ESA journey and looking at what training is involved.'*

(ATM)

For IS claimants, the operation of Work Focused Interviews (WFIs) was largely unchanged under the Offer. Changes cited by staff were limited to increased frequency of meetings for lone parents as they approached the end of their eligibility for claiming IS. Generally, staff felt it was difficult to implement increased flexibilities and support under the Offer because claimants were not required to have contact beyond the standard requirements for WFIs.

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<sup>6</sup> Universal Jobmatch is the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) online job posting and matching service for both employers/recruiters and job seekers introduced in November 2012. The service works by matching job seekers to jobs based on their skills and CV. Matching skills to jobs also allows job seekers, who might be unable to find jobs in their chosen profession, see what alternatives might be available in their local area.

### 2.2.3 How the Offer is delivered – Flexible adviser support

A key feature of the Offer is to allow greater flexibility around how adviser support is provided to claimants. For example, there is now greater freedom to vary adviser support, particularly in relation to frequency, duration and channel of contact with claimants. Decisions about how and when to provide adviser support, and indeed refer claimants to further support options, are intended to be determined through diagnosing claimants' individual needs.

Findings from the first year of the evaluation highlighted a number of issues affecting how flexible adviser support was applied in practice – specifically, these focused on the extent to which advisers were able to use their discretion to manage their caseloads, or whether offices adopted more structured approaches to diagnosing claimant needs and prioritising support for certain claimants. Over the course of the evaluation, these issues continued to drive approaches to flexible adviser support.

#### Diagnosing claimant needs

Claimant diagnosis takes place at the initial assessment of needs during NJI/New Joiner's Work Focused Interviews (NJWFIs) and through ongoing assessment during adviser interviews. Initially, it was expected that advisers would make use of the Customer Assessment Tool (CAT)<sup>7</sup> to identify claimant support needs. However, findings from the first year of the evaluation suggested that offices made only limited use of this tool, preferring instead to use more localised approaches.

*'I think that the [CAT] you know, had negative feedback from the advisers because they felt it was cumbersome in terms of using it within the interview and I think that what we've found is that there's been various different kinds of localised aide memoirs that people have pulled together, you know, a kind of checklist of things you want to make sure you've covered within your diagnostic interview or within a first follow up after that.'*

(CSOM)

A common approach observed in the first year was the 'RAG' categorisation, where claimants were identified as being either Red, Amber or Green, denoting the level of support needed based on adviser assessment of the complexity of their needs. Despite the use of such tools, staff suggested that many advisers were basing these decisions on their intuition, experience and knowledge, building on the rapport and relationship between claimant and adviser.

*'A lot of them just use their own skills and see what they think when they're speaking to the customer and looking at their experience and qualifications.'*

(ATM)

It was clear that by the second year of the evaluation, these less formalised approaches towards diagnosing claimant needs were becoming increasingly typical. Staff described even less explicit use of the CAT and other diagnosis tools; for example, in one office, advisers were given permission to 'drop' the CAT if they had achieved a personal adviser accreditation.

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<sup>7</sup> The CAT is a profiling tool used during advisory interviews to record the evidence about key attributes (such as skills) found to give customers the best chance of finding work.

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*'When we first looked at it, it was made mandatory that they use the CAT tool. I think most of them have kept it, but as they've earned their flexibility and they've got their certificate of accreditation, they can make the decisions of whether they drop it or not.'*

(CSOM)

*'Very limited [use of the CAT]. I mean, the advisers don't like it, and the majority of advisers have been advisers for quite a long period of time. And they know when they're interviewing a customer where their strengths or where their weaknesses are .... A lot of them feel that the system is not going to tell them a lot about the customer; it's about their face-to-face contact. I mean, sometimes it could just be that a customer comes in five minutes late for their interview all the time, and that triggers for them that it could maybe be an issue and when they discuss it, it may be because they've got childcare or caring responsibilities. No tool in the field can really diagnose a person's needs for employability as opposed to their actual contact by phone or by face-to-face with them.'*

(ATM)

However, senior staff raised concerns that an informal approach was reliant on advisers' variable skills and confidence in asking pertinent diagnostic questions of claimants. In particular, there were queries about whether advisers had the adequate skills and training to diagnose claimants' more complex or sensitive needs.

Perhaps in light of these concerns, a number of districts had developed more innovative approaches to diagnosing claimants' needs – for example, introducing group diagnostic sessions for JSA 18-24 (see Case study – Office 5), and two offices explicitly discussed the use of the Looking for Work questionnaire (a Jobcentre Plus diagnosis questionnaire). A further two offices had implemented structured skills and diagnosis pilots. One of these had introduced a skills assessment pilot at 6-8 weeks of the claimant journey, funded via the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). This involved a skills provider spending a day and a half with claimants to diagnose their needs and provide referrals to specific skills training and pre-gateway training which covered Universal Jobmatch job search (see Case study – Office 6).

*'As an adviser it is great for you because you know whether they've got any IT problems, ESOL, basic skills, anything else, whether they are going to be put on any training.'*

(Adviser)

Although this provided a very structured process of diagnosis for all claimants, it was seen as an expensive resource and advisers expressed concerns about the appropriateness of all referrals; in particular, whether this process might delay help for those who needed referral immediately, such as people with ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) needs. A second office was taking part in a pilot where claimants had their job readiness diagnosed via an assessment tool which gave advisers more specific information to discuss relevant support options.

### Case study: Office 5

#### What are they doing?

- Limited change to delivery model and team structure – ongoing team approach to case-loading with individual PAs teamed up with two Assistant Advisers to share information and provide continuity for claimants.
- Running group diagnostic sessions for JSA 18-24 claimants and group sessions to discuss Work Programme referrals with claimants.
- Early IT training sessions for claimants to aid jobsearch.
- Increased flexibility encouraged at office level to give more adviser autonomy in setting the format and length of adviser meetings.

#### Why are they doing this?

- Group sessions were implemented to drive efficiency and speed up the new claims process.
- Open to explore new practices resulting from participation in the Local Autonomy Pilot and now Freedom and Flexibilities.

ESA advisers described a range of challenges to their ability to identify and support claimants' needs. One challenge was that claimants were often dealing with uncertainty around the results of their Work Capability Assessment (WCA), which meant that adviser meetings often focused on providing reassurance about the process rather than spending time discussing how best to support them. ESA advisers and senior managers also discussed the lack of support and training for staff to identify and support claimants with complex needs, especially related to mental health. Further guidance had been made available in year two of the Offer by Head Office, regarding advisers' support and diagnosis for claimants in the WRAG Group. However, advisers discussed limited awareness of this. Challenges were also raised around how to understand the support needs of former Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimants, who tended to be particularly vulnerable claimants and less focused on looking for work. In particular, advisers felt this group commonly suffered from undiagnosed mental health issues, which made them more difficult to support.

*'It's been really difficult for everybody. I mean, the advisers are dealing with customers they never had to deal with before. A lot of the time we don't really feel that customers are on the appropriate benefit, and there seems to be a bit of conflict between what we see as being employable and what our Work Capability Assessment says as being employable, and the volume of customers with mental health problems is astronomical and, to be honest, we're not really geared to deal with these customers.'*

(ATM)

### Claimant prioritisation

Since the introduction of the Offer, increased flexibility around frequency, duration and channel of contact with claimants appeared to result in different approaches to prioritising adviser support for certain claimants. In particular, over the course of the evaluation there was increasingly widespread use of the 'cohort' management approach to determine the nature and intensity of adviser contact. Managers largely discussed this approach as a way

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to keep track of where claimants were in relation to key off-flow targets and how this data might be used to help focus adviser time in order to improve off-flows. For example, advisers would be told to focus their time and resources on claimants who were approaching key off-flow markers.

*'What we do is we use coloured slips to identify whether the customer needs some follow-up support. Whether a customer needs a diagnostic interview or whether the customer's in one of our key cohorts and they need some intensive support.'*

(CSOM)

Advisers discussed practical barriers to this new approach, including increased administration time and applying more structured approaches to adviser support that undermined adviser discretion about how best to support claimants.

The Offer had increased advisers' ability to vary the **channel of contact** through the additional use of telephone calls and home visits, and this move towards greater tailoring of format appeared to have increased over time. By the second year of the evaluation there was greater use of remote contact, not only by telephone, but also email and text. This variety of contact was driven not only by advisers wanting to introduce greater personalisation and innovation within the modes of communication they used, but also reflected the need to efficiently manage limited resource available for face-face appointments.

*'I think as the years develop, approaches have changed, there is a lot more telephone contact, there is even email contact. Universal Jobmatch gives us a further option there to send job details specifically targeted at individuals. I think my staff have become a bit more adept at understanding what support each person needs – we flexed the way that people sign on, we have got offices who run without appointments and so they can target individuals on any particular day, our signing clerks are now advisers and are working much more closely together, we have done a lot more case conferencing and there's just a far bigger focus on these kind of elements, so yes I would say that the method of contact now varies quite substantially, but I think all that has strengthened the focus and the quality of that contact greatly in the last year.'*

(CSOM)

There were additional developments around **duration of contact** with claimants. Advisers had been encouraged to move away from standard appointment slots of 40 minutes, however, ongoing use of structured diary systems in some offices made advisers reliant on prebooked appointment slots. Some offices had moved further towards flexible diary management and booking slots of varied durations and format; for example, by email and telephone contact – which had the benefit of allowing more cost-effective use of staff time.

*'I think the biggest way we changed the way we work is our levels of flexibilities. Whereas everything used to be notified appointment in 2 weeks' time and was very regimented, I think the difference now is that ... more of our Jobseeker support is conducted by phone or through digital channels, through Universal Jobmatch, by email ... Simply because of lack of resources we are pulling a lot of our emphasis away from face-to-face conversations.'*

(Adviser)

## Cast study: Office 6

### What are they doing?

- Ongoing use of team structure split by benefit type across JSA 18-24 and 25+ but IS advisers are now integrated within mainstream JSA 25+ teams.
- A new Skills Conditionality pilot (SFA funded) providing 1.5 days of customer diagnosis.
- Implementation of a district-led cohort management system.
- Introduction of IADs with two advisers (part-time) allocated to supervise.
- The appointment of cultural customer autonomy managers who act as relationship managers with employers and providers.

### Why are they doing this?

- Changes to team structure since policy change to IS and age of the youngest child entitlement.
- District introduced cohort monitoring system to help increase off-flow performance.

Overall, by the second year of the evaluation it was apparent that offices had embraced the flexibility now permitted in deciding how adviser support was applied. However, this was not to say that managers were comfortable with allowing advisers to make these decisions themselves. Indeed, in practice there was variation in the extent to which advisers were able to use their discretion to manage their own caseloads and make decisions about prioritising and diagnosing claimants. The first year of the evaluation highlighted that these variations were underpinned by three factors – how far flexibility had been devolved, the experience and skills of individual advisers, and the resources available to them.

As previously discussed there was variation in **how far flexibility had been devolved**. This ranged from the use of structured approaches to managing adviser caseloads in some offices, to allowing advisers to make decisions about how best to support claimants, and using case conferencing and reviews to monitor activity and identify best practice. The increased use of cohort management systems suggests that offices are now using structured flexibility with the intention to best manage caseloads to meet off-flow targets.

*‘Since you were last here there has been the tracking tool implemented to make it easier for an adviser to concentrate on individuals who fall into a certain cohort, you know, to manage the caseloads better. Rather than being diary-led it’s either claimant-led and tracker-led.’*

(Adviser)

*‘We were hoping that if we delivered our journey, our customers would naturally flow off, but to actually hit our targets we have got to be more focused on making sure we follow that customer through and make sure we know when they ought to be gone.’*

(CSOM)

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**Advisers' experience and skills** continued to influence the extent to which they were able to incorporate flexibility within their role; particularly their ability to adapt from previous process-driven approaches to more tailored support. Two main factors underpinning variations in ability and skills were identified, including: the length of time in role and the extent to which process-driven practices were engrained; and, whether advisers had experience of working under less structured support, such as the process for IS and former IB and the New Deal initiatives which were seen to have similar principles of greater flexibility.

**The resources available to advisers** were also an additional factor, whereby the perceived impact of training and support could be constrained by limitations around full diaries and size of caseloads. Throughout the two years of implementation, offices discussed how diary slots had continued to be booked in advance which created problems in arranging appointments flexibly. Generally, managers spoke of limited ongoing training focused on adviser flexibility although some offices had implemented this through internal training and communications. One office had regular structured training which included the use of behavioural insight techniques, confidence building, brokering skills and support training around key skills such as CV writing.

### **2.2.4 How the Offer is delivered – flexible menu of back-to-work support**

The flexible menu of support was seen by staff as offering a wide range of programmes that could support greater personalised provision. The main change appreciated by advisers was the introduction of fewer restrictions on what stage in a claimant's journey different types of support were available. However, the first year of the evaluation identified that there were a number of challenges in how advisers were able to refer claimants and how the support was provided. These included the following:

- Limited adviser knowledge of and confidence in the provision available.
- Complicated and slow processes for accessing funding for non-contracted provision.
- Challenges in purchasing services from other organisations.
- Lack of awareness and availability of local provision, including long waiting lists.
- Limited feedback about what types of support were successful in order to confidently refer claimants.
- Concerns about the lack of appropriate provision related to health and local lone parent services.

By the second year of the evaluation, there was a sense that the flexible menu of support had improved, both in terms of becoming more embedded in advisers' awareness, and in the operation and delivery of provision. Typically, advisers felt they had sufficient tools to work with the majority of their claimants. However, they identified a few remaining challenges; specifically around support available for claimants with complex needs, limited access to non-contracted provision, and the need for more intensive options for training and further education, particularly for younger claimants (explored in more detail below).

### **The process of referral to support**

As observed in the first year of the evaluation, offices used a number of different approaches to raise staff awareness of support options. These included the use of the District Provision

Tool (DPT) and eBoards<sup>8</sup>, provider presentations, weekly newsletters and ad hoc desk drops (as discussed in the first year evaluation report). Some advisers also discussed having a good knowledge of what was available through working closely with providers over the years. However, managers expressed concerns that these relationships could lead to complacency, with advisers not exploring other support options which could be more suitable for their claimants' needs.

Over the course of the evaluation, managers felt that adviser knowledge and awareness of the range of support options had improved. This was explained not only in relation to the efforts outlined above, but also a stronger focus on staff training and sharing of information within and across offices, and as a result of increased efforts to co-ordinate provision. For example, there appeared to have been increased investment across the case study districts to undertake engagement work with providers and employers, and to proactively monitor support and feed this back to advisers.

*'We now have a Provision Liaison Adviser and she's been a useful link between all the providers and was able to streamline exactly what was on LMS [Labour Market System] at that time, because a lot of the courses their actual content had been changed but you know we had not updated our record so some of the things we thought we were sending customers on wasn't actually what they were receiving, so that's been a very valuable process.'*

(ATM)

Advisers themselves described having greater confidence in using the full range of support. In part this related to perceived improvements with the accuracy of information provided via the DPT, although there was still fairly variable use of this tool, with some advisers describing greater reliance on their own knowledge and experience.

Improvements to the referral process were also reported by staff, including more streamlined approaches making use of online and phone referrals, and increased tracking of claimant attendance.

The following section outlines staff views about the **implementation and delivery of specific elements of the flexible menu of support**. It is important to note that the aim of the evaluation was not to provide a comprehensive assessment of individual support measures. Rather, this section focuses on those elements which were seen to have interacted with and developed over the course of the Offer.

**Get Britain Working measures (GBW):** There was a sense that GBW had introduced additional (rather than merely rebranded) provision, particularly with the implementation of sector-based work academies and Work Together. Another benefit from GBW was that in general these measures could be accessed more readily than other provision, with fewer time restrictions.

There were several factors impacting on the use of GBW as a whole. In particular, staff perceptions of the variable quality of providers and provision meant they were not always convinced that the support would meet the needs of their claimants. One district discussed pressure to increase referrals to GBW measures due to what they perceived to be district-

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<sup>8</sup> eBoards were observed in several offices; essentially, these are local intranets providing advisers with information about the latest job opportunities, upcoming events, and new support options.

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level targets to show improved use and engagement, particularly the use of work experience and sector-based work academies.

Over the second year of the evaluation, a number of developments were noted in relation to some of the measures which fall under the GBW banner.

- **Work experience:** It was felt that there had been improvements in diversifying the range of employers offering placements. This had resulted in greater adviser confidence in the matching and relevance of placements for their claimants. Staff also discussed improved feedback and contact with providers, facilitated by greater employment engagement activity by specific employer engagement staff. It was felt that improvements to work experience were reflective of an increased focus on young people – driven by the implementation of the Youth Contract and other youth-focused support (offered within the devolved nations, such as the Careers Wales and Skills Development Scotland). In spite of these developments, there were varied perceptions of the effectiveness of work experience. Some offices highlighted success stories of work experience placements (including sector-based work academies) improving job skills and employability, whereas others questioned whether claimants' experiences of the support had a direct impact on improving off-flow levels. A separate evaluation of the impact of work experience is currently being undertaken by DWP which provides specific analysis on impact<sup>9</sup>.

*'I know that our referral numbers for sector-based work academies and work experience are really high. We know we fill our places all the time but that doesn't translate into off-flow, so is the Offer actually the right thing for those customers because it is not leading them to off-flow?'*

(ATM)

- **New Enterprise Allowance (NEA)/Enterprise Clubs:** In the first year of the evaluation, NEA and Enterprise Clubs were both felt to have suffered from slow take up. Staff suggested that this was due to these measures not being available until six months into a claim. Take up was reported to have increased over the second year of the evaluation, and this was directly linked to changes that made both options available from day one of a claim. Some offices had also given NEA providers increased access and visibility within the Jobcentre Plus office; for example, through regular information stands and providing a room once a week for appointments with claimants.
- **Sector-based work academies:** Take up of this option was also fairly slow during the first year of the evaluation, which was explained by staff as being due to difficulties securing and establishing relationships with employers, in turn leading to long waiting lists and in some cases training being arranged with no work placement and no guaranteed job interview. Over the course of the evaluation, availability of placements increased as improvements in districts' engagement with employers were made. Initial concerns about a lack of diversity of placements on offer were largely dealt with over time, and advisers became increasingly confident that there was a sufficient range of opportunities available. However, this was strongly linked to availability in the local labour market, and some offices continued to voice concerns about limited placements. Overall, sector-based work academies were valued by staff because of the potential high rates of off-flows linked to the guarantee of an employer interview.

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<sup>9</sup> DWP is currently undertaking an impact assessment of work experience. Early findings were published in April 2012. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/222943/early\\_impacts\\_of\\_work\\_experience.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/222943/early_impacts_of_work_experience.pdf)

*'With sector-based work academy there's a job at the end of it. I know if I send eight people, probably eight people to six people are going to get a job out of it. So I know now that probably success-wise I'll get more out of sector-based work academy.'*

(ATM)

In addition to the GBW measures, the evaluation explored staff views about a number of other support options:

**Flexible Support Fund (FSF):** FSF was seen as the most effective support for claimants who needed help to overcome a single barrier; for example, clothing for interviews, transport costs, vocational certification. Therefore, it was typically used as a final push into employment. Although FSF gave greater flexibility to advisers to use a budget to spend on claimants, in the first year of the evaluation managers discussed its widespread underuse. This underuse was explained in a number of ways: a perceived lack of flexibility about what the funds could be spent on; advisers lacking confidence in making decisions about spending money; and perceptions of a slow and complex central procurement process. Over the course of the evaluation, there were notable changes to advisers' confidence in using FSF and in their greater awareness of the range of ways it could be used to respond to claimants' needs. There was also a shift in how managers discussed its use – with offices taking a more strategic approach, particularly in the use of low value procurement (LVP) to source additional provision to meet specific needs of the local area and claimant base. For example, one district had used the funding to procure ESOL provision, whilst another district had used funding for claimant access to a specialist health consultation support helpline, introduced specifically for former IB claimants.

*'One of the pieces of provision we have put in place through our Flexible Support Fund is a telephone support system from an NHS aligned organisation and they do telephone consultations with people we refer to them, and their job is not to cure people or to diagnose their illness or anything like that, but they are there to provide coping mechanisms and they have had very good feedback about the quality of that intervention and the help it is providing.'*

(District Manager)

However, the central procurement process for LVP was still viewed as being long and onerous, often with a lack of locally-based approved providers once the funding went out to tender.

*'LVP is still a bit cumbersome but better. They are working on that, at making it quicker for the decisions.'*

(CSOM)

In the Scottish case study district there had been less of a reliance on FSF because of the availability of Individual Learning Accounts (via Skills Development Scotland), which claimants could be granted for training such as health and safety, and food hygiene.

**Support Contract:** The Support Contract was often offered according to adviser discretion rather than as a mandatory form of support. There were two main factors impacting on its use: first, the inflexibility of the modular format, which meant it was hard to book places for claimants when required; and second, the perceived variation in quality of the provision. These challenges continued to be cited across both years of the evaluation, with continued issues concerning availability of spaces, timing of training and quality of providers. There was also discussion of the loss of specialist provision in some districts including specific support for 50+ claimants.

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**Work Programme:** Views of the Work Programme were only lightly touched upon during staff interviews and were discussed solely in relation to the referral process. Work Programme referrals are mandatory at the end of the claimant's journey with Jobcentre Plus and were discussed with claimants prior to this. During the first year of the evaluation it was clear that one of the main factors impacting on Work Programme referrals was advisers' lack of understanding about what it involved, compounded by limited contact between Jobcentre Plus staff and Work Programme providers. Over the course of the evaluation, relationships appeared to improve. In part, this was facilitated by regular meetings, bi-monthly case conferencing (covering discussions about the needs of specific claimants who had been referred) and provider presentations to Jobcentre Plus advisers. There had also been a shift towards more widespread use of warm handovers, where advisers made an initial call to the provider and handed the phone to the claimant to discuss their referral.

Although the flexible menu of support was generally viewed as providing a good range of support options, there were still a number of **significant gaps perceived in support available for specific types of claimants**, particularly relating to provision around ESOL, basic numeracy/literacy, tailored 50+ support and information and communications technology (ICT) skills.

*'It's the basic things that we need, people who struggle with switching a computer on or how to construct a basic letter.'*

(Adviser)

*'I think a lot of advisers feel that the 50+ age group are disadvantaged ... Why should it just be the 18-24 focus? I know we are looking to the future, but it can be absolutely devastating for somebody in midlife to find themselves unemployed and they need to retrain and move into a different work area of work.'*

(ATM)

*'We have a huge number of people here with English as a second language and we still haven't got any ESOL. It's a massive battle, if I am honest, with colleges to try and get the ESOL in.'*

(Adviser)

Staff also discussed a lack of health-related support, which was often raised in relation to limited places available to take part in Work Choice. A number of districts specifically discussed the reduction in options since the closure of Remploy sites for disabled people. In some districts there had been moves to tackle this by providing additional support for ESA claimants; for example, setting up a local structured programme of work experience. Beyond ESA claimants, staff discussed the need for more widespread access to provision for mental health conditions and related issues, including problems with self-esteem, anxiety and depression.

Also, despite improvements in feedback and relationships with support providers, there were ongoing concerns about the lack of information on the impact of support measures. Managers wanted stronger evidence and monitoring of the effectiveness of support to further help them plan their approaches in offering a flexible menu of support.

## 2.3 Wider changes influencing delivery of the Offer

Since the implementation of the Offer in April 2011, there have been a number of wider changes which have appeared to impact on the delivery of the Offer. These included the implementation of national initiatives affecting working practices within Jobcentre Plus – such as the new sanctions regime, the digital agenda, the Youth Contract, and expansion of Freedom and Flexibilities. In addition, offices were strongly focused on upcoming changes to welfare provision through the introduction of Universal Credit (and other welfare reforms), and the impact of claimants returning from the Work Programme. This next section considers how these developments have interacted with the Offer.

### 2.3.1 Freedom and Flexibilities

Freedom and Flexibilities developed from the Delegated Flexibilities and Local Autonomy pilots. It represents a move away from the Standard Operating Model and was expected to provide greater responsibility at local level for offices to decide how best to support claimants.

In general, staff found it difficult to separate the impact of Freedom and Flexibilities from the Offer, particularly for districts who had been part of a Local Autonomy pilot. The expansion of the autonomy pilots had, in the most part, led to increased office discretion and flexibility to make changes in relation to local conditions. This included, for example, implementing internal Youth Contract sessions and new practices around formats of contact and diary management. Similar to the Offer, the extent to which flexibility had been devolved was variable and dependent on decisions made at district and Customer Service Operations Manager (CSOM) level. The case study offices included examples where changes to working practices had been made at a frontline level, and contrasted with other offices who felt that the opportunities of Freedom and Flexibilities had not been opened up to them because of decisions at district level. This was acknowledged by one District Manager who claimed that a more structured process was required for larger offices because of the size and complexity of their claimant bases.

*‘There’s a lot of offices that have been allowed to have some sort of pilots to deliver monthly signing and there seems to be a lot of innovation going on and we are allowed to go look and see but are not allowed to touch. And this is where you get slightly frustrated where you think well actually we could benefit from that.’*

(CSOM)

### 2.3.2 New sanctions regime

The new sanctions regime was introduced in October 2012, introducing fixed period sanctions with the intention of aligning it more to the sanction regime planned for Universal Credit from 2013. Advisers typically had a good awareness of the changes and associated the implementation of the new regime with a wider cultural shift towards tougher conditionality and stronger challenging of claimants to ensure that they were meeting the conditions of their JSAg. Advisers discussed recent moves to increase the number and type of ‘actively seeking work’ actions within the JSAg, moving away from the traditional approach which looked for compliance within the minimum standards of three steps a week to more tailored conditions based on reasonable expectations to find work.

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*'We've also gone into a little bit more of a challenge agenda ... making sure they are meeting the requirements of benefit, they are looking at work, and getting them to take more activities to look for work which will be supporting the off-flow agenda.'*

(ATM)

Advisers generally supported the move to tougher conditionality but perceived that the level of sanctioning was not always appropriate for certain claimants. There was a sense that this could adversely affect claimants in areas with limited job market opportunities and restricted accessibility to the internet. For example, claimants living in rural locations were seen as having greater barriers to conducting online job search and using Universal Jobmatch, yet would still be expected to meet certain requirements. Furthermore, some staff felt that vulnerable claimants, such as those suffering from mental health problems, were more likely to face difficulties meeting conditionality and were more likely to be affected by the tougher sanctions. In this context a general need for greater discretion around the conditions for sanctioning was highlighted.

*'[Former IB claimants] are hugely difficult for us to deal with in the JSA journey. They can become suddenly vulnerable and we've got this increased pressure for stricter benefit regime and it's very easy for them to get caught up in a sanction for 26 week ... It's the easiest thing in the world for people with mental illness to not look for work for a couple of weeks.'*

(ATM)

It was too early to understand the full impact of the introduction of the new sanctions regime on the delivery of the Offer, however, there was an initial perception in some offices that it was influencing claimants to sign off the register, especially JSA 18-24 claimants.

### 2.3.3 Digital agenda

Across the districts, staff discussed a greater focus on a digital approach to working practices within Jobcentre Plus. Offices had seen a shift towards increased use of ICT for both the contact and support offered to claimants. This had been encouraged by national initiatives such as Universal Jobmatch and innovation at both district and office level. The research team observed physical changes within offices over the course of the evaluation, with the introduction of IADs. Advisers also discussed greater use of email contact and social media alerts through Twitter. One office outlined future plans to implement free wireless connection to enable claimants to job search using their own devices whilst in the Jobcentre Plus office. However, there were some concerns that increased digitalisation could divert resources from face-to-face contact and meetings with claimants.

Universal Jobmatch was a key example of the increased focus on digital methods. The principle of Universal Jobmatch was broadly supported by advisers, although there were acknowledged issues around its implementation, particularly in situations where staff and claimants had limited ICT skills. Training and ongoing support was not always viewed as sufficient. For advisers, this had been delivered via online e-training which caused problems for people who were not already ICT competent. More broadly, the use of online and remote training for wider and national changes was seen as less effective in engaging staff and developing new skills, in contrast to more personalised approaches provided within offices. Overall, the roll out of Universal Jobmatch training was seen to be fairly typical of other national programmes – being communicated too close to the time of its introduction, with too little time between managers being informed and the need to communicate with staff before implementation.

Advisers felt that there had also been little support to prepare claimants for the change. Some offices had introduced additional training through assisted sessions using IADs. One district decided to provide additional support for claimants through the development of a digital journey, including a FSF-funded 'IT skills for work' training, which included an introduction to the use of IADs, CV writing and Universal Jobmatch.

### 2.3.4 Youth Contract

The Youth Contract was launched in April 2012 and provides additional Jobcentre Plus support for unemployed young people aged 18 to 24. Young people can have more contact with Jobcentre Plus; specifically, contact on a weekly basis from day one of claiming JSA, and access to a named adviser who deals with the claimant throughout their claim and refers them to support services. Its introduction was intended to provide a greater focus on support for young people through the provision of greater resource allocation and the move in some offices to dedicated teams.

Staff discussed how the introduction of the Youth Contract had led to increased use of a range of contact formats, including email, text and phone calls. There was also a perception that this had led to increased off-flows for this claimant group.

*'I think [JSA 18-24 claimants] get a lot more attention from the advisers. We are seeing them more regularly, we are using things like work experience, apprenticeships .... They have more contact with their advisers via email as well as telephone interviews.'*

(ATM)

However, there were concerns that the initiative had introduced a more structured and procedural approach which was time-consuming and rigid; for example, requiring weekly contact. There was also apprehension regarding the amount of focus on this claimant group and unease that this may have diverted resources away from other JSA claimant teams and increased pressure on adviser caseloads. A full evaluation of the Youth Contract is currently being undertaken which provides comprehensive analysis of its implementation and delivery<sup>10</sup>.

### 2.3.5 Universal Credit

Offices were beginning to anticipate the impact of future changes to welfare provision, one of which was the introduction of Universal Credit<sup>11</sup>. Universal Credit involves the move to simplify the benefits system by bringing together a range of working-age benefits into a single integrated payment. Support for housing costs, children and childcare costs will be integrated in the new benefit and will remove the need to claim different means-tested benefits from different agencies.

There was a general feeling of uncertainty about the potential impact of Universal Credit on the support needs of claimants and the implications for advisers' roles. Some offices had particular concerns regarding how Universal Credit would work for claimants with multiple and complex needs who were currently supported via a number of agencies.

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<sup>10</sup> A full synthesis evaluation report is due for publication in 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Universal Credit was introduced on 29 April 2013 in selected areas of Greater Manchester and Cheshire. It is being gradually rolled out to the rest of the UK from October 2013 and will be completed by 2017.

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*'I think when we go to Universal Credit and look at the localised support services we need to get greater case conferencing between the agencies on the minority of customers who have the biggest issues .... They don't have one issue; they have several, so we need to get better at that kind of more complex area. I think we are pretty good now at the single issue customer and being able to find a way through that, but it is those with the more complex needs that we need to get smarter at.'*

(District Manager)

Offices had undertaken some preparation in advance; for example, working with local authorities to identify affected claimants and providing training on the changes for frontline Jobcentre Plus staff. However, this was at a very early stage of development.

### 2.3.6 Work Programme returners

Offices were also thinking about the imminent return (in June 2013) of the first cohort of claimants who had completed two years on the Work Programme. There was apprehension around how Jobcentre Plus could best support claimants who were likely to be the hardest to help (i.e. those with complex and/or multiple needs). At the time of the interviews (February to March 2013) Jobcentre Plus were expecting guidance from DWP on this area. Some offices had started to put plans in place for how they would support these claimants, including scoping local provision. One approach described by staff was working with providers to identify who was returning and what support they were likely to need. Again, this was at a very early stage of development.

## 2.4 Perceived impact of the Offer

In general, the Offer was viewed as being part of a positive shift for both staff and claimants. From a manager's perspective, it was felt that the Offer had moved working practices in the right direction towards increased tailoring for claimants.

*'The actual JCP [Jobcentre Plus] Offer is brilliant. It allows us to do what we need to do; we just want more of it.'*

(District Manager)

*'When I joined the Department, we were in the staged approach to dealing with customers .... whereas now, I don't think you could find two customers in our office who have the same journey. Everybody is really dealt with differently, and it's provided a more tailored approach, and I think that's why now the customers are starting to see jobcentre advisers as support.'*

(ATM)

The Offer had, in conjunction with wider changes, provided greater managerial flexibility within districts and local offices. However, as discussed earlier in the chapter, there remained variations in the extent to which decisions and approaches were determined at national, district and office level.

Managers felt that there had been a shift towards greater flexibility in the way advisers support claimants, which had been further supported by the increased options available through the flexible menu of support. This was associated with increased job satisfaction for

frontline staff; which was supported by reported improvements in staff surveys and ATM's observing greater adviser confidence. However, as noted previously, this did not necessarily correlate with increased adviser discretion, which could be constrained by district and office delivery models.

There also remained challenges around availability of bespoke and personalised support for specific groups of claimants and those with complex needs. It was felt that there was still limited flexibility in implementing new provision at a local level because of central procurement procedures and the need for district approval for the budget and bidding process.

*'I think as far as it goes we are quite a long way further along [providing personalised support] than we were 12 months ago. But customers are individuals and they do have a very wide range of issues and problems and addressing those is not always straightforward and not always something we can do.'*

(ATM)

Generally, the Offer was thought to have had a positive effect on off-flows. This was related to greater managerial flexibility to make decisions about how best to drive off-flow through a combination of diagnosis of claimant needs and flexible approaches to tailoring support.

*'I think the key successes are that we've been able to keep the pace and embed change within an organisation that is constantly dealing with change and we've also been able to, I think, improve our services to our claimants and that is evident through our success and improvements with looking at [off-flow] rates of people returning into employment.'*

(CSOM)

However, some offices felt the level of flexibility had been constrained by a greater push at district level in implementing measures and directives to meet targets. These had included district-wide initiatives (and in some cases, cohort management approaches) and district-level expectations about referrals to key support provision.

At an adviser level, there were mixed views on what they thought the impact of the Offer had been, which were linked to whether they felt they had greater autonomy in practice, appropriate levels of resources, and how easily they had found it to adapt to a new culture of change and new initiatives which affected the way they worked. There was a general sense that advisers now had more scope to use their skills and judgement and that there was greater trust in their professionalism by managers within Jobcentre Plus. However, as discussed previously, there were still issues around advisers adapting to this new style of working.

There was a feeling that offices and districts were now better at sharing best practice both across and within districts, and that staff were receiving increased employer and provider feedback and engagement. However, staff at all levels described a sense of constant change through both national initiatives and offices/districts rolling out new ways of working. There was an indication that this continual innovation was leading to confusion and uncertainty, particularly for frontline staff. Managers called for the introduction of robust piloting of new approaches and greater evidence to understand how new initiatives and policy could work in different local settings.

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*'I think I would really like to see policy and operations much more closely entwined. We have seen evidence recently where if we can understand how the policy will work, we can see if it will actually work on the ground.'*

(District Manager)

*'We never do anything long enough to know exactly what the impact of something is .... We never get to the stage in the Department of knowing whether it is the customer journey, whether it is us positively impacting on what's happening or actually would that person would have gone off anyway, if we hadn't have had that interaction.'*

(CSOM)

Finally, staff typically felt that the Offer had had a positive impact on claimants. There was now greater clarity of expectations on claimants and a more proactive approach to engagement, which staff felt had been received well by claimants. As a result of increased case-loading and more flexible access to support, it was felt that claimants would acknowledge a more personalised approach and would feel more 'listened too' rather than just being processed through the system. There was also anecdotal evidence of improvements to customer satisfaction via informal feedback and evidence from Jobcentre Plus satisfaction surveys. Despite this, there was an overall sense that the Offer (and particularly the flexible menu of support) was currently geared more towards JSA, particularly 18-24 year olds, with less emphasis on ESA claimants and people with more complex needs.

## 2.5 Summary

As the Offer embedded over time, ongoing changes and developments to working practices highlighted that flexibility had been embraced across the case study offices. Variations in how the Offer was being delivered within and between districts were identified in the first year, and these continued to evolve over the second year. In particular, it was clear that senior managers were making the most of the increased flexibility to experiment with different ways of structuring support that provide the best outcomes. This resulted in different delivery models, comprising a range of approaches that were either more or less structured for frontline staff. Over time, there appeared to be a slight shift in favour of more structured approaches within offices, underpinned by a stronger emphasis on monitoring claimant progress across the journey and focusing support at key off-flow milestones.

Alongside the increased variation in delivery of the Offer, it was clear that districts had become increasingly focused on understanding and disseminating best practice. Managers cited a number of mechanisms for learning from the numerous pilots and initiatives taking place across the case study districts, although in practice this did not always filter down to frontline staff. There were also ongoing concerns about how well advisers were adapting to new ways of working, and in particular how they were coping with the sense of continual change and evolution of working practices. In particular, staff sought greater evidence to understand how and why practices could be made to work within local settings.

There were limited changes to the way offices delivered core interventions across the two years of the evaluation of the Offer. Any developments, such as changes to handling new claims or timings of core interventions, were predominantly associated with making the best use of staff time and resources to maximise off-flows.

One of the key areas of change highlighted by staff was the effect of the Offer on flexible adviser support. The multiple delivery models outlined in this chapter suggest that this is a key area where managers have been able to tailor provision in order to meet off-flow targets. As noted above, this resulted in approaches that were more or less structured, and involved greater or lesser degrees of adviser discretion. Whilst flexibility around format and duration of meetings continued to increase across offices and districts, decisions around claimant prioritisation were increasingly driven by the widespread use of cohort management tools to determine the nature and intensity of adviser contact. Variations in how flexibility had devolved were additionally influenced by the skills and experience of advisers and resources available to advisers (for example, diary management).

The flexible menu of support provided a wide range of programmes to support more personalised provision. Staff identified the main benefit of the new menu as being the reduction in restrictions around when claimants were eligible for different types of support. Over the course of the evaluation, the flexible menu of support became more strongly embedded in advisers' awareness and improvements were noted in relation to the delivery and operation of key support options. However, there remained a number of significant gaps in provision, particularly for claimants with complex and/or multiple needs (for example, ESOL basic numeracy/literacy, tailored 50+ support and ICT skills) and limited access to non-contracted provision.

In addition to the individual elements of the Offer, it was clear that the work of Jobcentre Plus offices was influenced by a number of wider national initiatives, including the new sanctions regime, the digital agenda, the Youth Contract and expansion of Freedom and Flexibilities. In addition, offices were beginning to look to the impact of future changes to welfare provision and the return of the first cohort of claimants who had completed the Work Programme. Reactions to these initiatives tended to involve further development and evolution of day-to-day working practices, and in many cases the introduction of greater structure at either district or office level in terms of how advisers handle affected claimants.

Overall, the Offer was viewed by staff as a positive shift towards greater flexibility and tailoring of support for claimants. It was assumed that the Offer had had a positive effect on off-flows, by allowing greater managerial freedom to make decisions about how best to structure support within a local context. However, there remained concerns that the extent to which flexibility had been devolved was constrained by a greater push at district levels in implementing measures and directives to meet a range of targets or expectations (for example, off-flows and referrals to key support provision). There were also ongoing concerns that the Offer placed an emphasis on mainstream JSA claimants to the detriment of more vulnerable groups, such as ESA claimants and people with more complex needs.

## 3 The claimant experience of the Offer

This chapter presents Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants' perspective of the Offer, as well as their destinations and attitudes following their experience of the Offer. The findings are largely derived from a longitudinal national survey of new claimants, and supplemented by the inclusion of findings from qualitative research with claimants at various stages of their journey through the Offer.

The chapter begins by looking at claimants who were still on the same benefit 12 months after making their claim as well as the circumstances of those who off-flowed into employment or other destinations after a period of participating in the Offer. It explores the attitudes around work that claimants had when they made their claim and measures any attitudinal change after time spent on the Offer. The chapter then moves on to describe the various elements of support that claimants were presented with to assist them in moving closer to work, claimants' take-up of support measures throughout their claim, and their retrospective views of the assistance they received.

### 3.1 Proportions remaining on their claim or off-flowing

The survey collected details of the employment or benefit status of claimants at both the initial and second interviews. Where claimants had off-flowed from benefit the survey looked at whether this was into work or another destination. We know that the majority of new JSA claimants move off JSA quickly, most within three months of making their claim<sup>12</sup>. However, less is known about the destinations that JSA claimants move to, the rate that ESA claimants leave ESA or their destination when they do<sup>13</sup>.

Table 3.1 divides claimants who took part in the Jobcentre Plus Offer survey into those who were still claiming the same benefit and those who were not. The table shows that three-quarters of JSA claimants (76 per cent) who initiated their claim in March 2012 off-flowed into work or another destination at some point in the subsequent year, but only slightly over a quarter of ESA claimants in the 12-month prognosis Work Related Activity Category Group (WRAG) (28 per cent) off-flowed in the year following their New Joiner's Work Focused Interview (NJWFI).

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<sup>12</sup> Labour market data is available on NOMIS: <http://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>. The following Parliamentary Answer gives estimates for JSA off-flow rates from mid-2010 until early 2012: <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2012-03-14b.97621.h>

<sup>13</sup> A recent survey of destinations of benefit leavers was carried out for DWP 'Destinations of Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support and Employment and Support Allowance Leavers 2011', Adams L et al, DWP Research Report No 791, 2012. This found a slightly lower proportion of JSA leavers off-flowing into work and a higher proportion of ESA claimants moving into work than the destinations found through the Jobcentre Plus Offer survey. The two surveys were carried out through different methodologies, and at different time periods, which may help to explain any variation.

**Table 3.1 Destinations**

	JSA %	ESA looking for work %	ESA not looking for work %
<b>Still on same claim</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>72</b>
On Work Programme	10	29	17
Not on Work Programme	14	44	56
<b>Off-flowed</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>28</b>
Into work	59	10	4
Not into work	17	18	24

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,069); all ESA claimants looking for work (104); all ESA claimants not looking for work (575)*

The most common destination for JSA claimants who completed their claim was into employment (59 per cent), whereas ESA claimants were more likely to off-flow elsewhere, such as into training.

### 3.1.1 Claimants still on the same claim

At the time of the final survey interviews, approximately a year after claimants attended their New Jobseeker’s Interview (NJI) or NJWFI, around a quarter of JSA claimants (24 per cent) and over seven in ten ESA claimants (72 per cent) were still in receipt of the same benefit they originally claimed over 12 months earlier. Of those, only a minority were on the Work Programme: this was true of 10 per cent of all JSA claimants, equating to 40 per cent of those who might have been expected to be referred by that stage of their claim. It also applied to 17 per cent of ESA claimants who were not actively searching for work at the start of their claim, and 29 per cent of ESA claimants who were looking for work.

### Analysis of JSA claimants

Amongst JSA claimants, several demographic characteristics were associated with a greater likelihood of remaining on benefit for longer (Table 3.2). JSA claimants with a mental or physical health condition were more likely (38 per cent and 37 per cent, respectively) than those without one of those conditions (23 per cent each) to still be in receipt of the same benefit. Moreover, disadvantaged claimants<sup>14</sup> had a higher tendency to remain on the same claim (35 per cent) than other claimants (20 per cent).

However, the claimants most likely to remain on the same claim were those who agreed in the first interview that *‘the thought of being in paid work makes me nervous’* (50 per cent, compared with 27 per cent who disagreed). Remaining on the same claim was also very common amongst claimants who lacked any formal qualifications (40 per cent, compared with 23 per cent of claimants with some qualifications), with the likelihood of continuing to claim falling as educational level increased.

<sup>14</sup> JSA claimants are categorised as ‘disadvantaged’ if they have a long-term health problem or disability, if they are carers, ex-offenders or homeless, if they revealed a drug or alcohol dependency, or if they were formerly in the armed forces.

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JSA claimants who were still in receipt of JSA a year after initiating their claim would normally be expected to move onto the Work Programme. In fact, as shown in Table 3.3, only 41 per cent of JSA claimants who were still on the same claim (the equivalent of 10 per cent of all JSA claimants) were on the Work Programme at the time of the second interview, while a further 18 per cent of those continuing to claim had been referred and were waiting to start. It was relatively common for those who lacked qualifications to start on the Work Programme: amongst JSA claimants who had not off-flowed into work, far more unqualified than qualified claimants reported having moved on to the Work Programme (56 per cent compared with 39 per cent).

Almost three in five (57 per cent) Work Programme starters said that they had volunteered to access the Work Programme. Volunteers tended to have positive views of the support they had received from the jobcentre: they were more likely than non-volunteers to say that the amount of support they received felt 'about right' (63 per cent compared to 45 per cent); that the support they received matched their needs and circumstances (64 per cent compared to 35 per cent); and that their adviser was understanding (63 per cent compared to 41 per cent). Volunteering does not, therefore, seem to be driven by dissatisfaction with the Jobcentre Plus Offer, and in fact only eight per cent of volunteers said that the reason they volunteered was that they were not getting the support they needed from Jobcentre Plus advisers. The top reason mentioned for choosing to access the Work Programme was the belief that it would improve claimants' chances of getting a job (mentioned by 59 per cent of volunteers).

Of those still claiming the same benefit a year after making their JSA claim, one in seven (14 per cent) said they had not been referred to the Work Programme by an adviser. This small number of claimants (n=18) were asked why they decided not to start on the Work Programme, and the most common answer was that the opportunity had not been offered to them or they did not know about it.

**Table 3.2 JSA claimants still on same claim**

	All JSA				Disadvantage				Health condition				Qualifications											
	Age		50 or above		Yes		No		Any		Mental		Physical		None		Basic		GCSE grades A-C		A levels and post-16		Degree	
	%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%	
<b>All</b>	24	27	22	26	35	20	22	22	34	38	37	40	31	27	18	17								
On Work Programme	10	10	9	11	12	9	9	12	14	15	23	15	9	7	6									
Not on Work Programme	14	17	12	16	24	11	13	22	24	22	18	16	18	11	11									

*Base: All JSA claimants (1069); 18-24 (311); 25-49 (383); 50+ (367); disadvantaged (296); not disadvantaged (773); no health condition (905); any health condition (188); mental health condition (76); physical health condition (129); no formal qualifications (83); basic qualifications (157); GCSE grades A-C or equivalent (303); A levels or other post-16 qualifications (300); degree (181)*

**Table 3.3 JSA claimants still on same claim who had and had not started on Work Programme**

	All JSA still on same claim				Disadvantage				Health condition				Qualifications											
	Age		50 or above		Yes		No		Any		Mental		Physical		None		Basic		GCSE grades A-C		A levels and post-16		Degree	
	%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%		%	
<b>All</b>	41	39	42	40	33	46	42	36	37	41	56	49	35	40	36									
On Work Programme	60	61	58	60	67	55	58	64	63	59	44	51	65	61	65									

*Base: JSA claimants still on same claim: All (205); 18-24 (69); 25-49 (62); 50+ (75); disadvantaged (85); not disadvantaged (121); no health condition (152); Any health condition (52); mental health condition (23); physical health condition (39); no formal qualifications (24); basic qualifications (42); GCSE grades A-C or equivalent (66); A levels or other post-16 qualifications (42); degree (23)*

Note: small base sizes.

### Analysis of ESA claimants

Unlike JSA claimants, most ESA claimants (72 per cent) were still claiming the same benefit a year after their NJWFI, regardless of whether or not they were looking for work at the start of their claim.<sup>15</sup> The main difference between those looking and not looking for work was in their likelihood of being on the Work Programme by the time of the second interview, with those looking for work more likely to be referred and make a start (29 per cent) than those who were not looking for work (17 per cent).

One in five ESA claimants (19 per cent) reported being on the Work Programme at their second interview (Table 3.4). This is the equivalent of around a quarter (26 per cent) of ESA claimants who were still on the same claim, with a further four per cent referred and due to start shortly. It should be noted that ESA claimants with a 12-month or greater prognosis could volunteer to enter the Work Programme at any point following their Work Capability Assessment (WCA), but those who made a claim in early 2012 were not mandated to the Programme. It is therefore unsurprising that the majority (54 per cent) were still claiming their benefit without having yet having moved onto the Work Programme.

As shown in Table 3.5, those who had moved onto the Work Programme were more likely to lack formal qualifications (37 per cent of claimants who were still on the same claim, compared with 23 per cent with higher qualifications), have been unemployed for under five years (34 per cent of claimants who were still on the same claim, compared with 23 per cent who had been unemployed for longer or never worked), or be on a new claim (36 per cent of claimants who were still on the same claim, compared with 24 per cent of those transferred from Incapacity Benefit (IB)). Claimants' attitudes towards work at the start of their claim (including confidence of finding a job) were not significantly linked to their likelihood of moving to the Work Programme.

Three in ten ESA claimants on the Work Programme (30 per cent) had made the move after volunteering. Volunteering was more common than average amongst ESA claimants who had positive attitudes to work at the start of their claim. This is shown by the relative frequency of volunteering amongst: claimants who felt confident they *'would find a job that suits me'* (12 per cent of all ESA claimants volunteered, compared with five per cent who disagreed with this statement); claimants who felt they would be *'a happier person if I was in paid work'* (nine per cent volunteered, compared two per cent who disagreed with this statement); and claimants who lacked anxiety over the prospect of being in paid work (10 per cent of those who disagreed with *'the thought of being in paid work makes me nervous'* volunteered, compared with five per cent who agreed with this statement). When claimants who volunteered were asked to give their reasons for doing so, the most common reason, given by 22 of the 42 ESA claimants who volunteered, was the belief that *'the Work Programme would improve my chances of getting a job'*.

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<sup>15</sup> The analysis in this report looks at ESA claimants who were looking for work at the start of their claim, as this was their original intention and when support started to be offered to them through the Jobcentre Plus Offer. The second wave of the survey did ask ESA claimants again about whether they were looking for work. Fifty-six per cent of those who were looking for work at the start of their claim were still looking for work at the second interview, a year after attending their original NJWFI or after off-flowing from ESA. Most of those who were not looking for work at the start of their claim were still not looking at the second interview (87 per cent).

**Table 3.4 ESA claimants still on same claim**

	All ESA		Age		Length unemployed		ESA migration		Health condition		Qualifications	
			50 or above		5 years or more/ never worked		New		Mental		None Basic Higher	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>All</b>	72	81	61	68	74	66	73	76	71	77	73	70
On Work Programme	19	21	15	23	17	24	18	20	18	28	16	17
Not on Work Programme	54	59	46	45	58	43	56	57	54	49	57	54

*Base: All ESA claimants (676); under 50 (314); 50 or above (361); unemployed under 5 years (212); unemployed 5 years or more or never worked (450); new claim (157); ex-IB (519); mental health condition (493); physical health condition (577); no formal qualifications (129); basic qualifications (155); higher than basic qualification (349)*

**Table 3.5 ESA claimants still on same claim who had and had not started on Work Programme**

	All ESA		Age		Length unemployed		ESA migration		Health condition		Qualifications	
			50 or above		5 years or more/ never worked		New		Mental		None Basic Higher	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
On Work Programme	26	26	25	34	23	36	24	26	25	37	22	24
Not on Work Programme	74	74	75	66	78	65	76	74	76	63	78	76

*Base: ESA claimants still on same claim: All (449)/under 50 (239); 50 or above (210); unemployed under 5 years (128); unemployed 5 years or more or never worked (316); new claim (93); ex-IB (357); mental health condition (352); physical health condition (383); no formal qualifications (93); basic qualifications (101); higher than basic qualification (227)*

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**Table 3.6 Reasons why ESA claimants did not start the Work Programme**

	<b>ESA %</b>
Health reasons/disability	43
Was never mentioned or discussed	18
Was not offered to me	13
Unable to work	4
Unaware of Work Programme	3
Other reasons	14
Don't know	8
<i>Base: All ESA claimants did not start or were not referred on the Work Programme</i>	<i>273</i>

Over half of all ESA claimants (54 per cent) were still in receipt of the same benefit a year after attending an NJWFI, but without having started on the Work Programme. A quarter of those who did not start or were not referred to the Work Programme (24 per cent) had, in fact, discussed the Work Programme with an adviser at some point.

Claimants who did not start or were not referred to the Work Programme were asked to give their reasons for not starting (Table 3.6). The most common reasons had to do with their health or a disability (43 per cent), though other frequently cited reasons were that the Work Programme was not mentioned or discussed (18 per cent) or that the option was not offered to them (13 per cent).

Looking more broadly at all those who were still claiming the same benefit a year after attending an NJWFI (regardless of whether they were on the Work Programme or not), it is worth noting that the likelihood of remaining on benefits did not vary by claimants' attitudes at the start of their claim. For example, claimants' confidence of being able to find a suitable job and their belief that they would be happier in paid work made no difference to whether they were still claiming. The likelihood did, however, vary by claimants' views of the support and treatment they received. ESA claimants who believed the amount of support they received was not right for their needs, or felt they had not been understood by their advisers, were less likely to remain on the same claim (61 per cent and 64 per cent, respectively) than claimants who gave positive views on these measures (77 per cent and 75 per cent, respectively). This does not necessarily mean that claimants with negative experiences prefer to close their claim, but may simply reflect the fact that claimants with longer claims have more opportunity to seek support and develop a relationship with their advisers, and hence to develop positive views of the Offer.

### 3.1.2 Claimants off-flowing into work

JSA claimants were much more likely than ESA claimants to stop claiming their benefit in order to start a job (59 per cent compared to five per cent). This is not unexpected for ESA claimants with a 12-month or greater prognosis: these claimants were judged to have a limited capability of moving into work, and the focus of the Offer is to help such claimants move closer to the labour market rather than necessarily find a job.

#### Analysis of JSA claimants

There was a great deal of variation in the likelihood of off-flowing into work depending on JSA claimants' characteristics (Table 3.7). While almost two-thirds of JSA claimants aged between 25 and 49 (64 per cent) moved to work, proportions were lower amongst 18-24 year-olds (57 per cent), and lower still for claimants aged 50 or above (48 per cent). Proportions off-flowing into work were much higher amongst claimants with higher qualifications, falling from 71 per cent amongst those with degrees to just 44 per cent amongst claimants who lacked qualifications. Claimants who were disadvantaged, or had a mental health condition or a physical health condition were less likely to off-flow into employment (45 per cent, 43 per cent, and 42 per cent, respectively, compared with 59 per cent of JSA claimants overall).

The claimants least likely to move into work were those who were either out of work for a year or more before making their claim or who had never worked (35 per cent, compared with 67 per cent who had been in work more recently) and claimants who felt nervous at the start of their claim at the thought of being in paid work (23 per cent, compared with 52 per cent of other claimants).

The relationship between the support received through the Offer and claimants' final employment or benefit status is not straightforward to interpret. On the face of it, moving off benefits and into work was more common than average amongst JSA claimants who did not receive any support from the flexible menu, saw their adviser infrequently, or reported that some of the time spent with advisers felt unnecessary. However it should be borne in mind that claimants who off-flowed into work may have had fewer barriers to begin with, and be better equipped than most other claimants for finding jobs and succeeding in interviews, and their perspectives of the Offer may be coloured by the belief that they did not need support.

88 Table 3.7 JSA claimants who off-flowed into work

All JSA	Age	Length unemployment			Disadvantage			Health condition			Qualifications									
		Under 3 months	3-6 months	6-12 months or more/never worked	1 year or more/never worked	Yes	No	None	Any	Mental	Physical	None	Basic	A levels and post-16 GCSE grades A-C						
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%						
18-24	50 or above	59	57	64	48	73	65	54	35	45	65	61	48	43	42	44	49	56	65	71

Off-flowed into work

Base: All JSA claimants (1,069); 18-24 (311); 25-49 (383); 50+ (367); unemployed under 3 months (442); unemployed 3-6 months (256); unemployed 6-12 months (129); unemployed 1 year or more or never worked (239); disadvantaged (296); not disadvantaged (773); no health condition (905); any health condition (188); mental health condition (76); physical health condition (129); no formal qualifications (83); basic qualifications (157); GCSE grades A-C or equivalent (303); A levels or other post-16 qualifications (300); degree (181)

Table 3.8 ESA claimants who off-flowed into work

All JSA	Age	Length unemployment			ESA migration			Health condition			Qualifications			
		Under 5 years	5 or above	5 years or more/never worked	New	Ex-IB	None	Mental	Physical	None	Basic	Higher		
%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
5	6	5	10	3	15	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	7

Off-flowed into work

Base: All ESA claimants (676); under 50 (314); 50 or above (361); unemployed under 5 years (212); unemployed 5 years or more or never worked (450); new claim (157); ex-IB (519); mental health condition (493); physical health condition (577); no formal qualifications (129); basic qualifications (155); higher than basic qualification (349)

### Analysis of ESA claimants

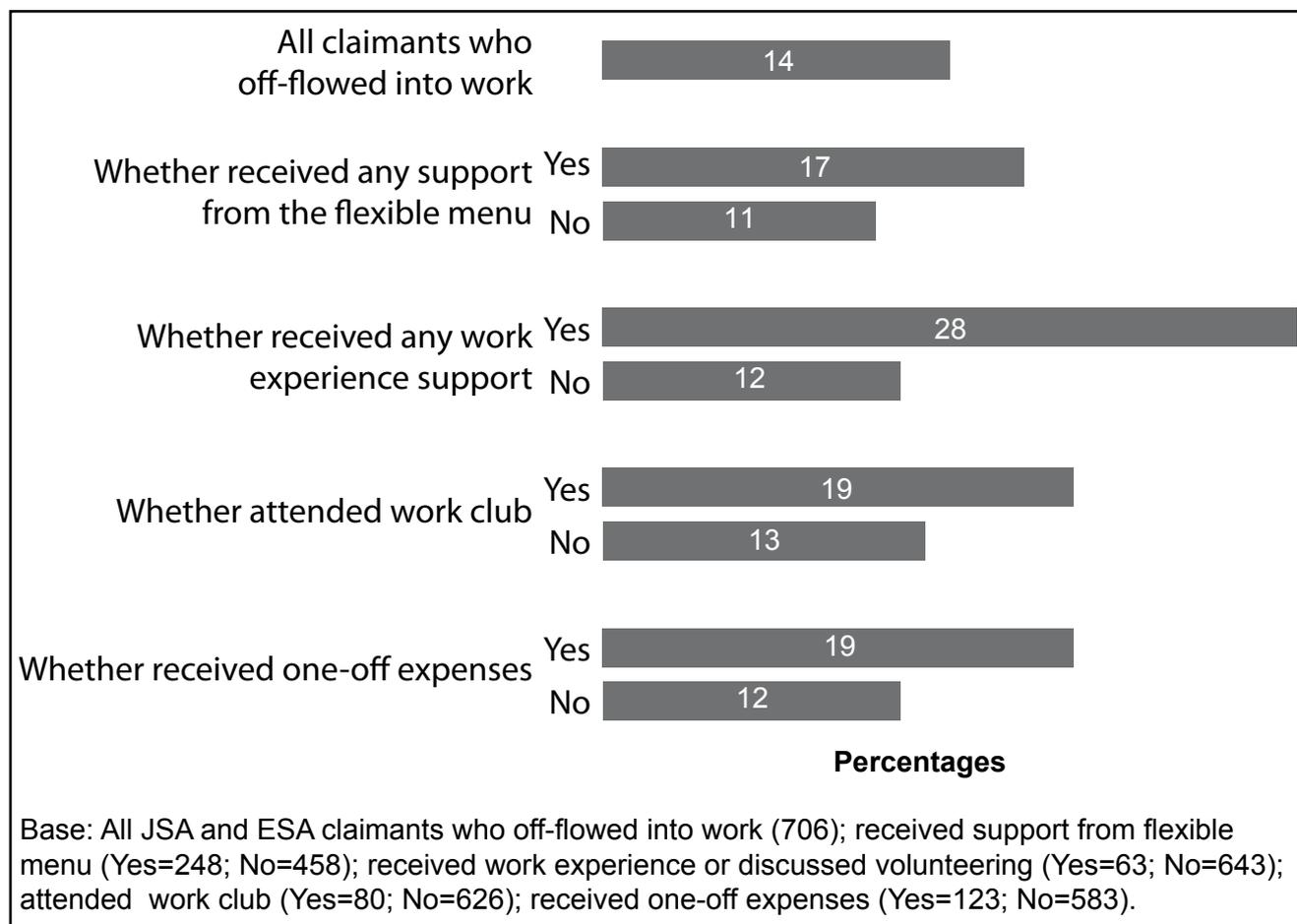
As might be expected, it was more common for ESA claimants to find employment if they stated around the time of their NJWFI that they were already looking for work (10 per cent) than if they were not looking for work at that time (four per cent). Table 3.8 illustrates that the ESA claimants who were most likely to move into work were those who had not been transferred from IB (15 per cent, compared with three per cent of claimants who were transferred). An employment outcome was also common for claimants who had been in employment in the past five years (10 per cent, compared with three per cent who had been unemployed for longer or never worked), and those who had a positive outlook regarding work: this applied to 10 per cent of claimants who felt confident at the start of their claim that they would find a suitable job and seven per cent who thought they would be happier in paid work (compared with three per cent who did not believe one or the other).

### The employment of claimants who off-flowed into work

One in seven (14 per cent) of the JSA and ESA claimants who off-flowed into work said that they found their job *'through Jobcentre Plus'*. Claimants who took part in the survey may have interpreted this question either narrowly to mean that they found the vacancy through Universal Jobmatch or a recommendation made by an adviser, or broadly to mean that the support they received through the Offer helped them move into work.

Both interpretations seem to be supported by the data. Claimants were much more likely to say that the job was found through the jobcentre if an adviser had tried to identify jobs that might be suitable for them (16 per cent, compared with just one per cent whose adviser had not done this). The same was true if they had received suggestions about where to look for job vacancies: 15 per cent who had received such suggestions said they found their job through the jobcentre, compared with four per cent of claimants who had not received suggestions. However, it was claimants who received some type of work experience support who were the most likely to attribute their employment to the jobcentre (28 per cent), suggesting that many jobs were found either through being able to report the experience of attending a placement on a CV or in an interview, or more directly through association with a placement provider or host organisation. The receipt of other support measures also increased the likelihood of finding employment through the jobcentre (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Claimants who found their job through Jobcentre Plus



### In Work Advisory Support

Jobcentre Plus offers some types of support to claimants who close their benefit claim in order to take up a job. In Work Advisory Support (IWAS) is not available to all claimants, but is offered and promoted to lone parents to help them with their transition into work and career progression once in work. However, some advisers may also offer to stay in contact with other claimants as they move back into work.

One in seven (14 per cent) of the claimants who off-flowed into work were offered the opportunity to stay in touch with the jobcentre, with 74 per cent of those who were offered the opportunity actually taking it up (the equivalent of 10 per cent of those who off-flowed into work).

The most common types of support received by claimants during their time in work were help with financial arrangements or other benefits (14 per cent) and assistance with closing their claim (seven per cent). Almost two-fifths (39 per cent) of the claimants who stayed in contact said they received no help at all.

Around three-fifths (59 per cent) of those who stayed in contact felt that the advice they received from the jobcentre while they were in their job was useful; however, three in ten (30 per cent) did not find it useful and a further one in ten (10 per cent) said they received no advice at all. Former claimants who received advice were evenly split between those who believed the advice helped them stay in work and those who did not (49 per cent each of those who received advice).

In the second interview, claimants who had off-flowed into various destinations but had not received the offer of further contact from the jobcentre were asked whether they would have liked to remain in touch with Jobcentre Plus after finding a job. Almost a quarter (24 per cent) said that they would. These claimants, together with claimants who remained in contact but had not been offered any help or advice, were given the chance to list what types of support they would have liked to receive after finding a job. The answers included: financial support (33 per cent), help to find another job with better pay (20 per cent), advice about further entitlements (20 per cent), support with training that might help them find a better job (18 per cent), and help to find another job with more hours (16 per cent). The small number of people (n=14) who mentioned a need for training specified a range of options, such as training for formal qualifications or training in vocational and IT skills.

### Perceptions and prospects of current job

Claimants who were in work at the time of either the first or second interview were asked about various attributes of their job (Table 3.9). It should be noted that the claimants who were in work at the time of the interviews did not correspond precisely with those who off-flowed into work.<sup>16</sup> The vast majority of survey respondents who were in work at the time they were interviewed were former JSA claimants (n=621), and the analysis which follows focuses on them.

The majority of JSA claimants who were in work when they were interviewed felt that their job mostly fitted with their family commitments, and for the most part matched their skills and abilities (73 per cent and 71 per cent, respectively). Around three-fifths believed the work benefited their mental well-being, and had a future in terms of security and opportunities to learn new skills. Only a half or fewer felt that the job offered them opportunities for progression or benefited their physical health.

**Table 3.9 Attributes of current job**

Whether believes employment ...	JSA %
Fits in with your family commitments	73
Is suited to your skills and abilities	71
Has benefited your mental well-being	59
Meets the criteria you were looking for when talking to advisers at Jobcentre Plus	58
Is secure	57
Offers you opportunities to learn new skills	57
Offers you opportunities for progression if you want it (moving up salary, increasing hours or responsibilities)	49
Has benefited your physical health	45
<i>Base: All JSA claimants who were in work at the time of the first or second interview</i>	621

Note: only proportions who answered 'mostly' are shown.

<sup>16</sup> Although follow-up survey interviews were conducted as soon as possible after the closure of claims, in some cases the claimants in question had already had time to leave the job they off-flowed into and either start a new claim or move to another destination.

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The fact that only three in five JSA claimants (58 per cent) were in jobs which met the criteria they were looking for when talking to their Jobcentre Plus advisers suggests that claimants were, in fact, willing to be flexible about the types of jobs they took up. In cases where the amount of time spent with advisers felt ‘about right’, the ‘fit’ between the job and the criteria specified to advisers tended to be better: 63 per cent in this situation said the job they were in met the criteria they were looking for, compared with only 47 per cent of claimants who had spent insufficient time with advisers. Similarly, those who felt they had received the right amount of support from Jobcentre Plus were more likely to be in a job which matched their criteria (67 per cent) compared with those who felt they had not received the right amount of support (49 per cent). This suggests that claimants who received adequate support during their time on the Offer, and possibly had more time to think about or discuss what might suit their circumstances, were more likely to find satisfying jobs.

JSA claimants who were in work at the time of the second interview were asked additional questions regarding their views about job progression. In response to a question regarding the speed at which they wished to progress within their job, three in five replied that they would like to ‘*get on and improve [their] pay and terms as quickly as possible*’ (Table 3.10). Notably, claimants who were of this view were no more likely than those who were happy to ‘*stay as you are for now*’ to be in jobs that offered opportunities for progression (51 per cent compared to 53 per cent). It may be that the need to find any type of paid job overrides any ambitions or expectations claimants may have about future progression.

**Table 3.10 Attitude towards job progression**

Which is closest to your view?	JSA %
Want to get on and improve your pay and terms as quickly as possible	59
Want to stay as you are for now	40
Don't know	
<i>Base: All JSA claimants who were in work at the time of the second interview</i>	<i>261</i>

The most common step taken by claimants who were in work at the time of the second interview to change their work situation or earnings was to seek an increase in working hours (Table 3.11). Two-fifths mentioned this (39 per cent), almost double the proportion who said they searched for a better job with another employer (22 per cent) or sought a pay rise (17 per cent). Around one in ten tried to improve their conditions by attempting to move to another job whether within the same organisation or for the same employer (11 per cent) or by negotiating better benefits (nine per cent). Only three per cent tried to reduce their hours in order to change their circumstances.

**Table 3.11 Steps taken to change work situation or earnings**

	JSA
Whether has taken steps to...	%
Increase the hours you work	39
Get a better job with a different employer	22
Get a pay rise	17
Change to a different sort of work with the same employer	11
Negotiate better benefits (e.g. pension or hours)	9
Reduce the hours you work	3
<i>Base: All JSA claimants who were in work at the time of the second interview</i>	261

### 3.1.3 Claimants off-flowing into other destinations

Around one in five JSA claimants (17 per cent) closed their claim at some point in the 12 months following their application but did not start a new job directly after off-flowing. A similar proportion of ESA claimants who were looking for work (18 per cent) did the same within a year of attending their NJWFI, but the proportion was higher (24 per cent) amongst ESA claimants who were not looking for work. Many claimants did not report what their destination was after off-flowing. The immediate destinations of claimants are shown in Table 3.12.

**Table 3.12 Off-flow destinations for claimants who did not off-flow to work**

	JSA	ESA
	%	%
New claim (for JSA, ESA or IS)	36	4
Caring for children or adults	15	13
Training or education	11	1
Something else <sup>1</sup>	38	78
<i>Base: All JSA claimants who off-flowed to another destination (250); all ESA claimants who off-flowed to another destination (436)</i>		

<sup>1</sup> These claimants reported that they were not in education or training, nor caring for children or adults, but did not report what they were doing.

JSA claimants were much more likely than ESA claimants to either make a new benefit claim (36 per cent compared to four per cent) or enter training or education (11 per cent compared to one per cent) soon after closing their original claim. Closing the claim in order to look after family or children was equally likely amongst claimants receiving the two benefits (15 per cent for JSA and 13 per cent for ESA).

Almost all JSA claimants who started a new claim after off-flowing (97 per cent) initiated a claim for JSA, with the remainder making a claim for Income Support (IS) (three per cent). Since they did not report taking up work in the interim, it is not known whether they made the new claim after a short interval or immediately after closing their existing claim, but these cases were likely to be rapid reclaims.

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None of the ESA claimants who started a new claim after off-flowing reported which benefit they began to receive. It is worth noting that almost a quarter (23 per cent) of ESA claimants who off-flowed into another destination said that they had been through another WCA since their first interview. It is possible that some of these claimants were found fit to work and that this prompted the closure of their claim and move to other destinations.

### **3.2 Claimant attitudes**

As illustrated in the previous section, a proportion of new JSA and ESA claimants did not move in to work after their time on the Offer. In these cases it is important to look at what effect Jobcentre Plus may have had in improving soft outcomes, such as increasing motivation to work; reducing levels of anxiety about the prospect of working; and improving claimants' confidence in their job search capabilities. Finally, it is important that people who do have high motivation to find work maintain that attitude even after being unsuccessful in their pursuit of a job.

This section provides an overview of claimant attitudes towards employment and job search at the start of their claim before moving on to look at how these changed for claimants over the course of their time on the Offer.

#### **3.2.1 Initial attitudes**

The first survey interview was conducted shortly after claimants had started on the Offer and had completed either their NJI or their NJWFI. Claimants were asked a series of attitude statements which explored both their confidence in their ability to find a job and their attitudes to working in general.

Towards the start of their claim most new JSA claimants were motivated to find work. Nearly all respondents agreed that they would be happier if they were in work (95 per cent), and more than four out of five agreed that having almost any type of paid work is better than not working (83 per cent). Since motivation was high for these claimants at the start of their claim, the main challenge for Jobcentre Plus and advisers was in maintaining motivation as claims extended.

New ESA claimants were less positive than JSA claimants, but nevertheless nearly two-thirds said that they would be happier in work (63 per cent). While this was encouraging, there was a relatively high proportion of ESA claimants who expressed anxiety about moving in to work. Just over half of all ESA claimants (53 per cent) said that the thought of being in paid work made them nervous and even among those looking for work over two-fifths of claimants said this (43 per cent). This anxiety is a potential demotivating factor for claimants and is something that the Offer would be expected to be able to assuage both through adviser support and practical measures from the flexible menu of back-to-work support, such as work experience, volunteering and Work Choice.

In addition to asking about attitudes to work, JSA claimants and ESA claimants looking for work were asked how confident they felt about different aspects of their job search. The two areas claimants were least likely to be confident in were that employers would want to offer them a job interview and that their skills were up to date. This was particularly true of JSA claimants aged 50 or over and the ESA claimant group as a whole. Again, both of these aspects are areas where the Jobcentre Plus Offer could make a positive impact in building confidence and reducing anxiety.

### 3.2.2 Changes in attitude

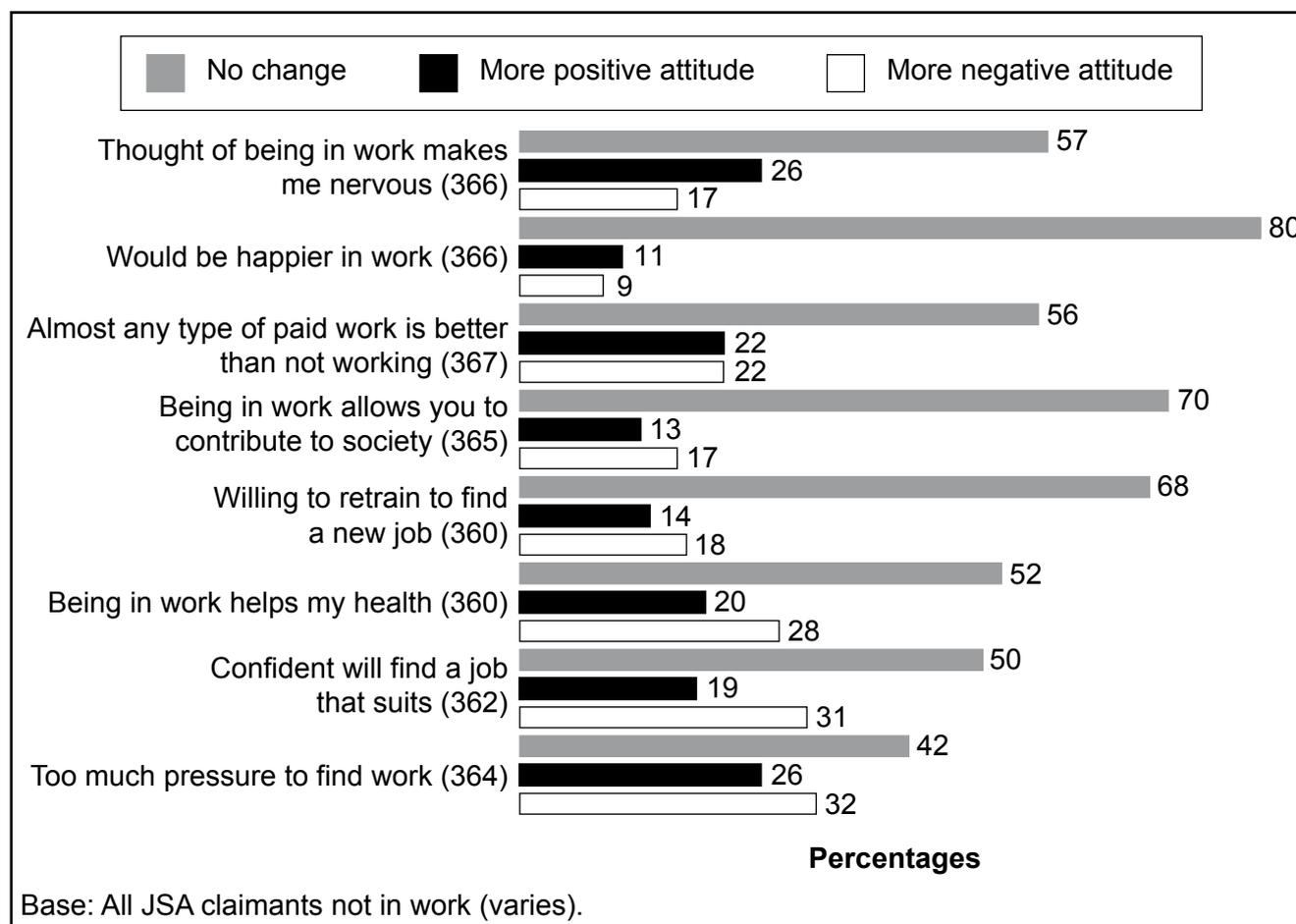
In order to assess whether there had been any change, the same set of attitude statements that were asked in the first survey interview were repeated in the second survey interview. Analysis was then conducted looking at where claimants based themselves on an attitudinal scale at the start of their time on the Offer compared with where they placed themselves at the time of their second interview.<sup>17</sup>

This section presents findings on attitudinal change for those claimants who had not managed to find work during their time on the Offer.

#### Analysis of JSA claimants

For JSA claimants who had not found work over the previous 12 months, the overall shift in attitudes towards employment was negative for most factors, albeit with a few notable exceptions. Figure 3.2 below shows the extent to which JSA claimants who did not move into work felt more positive or negative between the start of their time on the Offer and the point of their second interview (which took place either 12 months after the start of their claim or soon after moving on to the Work Programme).

**Figure 3.2 Change in attitudes towards employment amongst JSA claimants who did not find work**



<sup>17</sup> Analysis of attitudes based on two separate observations is preferable to the alternative approach of asking respondents to make a judgment on how much their attitudes or confidence had changed over the past 12 months.

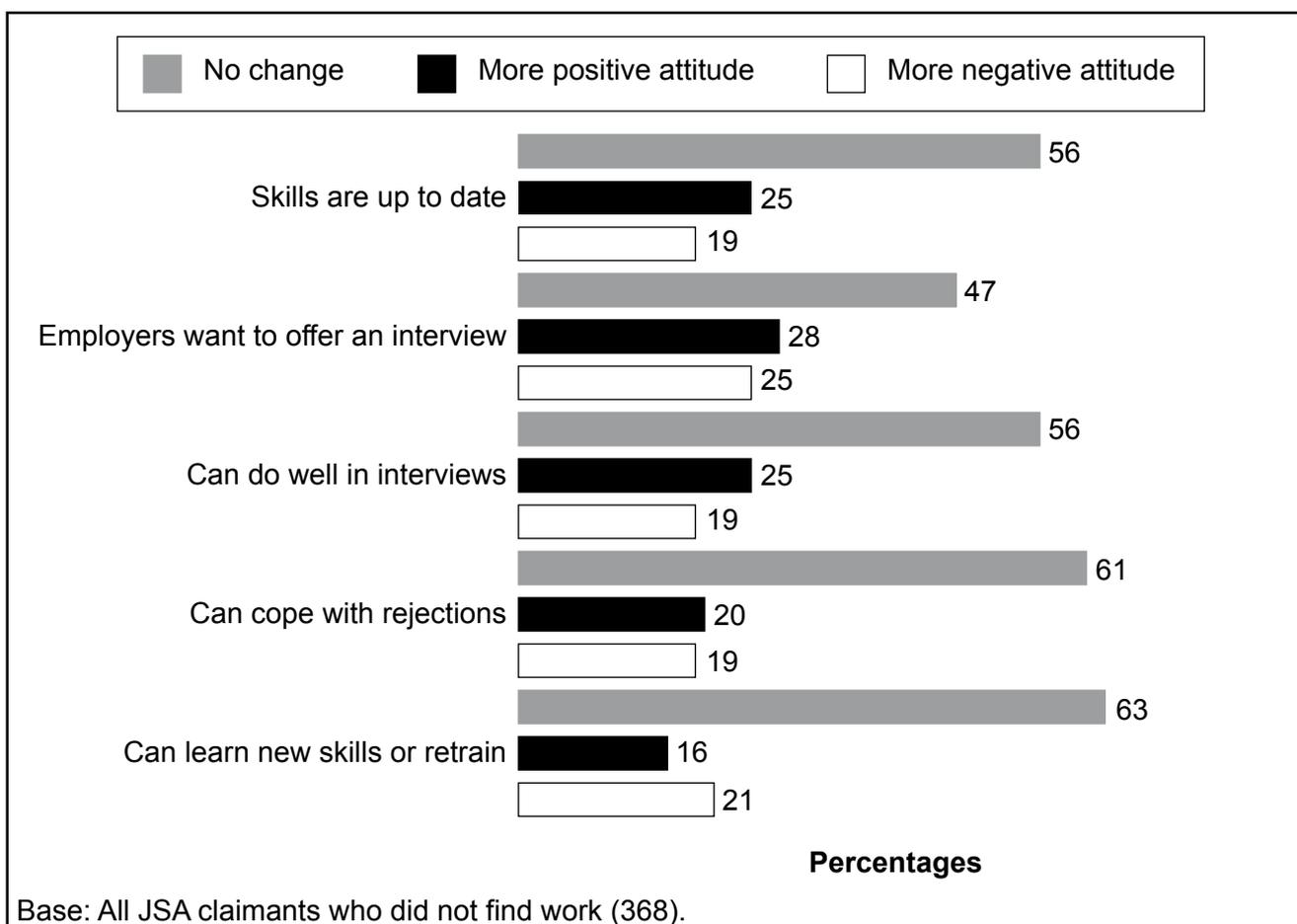
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There was a notable increase in the proportion who felt ‘too much pressure to find work’ (six percentage point increase in negative attitude) but the most significant net negative shift was around being confident of finding a suitable job (-12 percentage points). To some extent this is to be expected as these were claimants who had been looking for work for a prolonged period of time without success. This situation seemed to be exacerbated by age, with claimants aged 50 plus having a net negative shift of -22 percentage points compared to just -5 percentage points for 18 to 24-year olds. However, there was no significant variation for the length of time since the claimant had last worked: claimants who had not worked for two years or more had similar confidence levels at the start of their claim as those with more recent work experience, and the extent of the negative shift in confidence was also similar for the two groups.

There was only one aspect where there was a significant net positive shift which was ‘the thought of being in work makes me nervous’ (nine percentage point increase in positive attitude). The lessening in anxiety was particularly marked for the 18 to 24 age group and those aged 50 plus, where the net positive shifts were +15 percentage points and +14 percentage points respectively. As much as anything this reflects the fact that more of the new claimants in these age groups were likely to agree at the initial interview that the thought of being in paid work made them nervous.

Looking in more detail at confidence, Figure 3.3 below shows how much more positive or negative claimants felt about different aspects of job search.

**Figure 3.3 Change in confidence for job search amongst JSA claimants who did not find work**



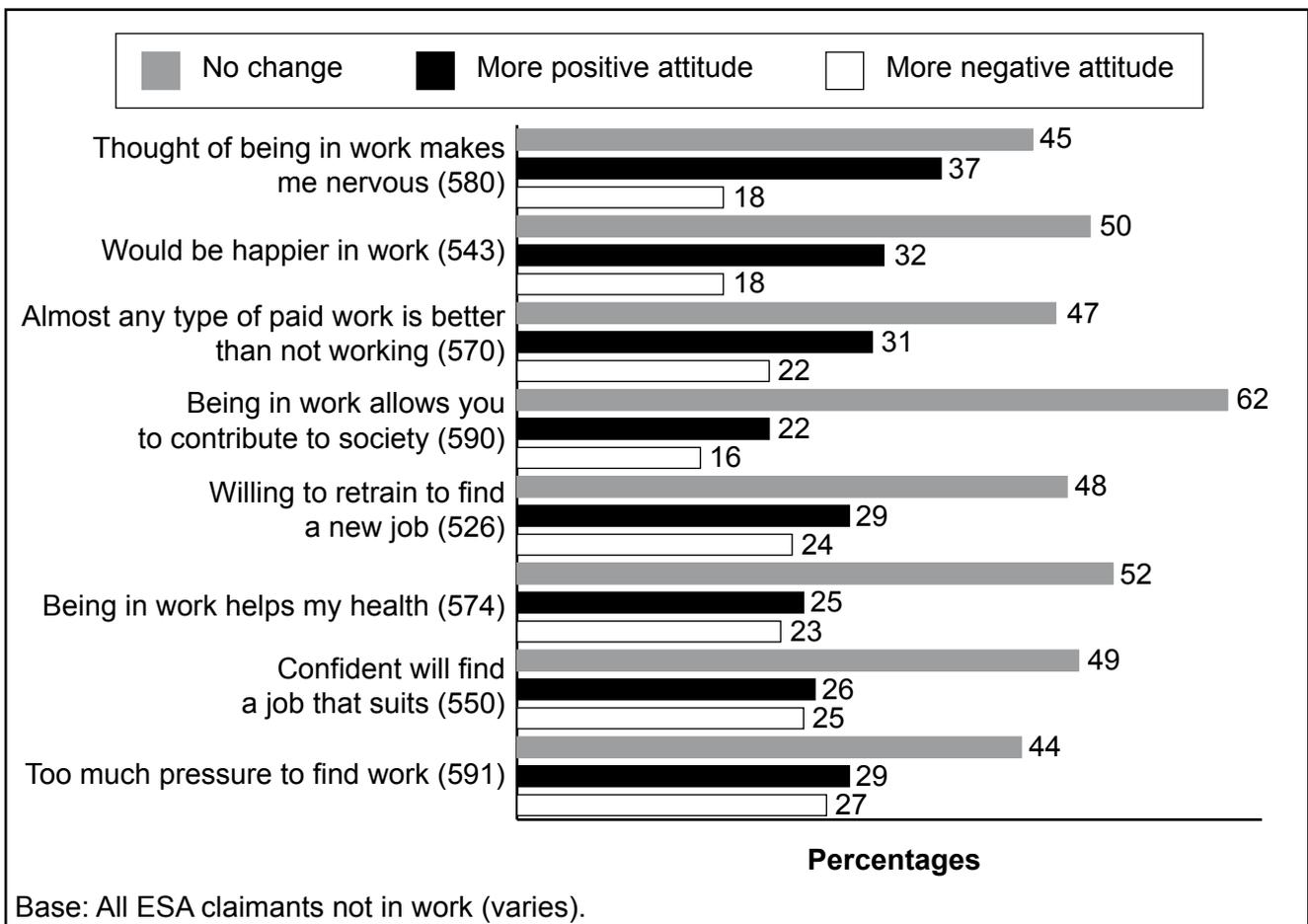
Unlike ESA claimants, there were no aspects of job search where there were significant net positive shifts in confidence. The two aspects which showed the biggest net positive increases in confidence were having skills that are up to date and doing well in interviews (both up by six percentage points). There was also one aspect which showed a negative shift which was confidence in learning new skills or retraining (down by five percentage points).

Within this though there were some interesting variations by age group. Those aged 50 or over showed a net positive shift in confidence that employers will want to offer them an interview (+10 percentage points), but this was accompanied by a significant net negative shift in confidence about doing well in interviews (-13 percentage points). This may be a result of older claimants finding that they were being invited to interviews more than they anticipated but not being able to secure those positions at the interview. It should be noted, however, that older claimants did not have a net negative shift in confidence in their ability to cope with rejections and knockbacks.

### Analysis of ESA claimants

Figure 3.4 shows the extent to which ESA claimants' attitudes became more positive, more negative or stayed the same across the different attitude statements they were asked about.

**Figure 3.4 Change in attitudes towards employment amongst ESA claimants who did not find work**



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The biggest improvement for ESA claimants was on the measure 'the thought of being in work makes me nervous'. While just under one in five claimants (18 per cent) had a more negative attitude on this issue since starting the Offer, twice as many had moved in a more positive direction (37 per cent). In total, this represented a net positive movement in attitudes of 19 percentage points. This is encouraging, as one of the challenges noted above was the high proportion of ESA claimants saying that the thought of being in work made them nervous. It is also worth noting that the net increase was broadly uniform with no significant differences between claimants on this measure by subgroup.

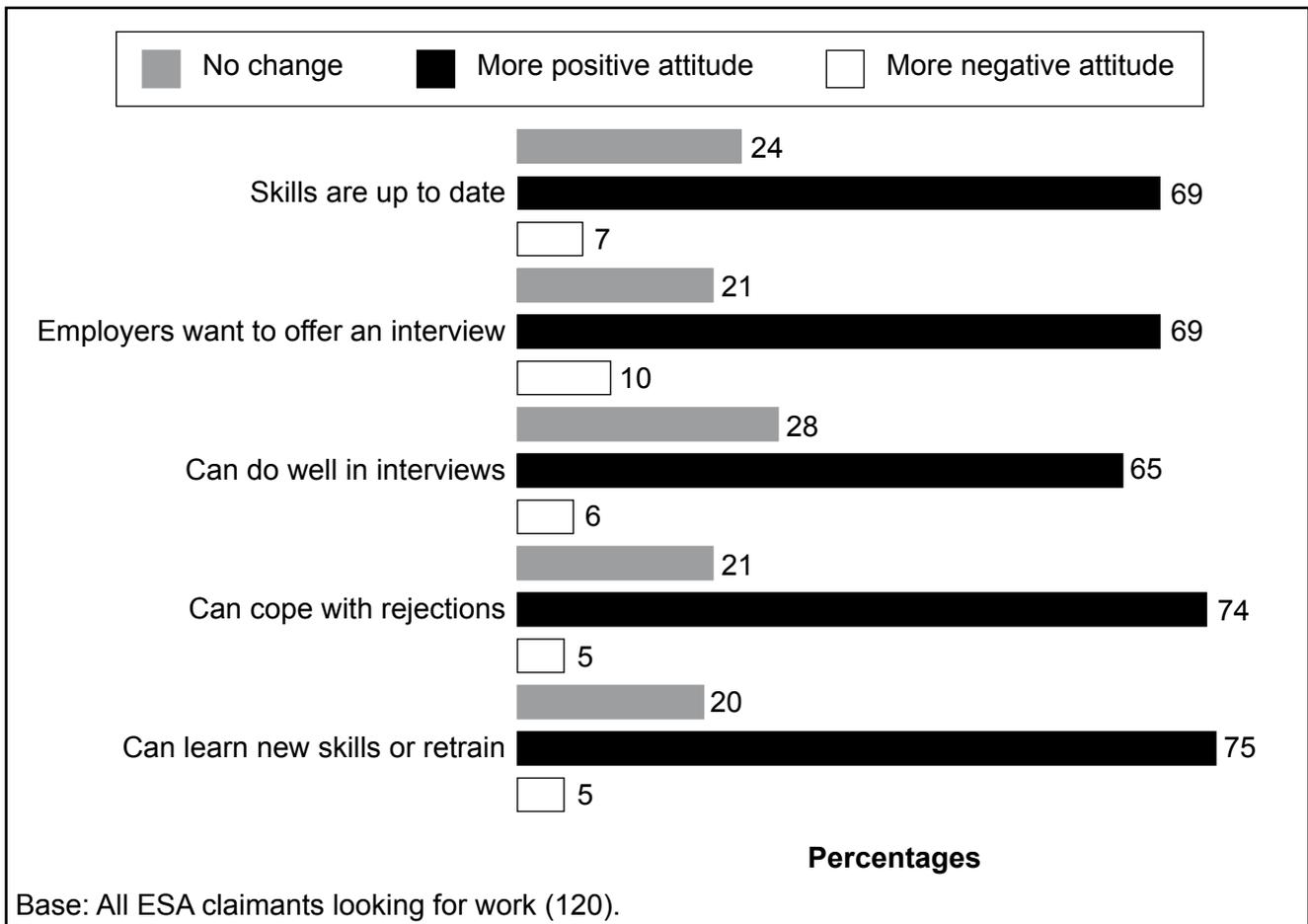
There were also significant net positive shifts for claimants on whether they 'would be happier in paid work' (+14 percentage points) and 'almost any type of paid job is better than not working' (+9 percentage points). Claimants whose health condition affected their mental, cognitive and intellectual functions had an even higher net positive shift for being happier in work than other ESA claimants (+17 percentage points compared to +5 percentage points).

The net change for the other attitudinal measures was also positive overall although not by significant margins. In particular it is worth noting that the net shift for being 'confident of finding a job that suits' was actually negative for ESA claimants who were currently looking for work (-6 percentage points). To some extent this is understandable as these are claimants who have not found work after 12 months; it might be argued that the fact that there was only a small negative shift on this measure is a positive result.

ESA claimants who were looking for work were also asked how confident they were in different aspects of their job search. Figure 3.5 shows how these confidence levels changed over the course of the Offer.

As Figure 3.5 illustrates, there have been significant increases in job search confidence across all aspects covered in the survey. The strong net positive increase in confidence for these different aspects may explain why confidence in finding a job had not declined significantly despite claimants being out of work for 12 months. These claimants were feeling demonstrably more confident about key aspects of the job search process, be it in terms of performing well in interviews or having skills that are up to date for the job market.

**Figure 3.5 Change in confidence for job search amongst ESA claimants who did not find work**



### 3.2.3 Perceptions of Jobcentre Plus in helping claimants' motivation

All claimants were asked whether they felt that the advice and support they had received from Jobcentre Plus had helped to increase their confidence about finding a job they can do and their motivation to find work. The views of JSA claimants were nearly evenly split for both measures, while ESA claimants were less likely to recognise any improvements in their confidence or motivation.

Just under half of JSA claimants (49 per cent) said Jobcentre Plus had increased their motivation to find work, while the same proportion said that it had not. Younger claimants were significantly more likely than older claimants to attribute an increase in their motivation to Jobcentre Plus. Three-fifths of 18 to 24 year old claimants (61 per cent) said Jobcentre Plus had increased their motivation compared to just under two-fifths of claimants aged 50 or above (37 per cent). The proportion saying that Jobcentre Plus had increased their confidence was slightly lower (45 per cent) and the proportion saying that it had not was slightly higher (53 per cent), but this still represented a broadly even split. Again younger claimants were slightly more likely to feel this, although the difference was not as marked as for motivation (54 per cent of 18-24 year-olds compared to 37 per cent of claimants aged 50 plus). Claimants with a degree were particularly unlikely to state that Jobcentre Plus had given them greater confidence (32 per cent).

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In contrast to JSA claimants, only a quarter of ESA claimants said that Jobcentre Plus had increased their motivation to find work (25 per cent) or their confidence that they could find a job that suits them (26 per cent). Within this, claimants with mental health conditions<sup>18</sup> were the most likely to be positive about the impact of Jobcentre Plus, with 46 per cent saying they had increased their motivation to find work.

### **3.3 Early diagnosis: New Jobseeker and New Joiner's Work Focused Interviews**

All new claimants begin their journey through the Jobcentre Plus Offer by attending an interview with an adviser. Findings regarding the NJI and NJWFI – including the topics discussed and next step information provided during these meetings – are covered in detail in the Year 1 report (see The Jobcentre Plus Offer: Findings from the first year of the evaluation – Section 5.1).

### **3.4 Ongoing adviser support**

Following the NJI and NJWFI, claimants' experiences of the Jobcentre Plus Offer begin to diverge as they start taking up elements of support according to their needs. The initial section below looks at claimant views of Jobsearch Review meetings before moving on to examine how much contact there is between claimants and advisers in other meetings, and claimants' perspectives on the levels and continuity of contact. There follows an overview of how claimants view advisers' understanding of their circumstances, and information about the basic support and advice they received from advisers with regards to looking for jobs and practical job seeking.

#### **3.4.1 Regular Jobsearch Reviews**

The depth interviews explored JSA claimants' experience of Jobsearch Review meetings. As noted in the first year of the evaluation, claimants were largely accepting of the need for Jobsearch Review meetings, but found them to be fairly basic meetings, focused more on demonstrating compliance with conditionality rather than substantive job search support.

In particular, claimants who felt they required minimal support from Jobcentre Plus to get back into work, found the meetings to be an ineffective use of their time. This was due to a perceived lack of job search support provided by Jobcentre Plus that they felt was appropriate to their area of interest. These claimants tended to be those who had a good work history and therefore knew what they were looking for, often having only been unemployed for a short period of time. Their lack of engagement may have been linked to their perception that their adviser could not do very much more to help them and ultimately a belief that their time could be otherwise spent more effectively carrying out an independent job search.

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<sup>18</sup> These are claimants whose conditions affect their mental, cognitive or intellectual functions.

*'When I signed on there wasn't anything for me, it was really a case of me being proactive to be honest, I mean for roles at my [professional] level there just wasn't too many that came up at the jobcentre.'*

(Female, JSA 50+)

*'They are very nice at the jobcentre, I just don't think they can do any more for you with the job search site they use'*

(Male, JSA 25-49)

Among claimants who had experience of Universal Jobmatch, those who were not comfortable with IT systems struggled to understand how to use it to search and apply for jobs. This meant their Jobsearch Review meetings could be a struggle for them, trying to understand what their adviser was doing on the site and how to then use it independently.

### 3.4.2 Level of other contact with advisers

The survey included a series of questions designed to measure whether the extent and nature of claimants' contact with advisers matched their needs. Claimants were asked about the number of times they met an adviser in the first few weeks of their claim and the overall frequency with which meetings were held throughout their claim.

In the early stages of their journey through the Offer, JSA claimants and ESA claimants who were looking for work maintained similar levels of contact with advisers (2.6 and 2.7 meetings on average respectively up until the point of their first interview for the survey. ESA claimants with no imminent plans to enter the labour market had the least contact with advisers in the early weeks of their claim (2.0 meetings on average), and around half had only attended a single meeting a few weeks after their NJWFI (51 per cent). Most of these claimants (74 per cent) judged this limited amount of contact to be about right for their needs, though a significant minority felt that some of this contact was unnecessary (12 per cent).

Throughout their journey on the Offer, the most common arrangement for JSA claimants was to see an adviser between two and three times a month excluding their regular Jobsearch Review meetings (Table 3.13). Two-fifths of JSA claimants (41 per cent) had this arrangement, double the proportion who met their adviser either just once a month (19 per cent) or less than once a month (20 per cent). Over one in eight JSA claimants (13 per cent) met with an adviser on a weekly or more frequent basis, with claimants under the age of 25 most commonly saying this (18 per cent), probably due to the Youth Contract. Notably, claimants who saw their adviser weekly or more than once a week were almost twice as likely as other JSA claimants to report that this felt like 'too much' contact (15 per cent, compared with eight per cent of those with less frequent or irregular contact).

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**Table 3.13 Frequency of meetings between JSA claimants and adviser throughout claim (excluding regular Jobsearch Review meetings)**

	JSA %
Once a week or more	13
2-3 times a month	41
Once a month	19
Less than once a month	20
It varied	3
Don't know	4
<i>Base: All JSA claimants</i>	<i>1,069</i>

JSA claimants with a mental health condition were more likely than other claimants to be seen just once a month (29 per cent) rather than more frequently. However, advisers did not seem to vary their meeting appointments depending on whether or not claimants had a physical health condition or other disadvantage.

On average, advisers saw ESA claimants much less frequently than JSA claimants during the course of their claim.<sup>19</sup> ESA claimants were also more likely to report variation in the frequency of adviser meetings (14 per cent reported variation, compared with three per cent of JSA claimants). ESA claimants looking for work generally saw an adviser more often than those who were not looking for work when they made their ESA claim (Table 3.14): specifically, those who were looking for work were twice as likely as those who were not to meet with an adviser on a monthly or more frequent basis (30 per cent compared to 15 per cent).

**Table 3.14 Frequency of meetings between ESA claimants and adviser throughout claim**

	ESA looking for work %	ESA not looking for work %
Once a month or more	30	15
1-2 times every three months	14	19
Less than once every three months	36	44
It varied	16	13
Don't know	4	9
<i>Base: All ESA claimants looking for work (105); all ESA claimants not looking for work (571)</i>		

The number of ESA claimants in the survey who were looking for work is too small to allow sub-group analysis within this category of claimant, but it is possible to explore how the frequency of meetings varied across the ESA claimant group as a whole. Those aged 50 or above were the most likely to have infrequent meetings, with over half (52 per cent) seeing an adviser less often than once every three months (compared with just 37 per cent of under-50s). Conversely, new ESA claimants and claimants who had been unemployed for

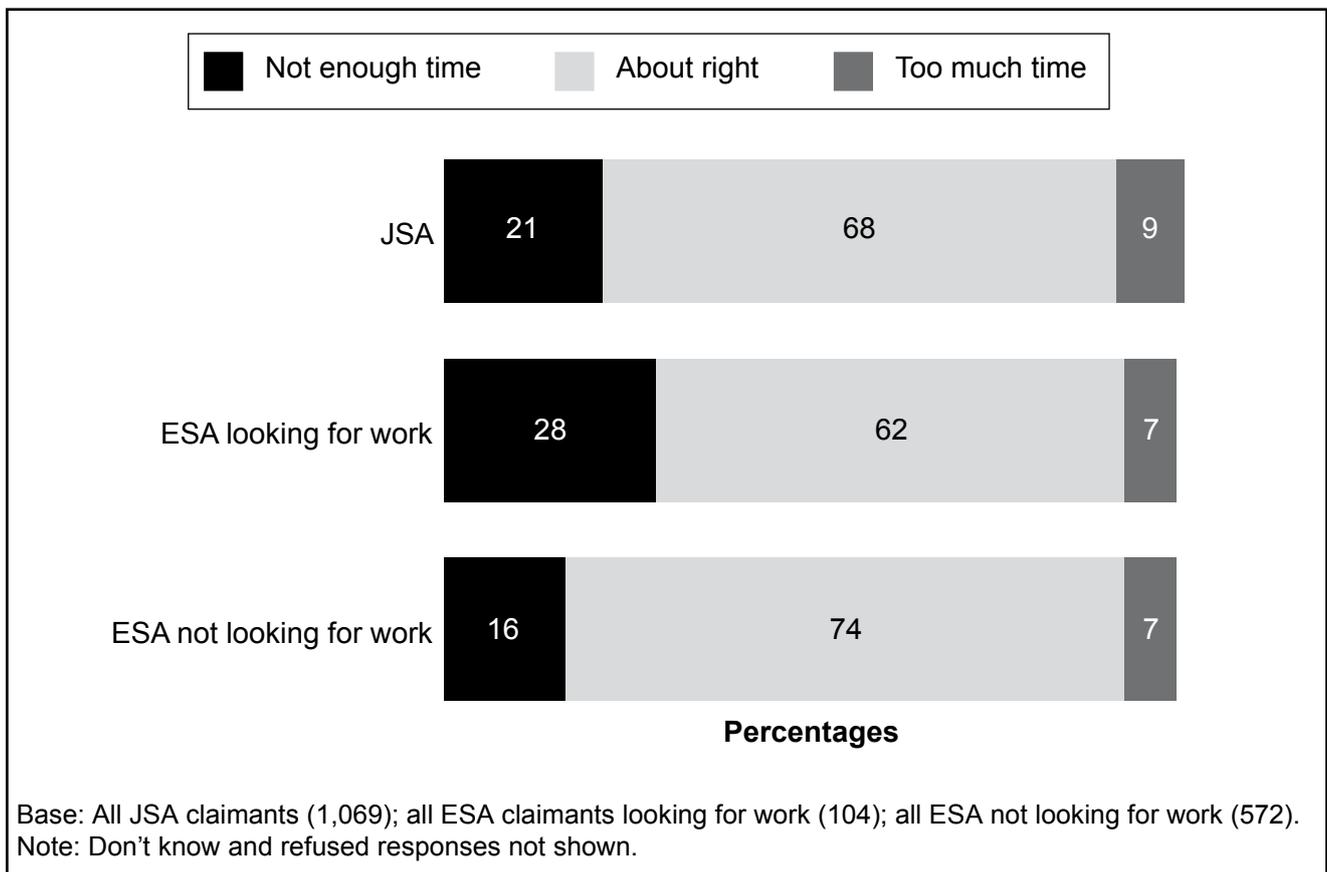
<sup>19</sup> At the time of the survey, ESA claimants were expected to participate in a minimum of two Work Focused Interviews a year.

less than five years were amongst the most likely to meet an adviser on a frequent basis, i.e. once a month or more (28 per cent each, compared with only 15 per cent of claimants who were transferred from IB and 13 per cent who had never worked or been unemployed for five years or more prior to making their ESA claim).

### 3.4.3 Claimant views on frequency of contact with advisers

Figure 3.6 shows how claimants viewed the amount of time they spent with advisers overall during the course of their claim. The majority of claimants in each category felt that they had spent about the right amount of time with advisers, though satisfaction varied depending on claimant type: ESA claimants who were not looking for work were significantly more likely to be satisfied than JSA claimants (74 per cent compared to 68 per cent), and JSA claimants in turn tended to be more satisfied than ESA claimants looking for work (68 per cent compared to 62 per cent).

**Figure 3.6 Views regarding amount of contact**



More than a quarter of ESA claimants looking for work believed that advisers had not spent enough time with them (28 per cent). This complaint was less widespread amongst JSA claimants (21 per cent) and ESA claimants who were not looking for work (16 per cent). Two sub-groups were more likely than the rest to feel that the time advisers had spent with them was insufficient for their needs: JSA claimants with a mental health condition (33 per cent, compared with 20 per cent of other JSA claimants), and ESA claimants who were not looking for work and were either seen irregularly, just once or twice every three months, or less frequently (18 per cent compared with five per cent who were seen on a monthly or more frequent basis). Furthermore, ESA claimants who were nervous about working were

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disproportionately more likely to mention that they did not spend enough time with advisers (23 per cent, compared with 17 per cent of those who disagreed that *'the thought of being in paid work makes me nervous'*.)

It is worth noting that the attitudes of ESA claimants who were looking for work shifted over the course of their claim. In the early stage of their claim, this group was the most likely to report that the amount of time spent with advisers felt 'about right' for their needs (80 per cent); however, only 62 per cent felt the same by the end of their claim or a year after their NJWFI, with many shifting their view and reporting that advisers had not spent enough time with them (up from 12 per cent to 28 per cent).

### 3.4.4 Adviser continuity

Around three-quarters of ESA claimants who had attended more than one meeting saw the same adviser every time (74 per cent). Fewer JSA claimants experienced the same level of continuity, with only 62 per cent seeing the same adviser on every occasion.<sup>20</sup>

The dominant view amongst both JSA and ESA claimants who had met with more than one adviser was that it did not matter which adviser they saw. This was expressed by around two-thirds of each type of claimant, though many added the proviso that the adviser they met with should know a bit about their circumstances (Table 3.15).

**Table 3.15 Views on seeing multiple advisers**

	JSA	ESA
	%	%
Prefer to see the same adviser	31	40
Prefer to see one of your usual advisers	4	2
No preference on which adviser you see	34	12
Spontaneous: Don't mind as long as they know a bit about your circumstances	31	42
Don't know	*	4

*Base: All JSA claimants who met with more than one adviser (224); all ESA claimants who met with more than one adviser (104)*

Almost half of the JSA claimants who had met with multiple advisers and said they did not have a preference regarding the adviser they saw mentioned that this was on condition that the adviser knew a bit about their circumstances (31 per cent of all JSA claimants who met with more than one adviser). This represents a departure from the attitudes reported by claimants who had already seen multiple advisers at an early stage of their claim, far fewer of whom mentioned this condition (three per cent). A similar pattern was seen amongst ESA claimants who had met with multiple advisers, with the proportion mentioning that their

<sup>20</sup> Due to an error in the computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) programming of the second survey interview, this question was not asked of respondents who reported having had a single meeting or no meetings at all with an adviser in their first survey interview (in the early weeks of their claim). Since it is not known whether these claimants saw multiple advisers during the course of their claim, the claimants in question have been removed from the calculation. Consequently, the proportions reported above regarding claimants who experienced adviser continuity should be treated with caution.

lack of preference was conditional rising from four per cent to 42 per cent. This suggests that claimants place increasing value on advisers who know something about them as their claims progress, so that they do not have to describe their circumstances afresh.

Amongst claimants who met with more than one adviser, a substantial minority (31 per cent JSA claimants and 40 per cent ESA claimants) said they would have preferred the continuity of seeing the same adviser. This preference was more common amongst JSA claimants with a disability<sup>21</sup> (44 per cent, compared with 27 per cent of other claimants).

It should be noted that the attitudes of ESA claimants shifted over time: whereas more than half of the ESA claimants who had experienced a change of adviser at an early stage of their claim stated a preference for continuity (52 per cent), this was not the prevailing view amongst claimants interviewed a year later or after off-flowing from the Offer (40 per cent of those who had come into contact with multiple advisers). Moreover, while the preference for continuity was more widespread amongst ESA claimants than JSA claimants at an early stage of the claimant journey, there was little disparity between the two groups at a later stage of the claimant journey.

In the depth interviews, claimants' views about continuity of adviser typically varied according to their perception of the quality of their adviser and how much tailored support they felt they required from Jobcentre Plus. 'Good quality' in this context refers to the claimant's view of the adviser, and whether they were friendly, encouraging and responsive to their support needs. It was found that if claimants did not perceive their adviser to be 'good quality' this could affect their engagement with the adviser and/or the support offered.

Claimants who had seen the same 'good quality' adviser consistently were often clear about its benefits, as they felt it ensured continuity of support and allowed for familiarity and trust to build with the adviser. However, it was also noted that some claimants were less concerned about receiving a personalised and tailored service and therefore did not mind seeing multiple advisers of potentially varying quality. This was underpinned by a sense that the role of the adviser was minimal in terms of them getting back into work and they were satisfied as long as they were aware of what support was available to them should they need it.

*'If you see the same adviser it's more comfortable as they know a little bit of your history, and that's good because it gives you structure.'*

(Female, JSA 25-49)

*'It doesn't really bother me who it is every time, as long as they are doing their job properly... take the time to listen to me, try to help me...'*

(Male, JSA 25-49)

Claimants who said they required more individualised support and had not seen the same adviser, felt they had lost out on developing a relationship that could bring them closer to employment. They believed a consistent and good adviser would be beneficial as they could rely on their advisers' understanding of their needs and broader personal context to support their job search.

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<sup>21</sup> These are claimants who reported having a disability or health condition expected to last for 12 months or more.

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*'It's nice to see the same face because obviously once you've kind of seen someone, it's all that nervousness hopefully dissipates and it does make it a bit easier to see someone who knows you. That's nice because seeing someone different every time, it just gets a bit uncomfortable, it puts me on edge.'*

(Female, JSA 16-24)

*'It's a bit disheartening because you start to build up a bit of rapport and somebody will remember you and you know they will say, "how did you get on with such a thing?"... then you go and see somebody else and they've got no history of what you've been doing or who you are.'*

(Male, JSA 50+)

Additionally, continuity of adviser support was of particular importance among ESA claimants and JSA claimants with complex needs who valued having one adviser who understood the sensitivity of their situation and could provide the appropriate support. This view was most prevalent among claimants with health needs (physical and mental) and other issues around drugs, alcohol and having a criminal record, who did not want to have to explain their situation on multiple occasions. They appreciated having a consistent adviser who they could build up a trusting relationship with and fully explore their barriers to work.

*'Because once you start getting to know someone you can talk to them a bit easier and open up a bit more ... rather than speak to one person and then go to a stranger and it's like you're starting all over again – all they know is what's written on a computer.'*

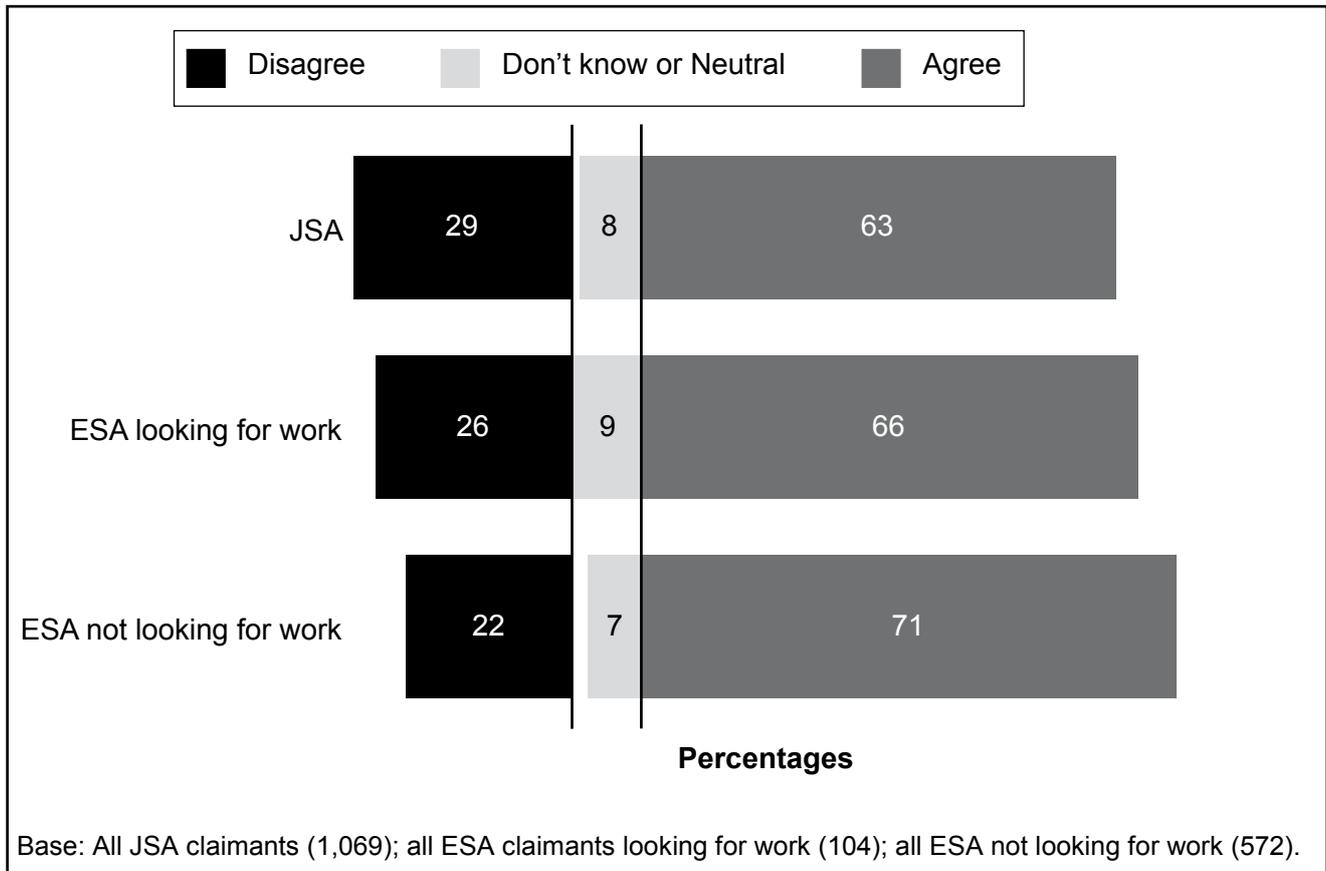
(Male, ESA)

### 3.4.5 Adviser support: Understanding personal circumstances

To gauge the level of tailoring of the support claimants received from advisers, the survey asked whether claimants felt that their advisers understood their particular circumstances. Between six and seven in ten claimants agreed that advisers they had come into contact with during their claim understood their circumstances (Figure 3.7). The opinions of the three claimant groups were broadly similar, though the proportion who felt that advisers had failed to appreciate their circumstances was higher amongst JSA claimants than ESA claimants who were not looking for work (29 per cent compared to 22 per cent).

The pattern of responses illustrated in Figure 3.7 matches the pattern recorded after the first wave of claimant interviews. However, when claimants were asked to consider a longer term view (the course of their entire claim or a year since their first interview) rather than concentrating only on the first weeks of their claim, fewer in each group agreed that advisers understood their circumstances. The fall in agreement levels was most marked amongst JSA claimants (down from 70 per cent to 63 per cent agreement) and ESA claimants who were not looking for work (down from 78 per cent to 71 per cent agreement), and suggests that claimants felt there was less understanding from advisers the longer their claim continued.

**Figure 3.7 Views regarding advisers' understanding of personal circumstances**



### Analysis of JSA claimants

JSA claimants' views regarding how well advisers understood their circumstances did not vary by most of their demographic characteristics. The exception to this was amongst claimants with a mental health condition, who were less likely than other claimants to feel that advisers treated them with understanding (44 per cent, compared to 28 per cent of other claimants).

While the actual frequency of adviser meetings had no bearing on claimants' views on this matter, seeing the same adviser was associated with a positive perception of advisers' understanding: around seven in ten (71 per cent) of the claimants who had seen the same adviser throughout their claim felt that the adviser understood their circumstances, whereas only 58 per cent of those who met with multiple advisers felt the same. Beyond this, views were shaped by claimants' perception of the time and support received from their advisers. Those who felt that the time advisers spent with them was 'about right' were more likely to agree that advisers understood them (78 per cent, compared with 37 per cent of those who believed that they had too much time with an adviser, and 29 per cent of those who felt the time was insufficient). Similarly, claimants who agreed that they received the 'right amount' of support, or that the support they received matched their requirements, were more likely to feel understood (86 per cent and 89 per cent, respectively) than those who disagreed that this was the case (23 per cent and 15 per cent, respectively).

### Analysis of ESA claimants

ESA claimants who maintained higher levels of adviser contact or greater continuity of contact were more likely to acknowledge advisers' understanding of their circumstances. While over four in five (83 per cent) of ESA claimants who met with advisers on a monthly or more frequent basis agreed that advisers understood their personal circumstances, just three-quarters (76 per cent) of those who had meetings once or twice every three months felt the same, falling to 64 per cent of those who met with advisers less often. As with JSA claimants, ESA claimants who saw a single adviser were more inclined than those who saw multiple advisers to describe advisers as understanding (73 per cent compared to 61 per cent). Moreover, around three-quarters of claimants who received clear 'next steps' information at their NJWFI (such as being clear when their next appointment was going to be) believed that advisers understood their situation (74 per cent agreement amongst claimants who received an appointment, and 76 per cent agreement for those who were clear about the frequency of subsequent meetings).

Agreement with the statement 'Jobcentre Plus Advisers understood your particular circumstances' was more common amongst ESA claimants who felt that advisers dedicated adequate time for their needs (84 per cent, compared with 40 per cent who spent 'too much' time and 29 per cent who spent 'not enough' time with advisers). Moreover, around nine in ten claimants who stated that the support they received was right for them (89 per cent) or tailored to their needs and circumstances (92 per cent) agreed with this statement.

The depth interviews highlighted sporadic evidence of tailored adviser support. Claimants' perceptions of this were typically dependent on what they considered to be the quality of the adviser and the complexity of their support needs. Advisers who were deemed to be 'good' provided tailored support to claimants by developing a relationship with them which meant they could understand the range of their needs to then provide the appropriate support. This happened in a variety of ways, from developing a trusting rapport with claimants who struggled to express their needs to keeping in touch with claimants in between appointments over job search progress via text message or the telephone.

#### Case Study: Male JSA 50+

Michael, aged 51, struggles with mental health issues which mean he often finds himself easily frustrated and regularly loses his temper. When he started attending the Jobcentre Plus office he saw a range of advisers and was frequently aggressive to them as he felt misunderstood and pushed into support that he believed was inappropriate for his needs. After eight months of his claim, he was referred to an adviser who he felt understood his needs; specifically, that he wanted to get into work, but would need some support and training in order to manage his behaviour. She referred him to a customer service course where he learned the necessary skills and then successfully applied for a job as shelf stacker at a supermarket. *'I relaxed a little ... we tried to work with each other rather than against each other which is how it seemed at the time. There was a better understanding ... so they said, "right, if you go on this course you have got a better chance of getting in at [supermarket]" and I said, "right, put me on it".'*

Additionally, in cases where claimants had support needs regarding soft skills, such as confidence building and interview techniques, tailored adviser support could often be beneficial in helping to overcome this. For example, claimants described gaining these skills through the development of a professional and supportive relationship with their adviser who was able to provide informal coaching.

### Case study: Female, JSA 16-24

Mia, aged 17, started claiming JSA after leaving college and was keen to get a role in retail. She felt that her lack of confidence in interviews and lack of relevant work experience were preventing her from being successful. After claiming JSA for three months without seeing the same adviser, she was referred to a personal adviser who she saw weekly. The adviser telephoned Mia if she found any jobs she believed were suitable, showed her several job search websites and gave her one-to-one informal coaching in interview skills. Mia felt her confidence increased from this personalised support and attributed her success to the support she received from her adviser. She is now very pleased to have a job in retail. *'She was just really helpful ... every time I had an interview she would always tell me to go in there confident and even if I didn't get the job she'd be like don't give up.'*

However, there was also evidence from the depth interviews to suggest that claimants who faced more complex barriers to finding work felt that their experience of tailored adviser support had been fairly limited. This sub-group included claimants such as lone parents, those with health problems, and the homeless. Many felt that their adviser had not understood the complexity of their needs, particularly around what might be needed in order to overcome these barriers, such as childcare support, counselling or coaching. Therefore, for these claimants, returning to work often felt like an insurmountable task without support to overcome their initial barriers. For example, a number of lone parents described a lack of support encouraging them to explore options that could assist them into employment, such as childcare support or part-time working.

Similarly, a number of ESA claimants who described themselves as 'ready for work' claimed that their support needs for returning back to work were not understood by their adviser. Specific support needs that they felt were not being addressed included more personalised job search or CV writing support, assistance finding employers who could be adaptable to their health condition, and coaching to regain confidence to return to the workplace. The perceived lack of such support from their adviser to address these issues meant that these claimants frequently felt that returning to work would be very challenging.

*'I want a job and they're [Jobcentre Plus] asking me for my CV and I've said 'I've not got a clue how to do a CV' and their answer to that is 'there's loads of websites that you can go onto help.' That's easy for them to say, if you've got someone to go through it with you it just makes it that much easier.'*

(Male, ESA)

*'They were just doing their job asking standard questions, and weren't particularly interested to be honest in what I needed [to get back into work] which was skills retraining.'*

(Female, ESA)

### Case study: Female, JSA 25-49

Sarah, aged 40, is in recovery from long-term drug addiction and now has multiple barriers to finding a job, including a criminal record, childcare responsibilities and depression. *‘My CRB check is as long as your arm, so it’s quite difficult to find anything ... Particularly working in a school, where I would like to be.’* Despite these barriers, the health team involved in her recovery referred Sarah to volunteer in a drug recovery centre, which she finds rewarding.

Since claiming JSA for 12 months her contact with Jobcentre Plus has been mostly through Jobsearch Review meetings, where she feels under pressure to find employment regardless of whether it would sustain her recovery. She feels uncomfortable discussing her barriers to work with Jobcentre Plus staff as she has not had the opportunity to build up a trusting relationship with a single adviser. She feels that she is still far from finding work and that Jobcentre Plus has offered her limited guidance or training. *‘The more you go to the jobcentre, you see a different adviser every time and then you know you become a normal person as you assume they know about you, which they don’t. I would have liked to have been offered some training ... some positivity ... I would like to have been given some more options rather than [being told] “you need to find work”.’*

### 3.4.6 Adviser support: Job search advice

Respondents were asked whether they had been offered certain types of job search advice by an adviser during their claim: advice about how to write a CV or job application, or how to prepare for and carry out a job interview and suggestions about where they should look for job vacancies

Most JSA claimants (90 per cent) said they had discussed at least one of these issues. However, the proportion was lower for ESA claimants who were looking for work (61 per cent). In particular, these ESA claimants were less likely to have been offered suggestions about where they should look for job vacancies (55 per cent, compared with 86 per cent of JSA claimants). Table 3.16 provides further details. Overall, these findings indicate that there is a stronger focus on practical job search advice for JSA claimants than ESA claimants, even where ESA claimants are looking for work.

**Table 3.16 Discussion of job search activities**

	JSA %	ESA looking for work %
Offered:		
Advice about how to write a CV or job application, or how to prepare and carry out a job interview	65	39
Suggestions about where you should look for job vacancies	86	55
Any of the above	90	61

*Base: All JSA claimants (1069); all ESA claimants looking for work (104)*

The depth interviews found that claimants of all age ranges reported attending group CV writing sessions at Jobcentre Plus, typically within the first few weeks of their claim. JSA claimants aged between 16 and 24 and those who had been out of work for a long time for various reasons most typically described the sessions as useful, as many did not have a CV before this. They mentioned that it was useful to learn how to format the document and how to present their often limited work experience in a way which would be attractive for prospective employers. However, among the older age groups there was a common view that the CV course had been forced upon them by their adviser as a consequence of poor diagnosis of their support needs. This was linked to a sense that the course was pitched to those who did not know how to write a CV, which was frustrating for this sub-group as they typically had a CV or they felt a CV would not help them to find an appropriate job. They felt that their time would have been better spent learning how to look for jobs that would match their current skillset.

*‘The CV course they ran was really helpful as it made me realise that I have a lot more skills than I thought.’*

(Female, JSA 25-49)

*‘When you get to my age you are not bothered about CVs and stuff like that. I only ever had one interview in my whole life.’*

(Male, JSA 50+)

In addition to being directed to sources of vacancies or being offered support with their CVs and job applications, advisers may try to direct claimants to vacancies for specific jobs that might be suitable for them. Almost nine in ten JSA claimants (87 per cent) and two-thirds of ESA claimants looking for work (66 per cent) said that their adviser had tried to do this. However, claimants did not always feel that the recommendations they received were aligned to their requirements. Table 3.17 shows the proportion of JSA claimants who felt that the recommendations they received throughout their claim were suitable. The base size for ESA claimants looking for work who received recommendations is too small to include in the table (n=29).

**Table 3.17 Suitability of job suggestions**

	JSA %
All suitable	52
Some suitable	18
None suitable	28
Don't know	3
<i>Base: All JSA claimants who received job suggestions</i>	428

Notably, there has been a decline since the first interview in the proportion of JSA claimants who felt that all of the recommendations they received were suitable (down from 69 per cent to 52 per cent). This may be the result of advisers recommending a broader range of jobs to claimants at later stages of their claim, and claimants perhaps feeling uncomfortable with this greater variety.

### Analysis of JSA claimants

Younger JSA claimants were more likely to have been offered job search advice: 93 per cent of 18-24 year olds were offered at least one of the types of advice, compared with 87 per cent of those aged 25 or over. The same age group was also more likely than older claimants to be signposted to sources of vacancies (90 per cent compared with 84 per cent) and receive suggestions from an adviser for jobs that may be suited to them (93 per cent compared with 84 per cent). However, the job recommendations made to claimants in this age band seem to have become more varied and unsuitable as their claims progressed: whereas 65 per cent of under-25s who received recommendations said, at an early stage of their claim, that all the recommendations they received were suitable, only 56 per cent said the same about the suggestions made over the entire course of their claim. Suitability did not decline in the same way amongst older respondents, though it is worth noting that claimants aged 50 or above were the most likely to say that none of the recommendations they received were suited to their requirements (36 per cent compared with 27 per cent of younger claimants).

Respondents who had been out of work for a longer period of time were also more likely to have been signposted to sources of vacancies or received advice on CVs, job applications and job interviews, as were those who described themselves as being nervous at the thought of being in work. By contrast, those who had already moved off JSA and into work by the time of the first survey interview were less likely to have been offered job search advice, perhaps reflecting the fact that they often did not need this type of advice.

Another indication that advisers may have avoided offering advice to those least likely to need it is the extent to which advice was offered to claimants with a degree. Around nine in ten claimants qualified to A' level or below or lacking formal qualifications had been signposted to sources of vacancies (88 per cent), and similar proportions were offered advice regarding CVs, job applications and job interviews (91 per cent) or suggestions for specific vacancies that advisers thought might suit them (89 per cent). By contrast, only four in five claimants with a degree were offered the same support (79 per cent, 83 per cent, and 81 per cent, respectively). It is worth adding that any selectivity on the part of advisers in proposing jobs to highly qualified claimants may have been well founded. This is suggested by the fact that claimants with a degree who received recommendations for specific vacancies were more likely to deem all of them appropriate (58 per cent of those who received suggestions) than lesser qualified claimants (32 per cent of those who received suggestions).

### Analysis of ESA claimants

There is very limited scope for sub-group analysis of ESA claimants, as these questions were only asked of those looking for work. However, analysis indicates that (as was the case with JSA claimants) discussion of job search activities was higher for those who had been out of work longer. For those on ESA, the division is between those who had worked in the last five years, compared with those that had not worked for over five years or at all.

## 3.5 Flexible menu of back-to-work support

This section looks at the flexible menu of support in terms of the proportion of claimants who were offered the various support options and the proportions who went on to take them up. It also looks at the profile of the claimants who were offered each type of support, in order to assess the extent to which support was tailored based on need.

Since very few ESA claimants were offered work experience, skills training or self-employment support, the figures discussed below in connection with these types of support are limited to JSA claimants. Findings relating to support with health, finances, childcare and homelessness cover both types of claimant.

The survey results in this section rely on respondents' ability to recall accurately the specific types of support they have discussed and taken up. Although experiences were still recent when the interviews were conducted, it is likely that some respondents had difficulty in recalling the detail of what they had discussed with advisers. Some caution should therefore be taken when interpreting the findings.

### 3.5.1 Work experience

Jobcentre Plus offers various work experience opportunities as part of its flexible menu of support. Claimants were asked whether they had discussed internships and apprenticeships, or opportunities to take part in the work experience scheme; a work trial; a mandatory work activity placement; or a sector-based work academy. They were also asked whether they received any advice about volunteering which might help them develop some work experience. The proportions of JSA claimants who discussed these options with an adviser are shown in Table 3.18.

**Table 3.18 Offer of work experience**

	JSA %
Discussed opportunities to develop some work experience	41
Discussed:	
Work experience scheme	14
Work trial	9
Mandatory work activity	6
Internships	5
Apprenticeships and 'Access to Apprenticeship scheme'	8
Sector-based work academy	5
Volunteering	35
<i>Base: All JSA claimants</i>	<i>1,069</i>

Over the course of the Offer, 41 per cent of JSA claimants discussed one of the work experience opportunities listed above with their adviser. Amongst the schemes offered by the jobcentre, the work experience scheme was the most common type of scheme discussed (14 per cent), though higher proportions discussed volunteering opportunities (35 per cent).

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Claimants who reported towards the start of their claim that a lack of work experience was preventing them from finding work were no more likely than anyone else to discuss work experience options with an adviser (37 per cent compared with 55 per cent). Instead, work experience opportunities of any type were most frequently discussed with 18-24 year-olds (62 per cent), reflecting the increased provision of placements on some schemes for under-25s through the Youth Contract.<sup>22</sup> Advisers may also have been targeting placements towards those who had been out of the labour market the longest. Discussions about work experience opportunities were more likely to be held with claimants who had been unemployed for over two years or had never worked (54 per cent) than claimants who had been in work more recently (39 per cent), and only around a third (36 per cent) of claimants who had been in work within three months of making their JSA claim discussed these options with their adviser.

Claimants who discussed a work experience opportunity or voluntary position were more likely (69 per cent) than those who did not (58 per cent) to say that the support offered by Jobcentre Plus felt right for their needs. Having these discussions was also associated with a positive perception of the tailoring of the advice and support offered by the jobcentre, with 71 per cent saying that the support they were offered matched their needs and circumstances (compared with 59 per cent of claimants who did not discuss a work experience or voluntary placement). Amongst claimants who actually went on to take up such an opportunity, the proportion indicating that the support fitted with their needs and circumstances was even higher (75 per cent).

A third of those who discussed a work experience opportunity (equating to fourteen per cent of all JSA claimants) went on to take this up (Table 3.19). The most common types of opportunity to be taken up were placements on the work experience scheme (six per cent) and positions with voluntary organisations (eight per cent).

**Table 3.19 Taking up work experience opportunities**

	JSA %
Taking up any work experience opportunity	14
Attended:	
Work experience placement	6
'Work Trial' placement	3
Mandatory Work Activity placement	4
sector based work academy placement	1
voluntary position	8
<i>Base: All JSA claimants</i>	<i>1,069</i>

Seven in ten (72 per cent) claimants who attended a work experience placement or volunteering opportunity said they were satisfied with the service that Jobcentre Plus provided in helping them find employment. Claimants who undertook some work experience

<sup>22</sup> The introduction of the Youth Contract, a cross-department initiative aimed at helping youth unemployment, has led to an increase in the provision of work experience and sector-based work academy placements to claimants under the age of 25. However, both schemes are also available to claimants aged 25 or above, but require local funding.

but did not succeed in finding work, had larger positive attitudinal shifts for being confident they can do well in interviews (+21 percentage points) and being less nervous about work (+16 percentage points) than claimants who did not undertake any work experience. Moreover, claimants who attended a work experience placement or voluntary position but did not manage to find work, were less inclined to say that *'people are put under too much pressure to find work'* after they had been on their claim for 12 months than they were at the start of their claim (+17 percentage point shift).

The depth interviews highlighted that the views of claimants who had been on work experience varied depending on their perception of the quality of their placement and whether they felt it had helped them get closer to work. For example, a number of claimants described the experience as being integral in helping them to understand the demands of the workplace and also appreciated having it to add to their CV thereby improving their employability. However, claimants also described experiences where they felt unsupervised, underused, and bored. For these claimants, the experience had not been worthwhile and they felt resentful for having to attend.

*'There is value in the work experience because I learned more about working life ... I wish that there was a job at the end of a work experience'*

(Female, JSA 16-24)

*'Working for a company for a month ... You don't earn a penny; they earn a fortune out of you ... that was my impression.'*

(Male, JSA 50+)

### Case study: Work experience: Male, JSA 16-24

Tim, aged 18, had been claiming JSA since he left school six months ago. He believed that his main barriers to finding work were travel difficulties, as he lives in a remote village, lack of work experience and low confidence with interviews and filling out job applications. After six months of his claim, his Jobcentre Plus adviser referred him to a six-week skills training course, which he found to give him practical advice for interviews and applications. He is now on a work experience placement at another local Jobcentre Plus office where he helps other claimants in the PC suite to register online for Universal Jobmatch. He finds the work rewarding and it has helped him explore the type the jobs he might be interested in, bringing him closer to employment. *'I am meeting new people, I am actually doing something. This is giving me motivation to look even harder for more jobs.'*

## 3.5.2 Skills and training

Jobcentre Plus advisers can recommend claimants go on various types of skills and training courses as part of the flexible menu of support. Respondents were specifically asked whether they had discussed any of the following types of skills and training courses with their adviser: education courses at local colleges or other training providers; skills assessments with a skills provider (not based at Jobcentre Plus); referral to the National Careers Service or a careers adviser; and mandatory courses to improve their basic skills in subjects such as English, maths or IT.

A quarter of JSA claimants (25 per cent) discussed skills support options with their adviser (Table 3.20). The most commonly discussed type of skills support was an education course

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at a local college or private provider (discussed by 20 per cent of all JSA claimants). JSA claimants who reported, towards the start of their claim, that a lack of skills was preventing them from finding work were no more likely than anyone else to discuss skills support with an adviser (34 per cent compared with 29 per cent).

**Table 3.20 Offer of skills or training course**

	JSA %
Offered an opportunity to go on a skills or training course	25
Offered:	
Advice on or referral to an education course	20
Referral to a skills assessment	12
Referral to the National Careers Service or a careers adviser	7
Referral on a mandatory course to improve skills	11
<i>Base: All JSA claimants</i>	<i>1,069</i>

Nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of those who discussed or were referred to some type of skills or training option went on to attend a session or course. As shown in Table 3.21, the most common type of skills support undertaken by claimants was an education course at a local college or private provider (11 per cent).

**Table 3.21 Attend skills or training course**

	JSA %
Attended a skills or training course	16
Attended:	
An education course at a local college or private provider	11
Attended a skills assessment with a skills provider	7
Attended a session at the National Careers Service or with a Careers Adviser	4
Attended a mandatory course to improve skills	7
<i>Base: All JSA claimants</i>	<i>1,069</i>

Claimants with basic qualifications were more likely to discuss skills and training sessions with their advisers (31 per cent) than either more qualified claimants (11 per cent) or claimants who lacked formal qualifications (17 per cent). However, the decision to attend a course or session did not vary by the claimants' highest qualification. This is perhaps surprising, given that many of the courses on offer relate to the development of basic skills which more qualified claimants would probably already possess. This may indicate insufficient use of discretion on the part of advisers when referring claimants.

Over two-thirds of claimants who attended a session or course to assess or improve their skills (68 per cent) said they were satisfied with the service that Jobcentre Plus offered in helping them find employment (compared with 55 per cent of those who did not attend). Moreover, claimants' rating of the level and tailoring of support provided by the jobcentre

varied according to whether or not they received any skills support. Three-quarters of claimants who took up some type of skills support agreed that the amount of support they received from the jobcentre overall felt right for their needs (76 per cent, compared with 59 per cent of claimants who did not receive skills support); a similar proportion believed that the support and advice they received matched their needs and personal circumstances (77 per cent), whereas only three-fifths of other claimants felt the same (62 per cent).

### 3.5.3 Self-employment support

Jobcentre Plus advisers can offer claimants support in setting up their own business through general advice; referring the claimant to a business mentoring scheme or an enterprise club; or through the New Enterprise Allowance, which offers financial support for starting a new business.

Less than one in ten JSA claimants (seven per cent) discussed self-employment support with their adviser (Table 3.22). General guidance and information about self-employment was the most commonly discussed form of support amongst JSA claimants (six per cent).<sup>23</sup>

**Table 3.22 Types of self-employment support discussed**

	JSA %
Discussed self-employment support	7
Offered:	
Information and guidance about self-employment or setting up own business	6
Referral to a business mentoring scheme	3
Referral to an enterprise club	2
Discussion of the New Enterprise Allowance	3
<i>Base: All JSA claimants</i>	1,069

A quarter of the claimants who discussed some type of self-employment support went on to take this up (23 per cent). Overall, take up rates of self-employment support were relatively low (Table 3.23): only two per cent of JSA claimants went on to attend a business mentoring scheme or an enterprise club, or to apply for the New Enterprise Allowance.

**Table 3.23 Types of self-employment support discussed**

	JSA %
Took up self-employment support	2
Attended business mentoring scheme	1
Attended enterprise club	1
Applied for New Enterprise Allowance	*
<i>Base: All JSA claimants</i>	1,069

<sup>23</sup> The majority of respondents were interviewed before the campaign to raise awareness of the New Enterprise Scheme was launched in the summer of 2013.

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Discussions about self-employment support seem to have been targeted particularly towards older claimants and those with higher qualifications. Claimants aged 25 or above were more likely to discuss (10 per cent) and take up (three per cent) self-employment support than 18-24 year-old claimants (three per cent and nought per cent, respectively). The likelihood of discussing self-employment also varied by claimants' level of educational attainment: nearly one in six claimants with a degree (15 per cent) discussed self-employment support compared with just six per cent of claimants who were less qualified.

There was fairly limited mention of self-employment support in the depth interviews. The NEA Programme was the type of self-employment support most commonly cited by claimants who already had an idea that they would like to set up their own business prior to attending the jobcentre. The claimants described the programme as sufficiently wide-ranging and helpful as it included both practical support with a loan and also softer skills support, as courses in marketing and business skills were provided. The claimants who had undertaken the scheme were very positive about the new skills that they had learned and strongly believed that this had brought them closer to sustainable employment.

### Case study: NEA: Male, JSA 50+

Peter worked as a lorry driver for 30 years, but after suffering from a severe stroke he was told he would not be able to work in this role again. When he was found 'Fit for Work' following a Work Capability Assessment he found job search challenging as he had developed health problems and did not have any qualifications or previous work experience in areas other than lorry driving.

Initially, his Jobcentre Plus adviser sent him on maths and English short courses to improve his literacy skills but he found them to be too basic. Peter realised that he would be likely to have more success if he started up his own business in pest control, as it would suit his skills level and it would not be physically demanding. After a period of 12 months, Peter was referred onto the NEA programme, and subsequently undertook courses in pest control and business and used these to set up his own business. He is pleased with the support he received from Jobcentre Plus but feels frustrated that he had to wait a year before being referred to the programme which was the most suited to his needs (the rules for NEA have since changed, so that claimants are generally now eligible from when they start receiving JSA).

### 3.5.4 Volunteering

Claimants are encouraged to consider volunteering positions<sup>24</sup> to improve their chance of securing work, and Jobcentre Plus can help source these opportunities. Advisers are able to signpost opportunities to claimants, including websites such as 'Do It' and local organisations who have agreed to support unemployed people.

Whereas around a third of JSA claimants (35 per cent) discussed volunteering with an adviser (Table 3.18), almost half of ESA claimants (49 per cent) had similar discussions (Table 3.24).

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<sup>24</sup> Excludes claimants who are being supported through mandatory provision. Volunteering is subject to continued benefit eligibility conditions being met.

**Table 3.24 Types of volunteering support discussed**

	ESA %
Discussed volunteering support	49
Local organisations	35
Local volunteer centre	28
On-line (e.g. Do It)	21
None of these	12
<i>Base: All ESA claimants</i>	676

There was no significant difference between ESA claimants who were looking for work and those who were not looking for work (51 per cent and 48 per cent respectively). Furthermore, the two groups did not differ significantly in their level of take up of voluntary positions: amongst those who discussed volunteering, 21 per cent of those looking for work took up a placement compared with 14 per cent of those not looking for work.

Only seven per cent of ESA claimants actually took up a voluntary position. The large gap between the proportion being signposted and actually taking up a voluntary position may partly stem from advisers' reluctance to 'push' ESA claimants or follow up on their progress after initial signposting. The depth interviews from the first year of the evaluation indicated potential problems which may lead to the relatively low take up of volunteering options. Where volunteering had been discussed with ESA claimants, they did not necessarily take up support because of current health conditions. Others did not see the value as it was perceived as unpaid work and associated with negative media stories.

However, perhaps most worryingly of all from an organisational standpoint was that the discussion of volunteering was not always followed up with information regarding where they could find opportunities. As a result of this, some claimants found they had to look independently for contacts and organisations.

### Case study: Volunteering: Male, ESA

Robert suffers from psychosis and depression/anxiety problems and receives ongoing support from his local psychiatric support team. His adviser mentioned the possibility of volunteering but did not provide him with any details or signpost any suitable contact organisations. Although he initially felt reluctant about the idea of volunteering, he subsequently thought this could be a good idea. He found the discussion with his adviser unclear and did not know if this was something he had to organise himself and what next steps he needed to take.

*'You know a couple of months into it she was kind of saying, "you need to be doing something, whether it's voluntary work or whether it's getting on some kind of programme" ... and I said, "well, like what?", you know, and she said, "well the NHS do things" and so I asked my psychiatric nurse and she said that she doesn't really know what kind of programme or anything like that they're talking about anyway so it wasn't really clear exactly what I was meant to be doing.'*

### 3.5.5 Health

Jobcentre Plus advisers offer support and guidance to claimants with health conditions or disabilities, for example by encouraging voluntary referral to providers and treatment services where relevant. This can include advice around treatment for drug or alcohol dependencies or health service providers who can help with the claimant's health condition, as well as more basic discussion and advice around what jobs claimants feel they can and cannot do.

As shown in Table 3.25, nearly half of all ESA claimants (45 per cent) were offered some form of health support. The most common form of support was advice on health service providers who could help with the claimant's health condition or disability (37 per cent). JSA claimants who had a disability or health condition were less likely to be offered support relating to their health, with only around a quarter (24 per cent) discussing some form of support with their adviser. There was no difference in this respect between claimants with a physical or a mental health condition.

**Table 3.25 Types of health advice or support received**

	ESA %	JSA with disability %
Discussed some form of health support	45	24
Received advice or support:		
by adviser on health condition or disability	27	17
on health service providers who can help with health condition or disability	37	11
on treatment options for drugs or alcohol dependency	10	8

*Base: All ESA claimants (676); all JSA claimants with a health condition or disability (188)*

While over a quarter of ESA claimants (27 per cent) were offered help or support for their health condition or disability by an adviser at Jobcentre Plus, around a third of these claimants (36 per cent) did not discuss the potential suitability of particular types of jobs, such as jobs they would and would not be able to do. A further five per cent only discussed jobs they were able to do, and a similar proportion only discussed jobs they would not be able to do, rather than having a fully rounded discussion about the options available to them. These proportions are perhaps indicative of a lack of confidence or relevant knowledge on the part of advisers when interacting with claimants with health needs or advising them on their health needs.

Those who were offered health support had a higher propensity to give a positive report of the amount and tailoring of support on offer by the jobcentre. Seven in ten ESA claimants who discussed this type of support assessed the overall level of support provided by Jobcentre Plus as right for their needs (72 per cent); amongst JSA claimants who had a health condition or disability and discussed health support the proportion who felt this was even higher (85 per cent). Similarly, around four in five ESA claimants who were offered health support (81 per cent) and seven in ten JSA claimants who were offered health support (71 per cent) felt that the advice and support they were offered matched their personal needs and circumstances.

A further form of support available to ESA claimants is the chance to be referred to a Disability Employment Adviser (DEA). Eight per cent of ESA claimants were referred to a DEA, where topics such as the 'Access to Work' and 'Work Choice' schemes were commonly discussed (Table 3.26).

**Table 3.26 Topics discussed with DEA**

	ESA %
Access to Work	56
'Work Choice'	50
Information on employers in your areas who have adopted the 'two ticks' disability symbol	29
Residential training	8
<i>Base: All ESA claimants referred to a DEA</i>	<i>70</i>

### 3.5.6 Other areas of support

Jobcentre Plus can offer a range of other types of support, such as advice or information regarding childcare support, homelessness, and caring responsibilities. Advisers may also offer information regarding support networks for the unemployed (specifically, signposting to local work clubs) and some types of financial support to cover one-off expenses or childcare costs in connection with job search activities.

Table 3.27 shows the proportion of JSA and ESA claimants who received each type of support. Since these types of support are only relevant to claimants with specific circumstances, it is unsurprising that fairly low numbers were offered each type of support. The exception to this is information about work clubs, which was provided to over half of JSA claimants (53 per cent), but fewer ESA claimants who were looking for work (38 per cent, equivalent to eight per cent of all ESA claimants).

Additional information regarding financial support is provided in Section 3.5.7.

**Table 3.27 Other types of support offered**

	JSA %	ESA %
Information about 'work clubs' in the local area	53	8
Financial help for one-off expenses	25	13
Information or help with caring responsibilities for adults	8	12
Advice regarding homelessness	7	6
Information or help with childcare	4	2
<i>Base: All JSA claimants (1,069); all ESA claimants (676)</i>		

JSA claimants under the age of 25 or who were either unqualified or educated to GCSE level or below were more likely than other claimants to be directed to a local work club (61 per cent each, compared with 48 per cent of those aged 25 or over and 42 per cent with higher

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qualifications). This is perhaps because they were seen to be more in need of networking opportunities than other claimants. However, JSA claimants who had been out of the labour market for longer and arguably also needed opportunities to meet people in similar circumstances were no more likely than anyone else to be signposted to this resource.

Far fewer ESA claimants than JSA claimants were signposted to work clubs, perhaps partly because advisers were focusing referrals on those who had been in work within the last five years: whereas around one in six (16 per cent) ESA claimants who had been out of work for less than five years were directed to a local work club, the same was true for only six per cent of those who were unemployed for longer.

JSA claimants in the under-25 age band had a higher likelihood of being offered financial support (29 per cent), advice regarding homelessness (10 per cent), and information or help with caring responsibilities for adults (10 per cent) than claimants aged 25 or over (23 per cent, five per cent, and six per cent, respectively). The offer of information regarding homelessness or the care of adults is perhaps surprising for this group, who were no more likely than older respondents to report that they were homeless or to feel that caring responsibilities were a barrier to finding work.

Childcare support was offered to 19 per cent of JSA claimants with children, and was much more likely to be offered to single parents (36 per cent compared with nine per cent of claimants with a partner). Of the small number of people who said they were offered this kind of help (n=32), 28 said they received information about how working hours can fit around caring commitments; 28 received advice regarding support through tax credits for working parents; and 15 received information about childcare costs for attending job interviews. Fewer ESA claimants with children received any type of childcare support.

The low numbers of claimants overall who received these types of support prevent much sub-group analysis.

### 3.5.7 Financial support

Claimants can be offered financial support, notably through the Flexible Support Fund, for one-off expenses such as travelling to interviews, clothing and footwear, and childcare. Advisers can award these funds at their discretion. As summarised in Table 3.27, advisers spoke about the potential for financial help with a quarter of JSA claimants (25 per cent) and half as many ESA claimants (13 per cent). In the majority of cases, JSA claimants themselves asked for this support (20 per cent of all JSA claimants); this was also true for around half of ESA cases (six per cent of all ESA claimants).

The under-25s were the only sub-group who stood out amongst JSA claimants as having a higher than average likelihood of having discussions about financial help with advisers (29 per cent, compared with 23 per cent of other JSA claimants). Amongst ESA claimants there was more variation, indicating the use of greater discretion: advisers were more likely to discuss funding with claimants who were looking for work (24 per cent, compared with 11 per cent of claimants who were not looking for work) and those on new ESA claims (23 per cent, compared with 11 per cent of claimants who had transferred from IB). One in five ESA claimants who had been in work within the last five years had such a discussion (20 per cent, compared with 11 per cent of claimants who had been unemployed for longer or never worked), as did around one in six claimants who were under the age of 50 (16 per cent, compared with 10 per cent of older claimants).

Not everyone who spoke to an adviser about financial support actually received any. Around three-quarters of JSA claimants who had a discussion about financial help received some funds (73 per cent, the equivalent of 21 per cent of all JSA claimants), while three in five ESA claimants who had a discussion received help (60 per cent, the equivalent of nine per cent of all ESA claimants). The rest of the claimants who had a conversation with an adviser about funding said that the possibility of funding was mentioned but ultimately they received nothing, or that financial help was offered to them but they declined it, often because they felt they did not need it.

Table 3.28 shows the types of help received by those who accepted financial assistance.

**Table 3.28 Types of financial help received**

	JSA %	ESA %
Transport or parking	72	70
Clothing or footwear	24	11
Work-related licence (including CRB check)	7	-
Courses or training	5	2
Tools or equipment	2	5
Something else	9	8
Don't remember	2	8

*Base: JSA claimants who received financial support (197); ESA claimants who received financial support (58)*

The most common type of financial help was for transport or parking, received by over seven in ten JSA and ESA claimants, followed by help with buying or renting clothing or footwear appropriate for interviews or work in particular industries or environments. Seven per cent of JSA claimants received assistance with securing a work-related licence required for practising certain professions, such as a Construction Skills Certification Scheme card or a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. Around one in 20 were supported to attend a course or training: notably, this funding was only received by people with GCSE or higher qualifications. Similar proportions received funding to buy or rent necessary tools or equipment. Almost one in ten received assistance for other things, including childcare or crisis loans.

The depth interviews highlighted sporadic and fairly limited use of Flexible Support Fund (FSF) by advisers, with it most typically being used to enable claimants to attend job interviews. Examples of this included the provision of high street shopping vouchers to enable claimants to purchase suitable clothes for an interview and petty cash to cover travel costs to an interview. In these instances, claimants acknowledged that often small sums of money were significant in assisting them to overcome barriers to employment, such as a lack of professional clothing and minimal funds to cover travel.

### **3.5.8 Awareness and take up of the flexible menu of support**

While the claimant survey covered specific measures in the flexible menu of support, the depth interviews explored claimant's awareness and take-up of the options and their views of the support offered by the jobcentre more widely.

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Younger JSA claimants had a good awareness of the provision available to them through Jobcentre Plus. Options such as work experience, apprenticeships and job fairs were widely known to these claimants, many of whom had taken up one or more of these. This is likely to be linked to broader policy changes in this area; specifically the introduction of the Youth Contract in April 2012 entailed increased investment in a range of support options for young people. For many, these 'hands on' support measures had significantly helped claimants to overcome their barriers to work such as low confidence and lack of work experience.

*'Absolutely superb ... well, my careers adviser just refers me to these different programmes and all of that, it is absolutely superb. I am hearing back more [from employers] now than I did before I did the work placement, before I did anything else with the jobcentre, I hear back more often.'*

(Male, JSA 16-24)

Conversely, JSA claimants in the 50+ age group described a lack of relevant support from Jobcentre Plus. This was linked to a perception by these claimants that employers were less interested in employing them as their age could be indicative of a limited skillset and meant they would not be able to make a long-term commitment to the business. They believed they could benefit if Jobcentre Plus offered them specific support, such as further skills training, to make them more attractive to employers. Instead, several described feeling forced onto support measures that were inappropriate for them, as the measures did not address their specific barriers to work or bring them closer to employment. For example, attending a CV writing course was described as an inadequate support measure for this group, as they had a long work history but needed upskilling in order to find employment in new sectors. Additionally, for some a lack of IT skills presented a range of barriers in terms of job searching online, using Universal Jobmatch, communicating with employers over email and generally lacking the necessary IT skills required by employers. Consequently, JSA claimants aged 50+ had taken up less support than other groups, though this was perhaps also linked to their lower awareness of what was available.

ESA claimants also had a limited awareness, and made limited use of, the provision available through Jobcentre Plus. This was linked to a sense that often these claimants did not understand why they were at the jobcentre so did not know what to ask for and that they had very limited contact with Jobcentre Plus. These factors combined meant that there was limited time for support measures to be explored in any detail.

*'She didn't really talk about me getting back into work in the near future – I don't know what I expected when I went there.'*

(Male, ESA)

### 3.5.9 Barriers to take up of support options

The depth interviews found that across the support options available to claimants, there were several barriers preventing take up. These included the following:

- Perceived relevance of referrals: There was evidence to suggest that advisers' referrals to support were sometimes based on an inappropriate diagnosis of claimants' needs. This was particularly raised by JSA claimants who had multiple and complex needs, such as homelessness or health issues, who felt that it was more important to deal with that immediate challenge rather than embarking on support measures aimed at moving them into work.

*'And I've been told [by the doctor] that I can't drive so I'm flogging a dead horse trying to find a warehouse job or a driving job ... but my adviser keeps trying to get me to sign up for a forklift truck licence.'*

*(Male, JSA 50+)*

- Lack of availability of tailored provision: This was of most relevance for claimants with multiple and complex barriers to work and, in particular, having a criminal record, health conditions and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) needs. They found that Jobcentre Plus offered no specific support in order to overcome this barrier when they were looking for work. Additionally, it was found that advisers did not address the limited information and communications technology (ICT), basic literacy and numeracy skills and lack of work experience that overlaid these claimant groups.

*'Well I explained that I've got a criminal record and I've been in prison, and basically the jobcentre didn't want to know, they said I'd have to get a job anywhere, But I've been told by the police that there's places that I'm not allowed to work.'*

*(Male, ESA, ex-offender)*

*'I need help to get some skills where I can type and work in office. Just telling me to widen my job search isn't going to help me with that really.'*

*(Male, JSA 50+)*

### **3.5.10 Assessment of support on offer**

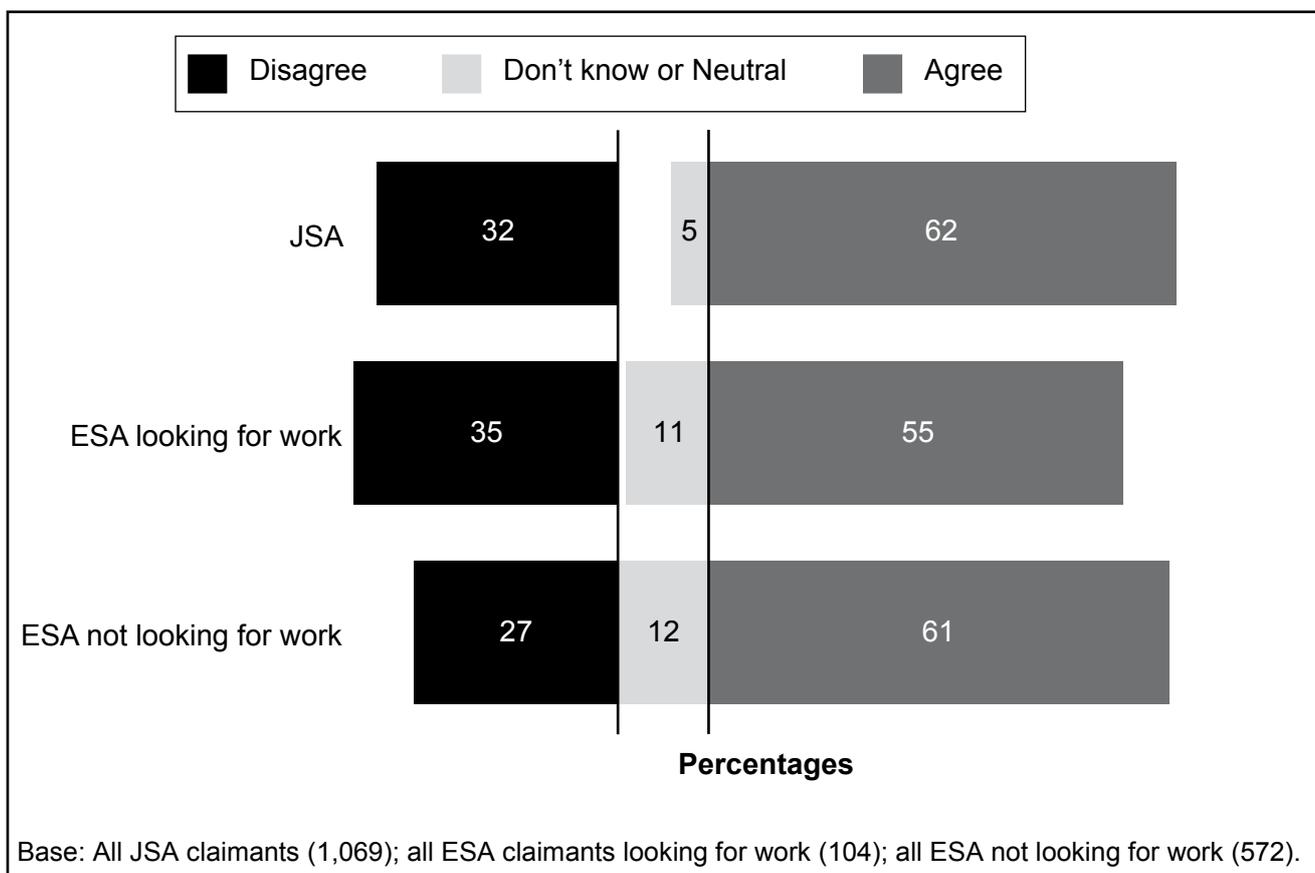
Claimants were asked to think about all the advice, information and support they received from Jobcentre Plus since starting their claim, and to assess the level of support they were offered, consider whether the support was tailored to their needs and circumstances, and rate their satisfaction with the service offered by the jobcentre in helping them find employment.

#### **Whether offered the right amount of support by Jobcentre Plus**

In response to the first question, around three-fifths of claimants agreed that the support they were offered was the 'right amount' for them, with no significant differences between JSA claimants, ESA claimants looking for work and ESA claimants who were not looking for work (Figure 3.8)

As might be expected, claimants who had been offered some type of support from the flexible menu were more likely to agree with the statement 'you have been offered the right amount of support' than those who been offered none of the options from the menu. Two-thirds of claimants who had been offered some support (67 per cent JSA and 65 per cent ESA) agreed with the statement, compared with less than half of claimants who had not been offered support (47 per cent of each type of claimant).

**Figure 3.8 Agreement with statement: ‘You have been offered the right amount of support by Jobcentre Plus’**



The offer of certain types of support was associated with higher levels of agreement. JSA claimants with a disability or health condition who had been offered health support were the most likely to agree that the amount of support they received felt right (85 per cent, compared with 52 per cent of those with a disability or health condition who were not offered support). Agreement levels were also high for JSA claimants who were offered support with childcare or adult caring responsibilities (79 per cent compared with 61 per cent who were not offered this support); claimants offered skills support (74 per cent compared with 59 per cent who were not offered skills support); and those offered work experience support (69 per cent, compared with 58 per cent who were not offered work experience support). In addition, agreement was more common amongst JSA claimants who received financial support than those who did not (70 per cent compared with 61 per cent).

Similarly, amongst ESA claimants views regarding the level of support on offer differed depending on whether they were offered, or not offered, certain types of support. Almost four-fifths of ESA claimants who were offered help or advice with caring responsibilities or childcare (79 per cent) or support with their skills (77 per cent) agreed that they had received the right amount of support (compared with 57 per cent who were not offered care-related support and 59 per cent who were not offered skills-related support). Around seven in ten ESA claimants who were offered support with their health (72 per cent) or help to develop their work experience (68 per cent) felt the same (compared with 50 per cent and 53 per cent who were not offered these types of support).

Table 3.29 presents a profile of JSA claimants who felt they were offered the right amount of support and the profile of those who felt they had not been offered the right amount of support, breaking down the types of support each group had been offered. Table 3.30 presents the equivalent profiles for ESA claimants. The majority of people in all groups had been offered at least one item from the flexible menu, though there were more people in receipt of this support amongst the groups that gave a positive assessment of the amount of support on offer.

**Table 3.29 Profile of JSA claimants who felt they had, or had not, been offered the right amount of support**

	Offered right amount of support %	Was not offered right amount of support %
Offered any support from flexible menu	82	65
Offered:		
Signposting to local work club	60	39
Work experience support	46	32
Skills support	29	17
Support with funding	27	21
Health support	15	5
Support with caring (children or adults)	13	6
Support with homelessness	9	2

Base: JSA claimants who felt they received right amount of support (674);  
JSA claimants who felt they did not receive the right amount of support (337)

**Table 3.30 Profile of ESA claimants who felt they had, or had not, been offered the right amount of support**

	Offered right amount of support %	Was not offered right amount of support %
Offered any support from flexible menu	80	65
Offered:		
Signposting to local work club	11	6
Signposting to volunteering	54	41
Skills support	11	5
Support with funding	18	7
Health support	54	30
Support with caring (children or adults)	18	5
Support with homelessness	7	4

Base: ESA claimants who felt they received the right amount of support (404);  
JSA claimants who felt they did not receive the right amount of support (191)

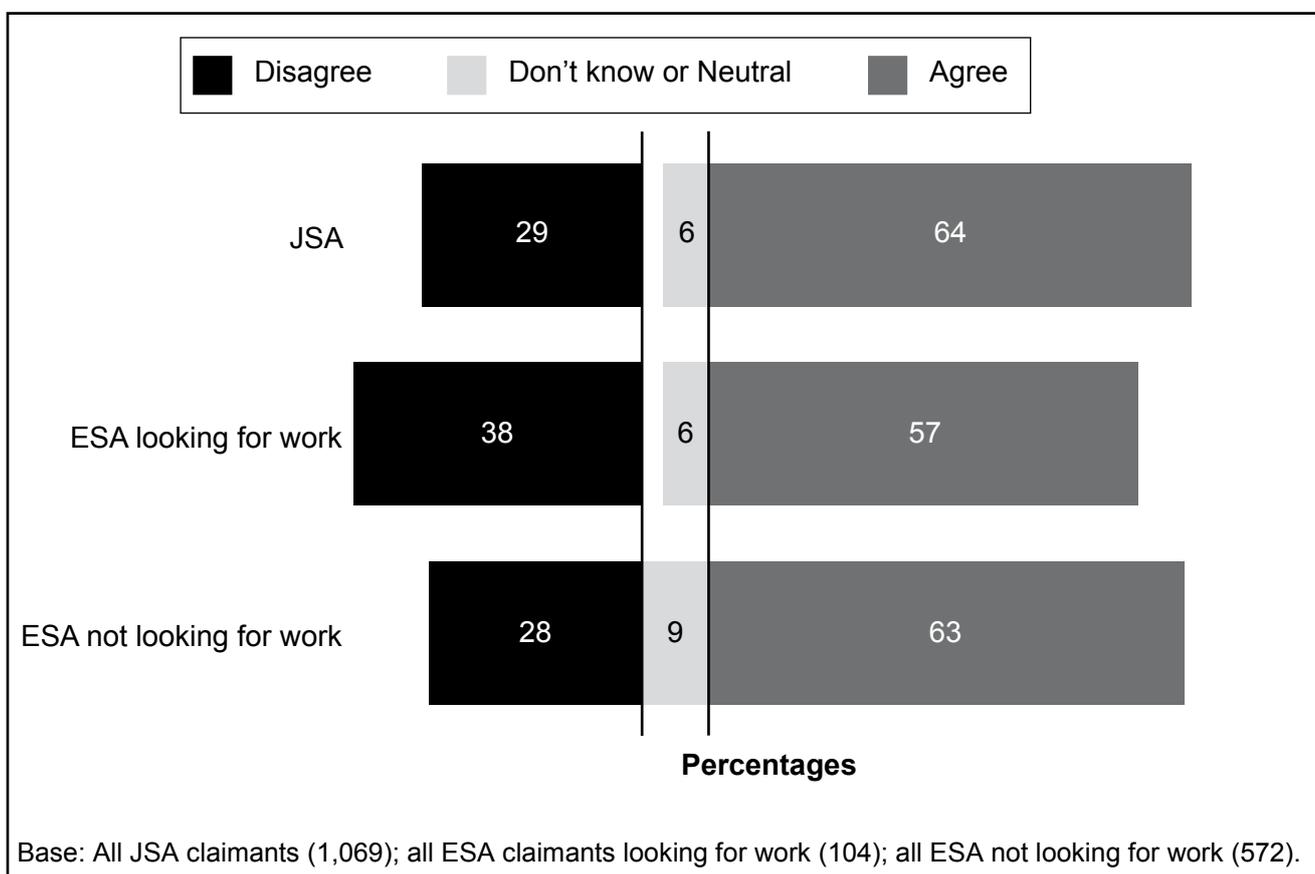
### Whether advice and support offered matched personal needs and circumstances

Over three in five JSA claimants and a similar proportion of ESA claimants who were not looking for work felt that the support they received was tailored to their needs and circumstances (Figure 3.9). ESA claimants who were looking for work were more likely than the other two groups to disagree that this was the case (36 per cent), indicating a needs gap amongst these claimants.

Claimants who were offered support from the flexible menu were more likely (71 per cent JSA and 66 per cent ESA) to perceive the support on offer as tailored than those who were not offered any support (47 per cent JSA and 51 per cent ESA). JSA claimants aged 18-24 were more likely to say this (69 per cent) than older claimants (62 per cent), as were those who had been unemployed for less than three months before making their claim (67 per cent) compared with claimants who had been unemployed for longer (62 per cent).

However, some groups were less likely than average to feel that the support on offer was tailored to their requirements and circumstances: this included disadvantaged JSA claimants (60 per cent compared with 66 per cent who were not disadvantaged) and JSA claimants with a disability or health condition (57 per cent compared with 66 per cent who were not disabled), particularly those with a mental health condition (53 per cent compared with 65 per cent of other claimants). Amongst ESA claimants the only group that stood out were those seeking work.

**Figure 3.9 Agreement with statement: ‘The advice and support you have been offered matched your personal needs and circumstances’**



## Whether satisfied with service that Jobcentre Plus offers in helping find employment

Almost three in five JSA claimants (57 per cent) and around half of ESA claimants (52 per cent who were not looking for work and 48 per cent who were looking for work) said they were satisfied with the service offered by the jobcentre in helping them find employment (Table 3.31).<sup>25</sup> Dissatisfaction levels were higher amongst ESA claimants who were looking for work than those who were not (34 per cent compared with 21 per cent). The proportion of ESA claimants looking for work who reported being ‘very’ dissatisfied was particularly high (24 per cent). Since there is an association between satisfaction and perceptions of tailoring of the service, their dissatisfaction may be linked to the fact that fewer people in this group felt the service was suited to their needs and circumstances.

**Table 3.31 Satisfaction with service that Jobcentre Plus offers in helping find employment**

	JSA %	ESA looking for work %	ESA not looking for work %
Very satisfied	20	21	20
Fairly satisfied	37	31	27
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	15	14	24
Fairly dissatisfied	11	10	7
Very dissatisfied	17	24	14
Don't know	*	1	7
Satisfied	57	52	48
Dissatisfied	28	34	21

*Base: All JSA claimants (627); all ESA claimants looking for work (98); all ESA claimants not looking for work (541)*

Satisfaction levels were higher amongst JSA claimants who were offered options from the flexible menu of back-to-work support (62 per cent) than those had not been offered any options (37 per cent), and highest for claimants offered help with homelessness or health (81 per cent each) or support with self-employment (73 per cent). Similarly, ESA claimants who had been offered some type of support from the flexible menu tended to be more satisfied than those who had not (53 per cent compared with 36 per cent). In the case of ESA claimants, particularly high satisfaction levels were linked with the offer of skills support (81 per cent) or financial assistance (65 per cent). In addition, satisfaction was more common amongst claimants of both types who were offered support with childcare or caring responsibilities for adults (75 per cent of JSA claimants and 69 per cent of ESA claimants).

Satisfaction did not vary by JSA claimants’ demographic characteristics. For the most part the same was true for ESA claimants, with the exception that claimants who lacked any qualifications were more likely than those who had basic or higher qualifications to say they were satisfied with the service on offer (64 per cent compared with 44 per cent).

<sup>25</sup> This question was only asked in the second interview, so the results do not include anyone who off-flowed by the time of the first interview.

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Dissatisfaction was linked to views regarding the amount of support on offer, as well as views about the extent to which the service matched claimants' needs and circumstances. Around two-thirds of JSA claimants who disagreed that the jobcentre offered the right amount of support (65 per cent) or disagreed that the service was tailored (69 per cent) were dissatisfied with the service. Amongst ESA claimants, two-thirds of those who gave a negative assessment of the level of support on offer (64 per cent) and three-fifths of those who felt the support did not match their requirements (60 per cent) were dissatisfied.

### 3.6 Summary

This chapter focused on claimants' perspective of the Offer and their destinations and attitudes following their experience of the Offer

#### 3.6.1 Proportions remaining on their claim or off-flowing

Benefit off-flow rates were significantly higher for JSA claimants than for ESA claimants in the 12-month WRAG group: while two-thirds of JSA claimants off-flowed, around a quarter of ESA claimants did the same.

Only two in five JSA claimants who were still on the same claim after 12 months (and might be expected to have moved onto the Work Programme) had actually started on the Work Programme. A quarter of ESA claimants (in the 12-month WRAG group) had moved onto the Work Programme, with three in ten starters volunteering. Volunteers tended to have positive attitudes about work and job searching at the start of their claim.

Three-fifths of all JSA claimants stopped claiming their benefit in order to start a job. This was more common for claimants aged 25-49, claimants who had higher qualifications and those who had received little additional, flexible support from the Offer. This is probably a reflection of the fact that they required less assistance from Jobcentre Plus and suggests the effective allocation of resources.

Five per cent of ESA claimants off-flowed into work. Those who moved into work were more likely to be people who were looking for work at the start of their claim, had been employed within the past five years, and had positive attitudes to work and job searching at the start of their claim.

One in seven of the claimants who off-flowed into work said that they found their job *'though Jobcentre Plus'*. People who said this were more likely to have had an adviser who tried to find suitable jobs for them and offered suggestions for where to look for job vacancies, and they were more likely than other claimants to have undertaken work experience.

The jobs that JSA claimants moved into mostly fitted with their family commitments and matched their skills and abilities, but only three in five felt they met the criteria they were looking for when talking to their Jobcentre Plus advisers, suggesting that claimants were willing to be flexible about the types of jobs they took up. Claimants who felt they received adequate support during their time on the Offer, and possibly had more time to think about or discuss what might suit their circumstances, were more likely to find suitable jobs.

One in seven of those who off-flowed into work were offered the chance to stay in touch with the jobcentre after starting their job, and two-fifths of them actually did, though views about the helpfulness of the advice and support received during that time were mixed.

Around a fifth of JSA claimants and ESA claimants who were looking for work closed their claim at some point in the 12 months after starting on the Offer, but did not start work after off-flowing. A quarter of ESA claimants who were not looking for work (at the time of their first interview for the survey) did the same.

### 3.6.2 Claimant attitudes

This section explored claimants' attitudes towards employment and job search at the start of their claim, and how these changed over the course of their journey on the Offer.

When they started on the Offer most JSA claimants were highly motivated and wanted to be in work. The picture was more mixed for ESA claimants, but still a majority felt they would be happier in work.

Amongst JSA claimants there were negative shifts in attitudes for being put under too much pressure to find work and being confident that they will find a job that suits them. However, it could be argued that a negative shift on this last point is only to be expected given that these are people who have not managed to find work after 12 months. There was a net positive shift in being nervous about paid work and this was particularly marked for the youngest claimants, in the 18-24 age category.

As ESA claimants progressed through their claim, there was a net reduction in anxiety levels about the prospect of being in paid work. Even more encouragingly, ESA claimants who were looking for work also showed dramatic increases in confidence for all aspects of their job search activities.

### 3.6.3 Ongoing adviser support

This section looked at the level and nature of the contact that claimants had with advisers during the course of their claim, as well as claimants' views of advisers.

Outside regular Jobsearch Review meetings, JSA claimants saw advisers more frequently than ESA claimants. The majority of claimants felt that the time they spent with advisers was about right, with fewer than one in ten claiming that some of that time was unnecessary, and around twice as many believing that the time spent with advisers was insufficient for their needs. Notably, amongst ESA claimants looking for work there was a shift in perceptions as their claim progressed, with more reflecting that they did not have enough time with their adviser later into their claim.

Around three-quarters of ESA claimants and three-fifths of JSA claimants saw the same adviser every time. The dominant view amongst both types of claimant was that it did not matter which adviser they saw, though many added the proviso that the adviser they met with should know a bit about their circumstances. This requirement seemed to become more important at later stages of the claimant journey.

Between six and seven in ten claimants agreed that advisers they had come into contact with during their claim understood their circumstances. The proportions reduced over time, suggesting that claimants felt there was less understanding from advisers the longer their claim continued. Claimants' views were partly contingent on whether they saw the same adviser throughout their claim, and varied in line with their perceptions of the time and support they received from their advisers.

### 3.6.4 Flexible menu of back-to-work support

This section presented findings on the proportion of claimants who were offered and who took up various support options from the flexible menu.

Two-fifths of JSA claimants discussed the opportunity to develop some work experience, though advisers seemed to focus discussions on the under-25s and the long-term unemployed. A third of those who discussed these opportunities went on to attend a placement. Even when this did not result in a job, claimants tended to benefit from positive attitudinal shifts, feeling more confident they could do well in interviews and less nervous about the prospect of paid work.

A quarter of JSA claimants discussed skills support with an adviser and two-thirds of these claimants went on to take up some support, most commonly a course in a local college or private provider. While advisers were more likely to have these discussions with claimants who had only basic qualifications, educational attainment made no difference to whether or not claimants attended a skills assessment or course.

Fewer than one in ten discussed self-employment support, with discussions mostly focused on older JSA claimants and those with a degree. Of those who were offered self-employment support, a quarter went on to take up some form of support.

A third of JSA claimants and half of ESA claimants discussed the possibility of volunteering, but only a small proportion of ESA claimants went on to take up a voluntary position.

Half of JSA claimants were signposted to a work club. Fewer than one in ten ESA claimants were signposted to a work club, with a focus on those who had been in work in the last five years.

Of some of the other support available through Jobcentre Plus:

- Half of ESA claimants and a quarter of JSA claimants with a disability or health condition discussed health support options with their adviser.
- A fifth of JSA claimants with children were offered some type of childcare support.
- A quarter of JSA claimants discussed financial support with an adviser. Around half as many ESA claimants did the same. Overall, a fifth of JSA claimants and around one in ten ESA claimants received some type of financial assistance. The funds were most commonly aimed at covering transport or parking expenses, but could include a range of other uses relating to job search.

The levels of take up of support reflected both awareness and barriers towards take up by particular groups. Younger JSA claimants had a good awareness of the provision available to them through Jobcentre Plus, possibly stemming from recent policy changes such as the introduction of the Youth Contract. By contrast, older JSA claimants as well as ESA claimants more generally had limited knowledge of support options. In the case of ESA claimants this may be because of their limited contact with the jobcentre.

At the same time there were factors preventing the take-up of some of the support on offer, with some claimants – particularly those with multiple and complex needs – feeling that their needs had not been correctly identified and the support they were offered was not appropriate for their needs.

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Most claimants gave a positive assessment of the support on offer by Jobcentre Plus. Almost three in five JSA claimants and around half of ESA claimants said they were satisfied with the service provided by the jobcentre in helping them find employment. In addition, three-fifths of both JSA and ESA claimants agreed that the jobcentre offered them the right amount of support, and that the advice and support they were offered matched their personal needs and circumstances. The proportions giving a positive assessment were higher amongst those who were offered support from the flexible menu, suggesting that support options are generally being used for the right people at the right time.

However certain groups were less likely to feel that the support on offer was tailored to their requirements. This applied to ESA claimants who were looking for work, disadvantaged JSA claimants, and JSA claimants with a disability (particularly those with a mental health condition).

## 4 A focus on three potential barriers to work

The Jobcentre Plus Offer enables Jobcentre Plus flexibility in tailoring support to claimants to help move them into, or closer to, work. As well as providing a more individualised service to claimants, it should also ensure more efficient use of resources, with claimants who have complex needs receiving more support than those who are closer to the labour market.

Jobcentre Plus recognises that certain claimants may face additional challenges when trying to get back into the labour market, particularly those who:

- have health conditions;
- have a drug or alcohol dependency;
- have a criminal record;
- are homeless;
- have been in local authority care; or
- served in the armed forces

Chapter 3 includes analysis of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants who experienced one or more of the conditions listed above, predominantly health issues. These claimants are referred to as 'disadvantaged', and this sub-group's experiences and views of the Offer were compared to the experiences and views of the rest of the JSA claimant population.

This chapter focuses on three potential barriers to work in more detail. It presents the views and experiences of JSA and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants who reported that they were in one or more of the following groups: those with a drug or alcohol dependency; those with a criminal record; and those living as homeless. These conditions or circumstances were self-reported<sup>26</sup> and some claimants indicated that they were in more than one group, as shown in Table 4.1. Details of the claimants' other characteristics are included in Appendix C.

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<sup>26</sup> Claimants with these conditions or circumstances were identified from the survey partly on the basis of what they reported discussing with advisers. In addition, claimants with a criminal record were identified by their response to the question '*What would you say is preventing you from finding work at the moment?*' and the question '*Do you have any unspent criminal convictions?*'. Claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency were identified by their response to the question '*What would you say is preventing you from finding work at the moment?*'. Claimants who reported that they were squatting, in temporary accommodation provided by a housing association or local authority, in bed and breakfast accommodation, in a hostel, staying with friends (sofa surfing), 'have no fixed home', or sleeping rough, were classified as homeless.

**Table 4.1 Claimants with criminal record, drug or alcohol dependency or who were homeless who fall into one, two or three groups**

	Criminal record	Drug or alcohol dependency	Homeless
	%	%	%
<b>One group only</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>35</b>
Criminal record only	43	-	-
Drug or alcohol dependency only	-	31	-
Homeless only	-	-	35
<b>Two groups only</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>38</b>
Criminal record and drug or alcohol dependency	42	53	-
Criminal record and homeless	7	-	22
Drug or alcohol dependency and homeless	-	6	16
<b>Three groups</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>28</b>
Criminal record and drug or alcohol dependency and homeless	8	10	28

Base: Claimants with a criminal record (228); claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (182); homeless claimants (68)

It should be noted that claimants in these three groups were surveyed as part of a boost survey and were in various stages of their claimant journey when interviewed. The claimants they are compared with (who were not in one of these groups) were interviewed as part of the main survey and belong to a cohort who made their claim at a particular point in time (March 2012 for JSA claimants, and December 2011 or January 2012 for ESA claimants). Any comparisons between these populations should therefore be treated with caution.<sup>27</sup>

## 4.1 Claimant attitudes

All claimants were asked a series of statements about their attitudes towards being in work and their job search prospects, to assess their motivation to find work and any psychological barriers that might undermine this. The attitudes of claimants with a criminal record, claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency, and homeless claimants were compared to those of claimants who were not in one of these groups.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> In this chapter, homeless claimants are analysed as a single group, regardless of whether they were receiving JSA or ESA, as base sizes would otherwise be too low for robust analysis. The number of ESA claimants who were looking for work and were in one of the three groups was also low, and analysis therefore combines JSA and ESA claimants looking for work. Particular caution is advised when interpreting findings regarding homeless claimants, as the base sizes are very low.

<sup>28</sup> To increase comparability, the attitudes of claimants who did not have these constraints were those recorded at a mature point during their claim (a year after their New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) or New Joiner's Work Focused Interview (NJWFI) or after they had already off-flowed) rather than at the start of their claim.

### 4.1.1 Motivation to find work

Nine in ten claimants with a criminal record (89 per cent) expressed a desire to be in paid work. As shown in Table 4.2, JSA claimants with a criminal record were as likely to feel this way as JSA claimants without a criminal record (93 per cent each), but ESA claimants who were ex-offenders were more motivated to be in work than ESA claimants with no criminal record (83 per cent compared with 69 per cent).

**Table 4.2 Agreement that ‘I would be a happier person if I was in paid work’, by whether had criminal record**

	No criminal record		Has criminal record	
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA %	ESA %
Agree	93	69	93	83
Disagree	4	14	4	11
Neither agree nor disagree	2	5	3	-
Don't know/Not applicable	1	21	-	6

*Base: JSA with no criminal record (1,025); ESA with no criminal record (655); JSA with a criminal record (135); ESA with criminal record (82)*

Around four-fifths of claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (83 per cent) believed they would be happier in paid work. Within this group, the proportion who felt they would be happier in paid work was lower for claimants on ESA (76 per cent) than claimants on JSA (93 per cent). JSA claimants with a dependency were as likely to say they would be happier in work as JSA claimants who were not in this group; similarly, there was no significant difference in the views of ESA claimants who did or did not have a dependency (Table 4.3).

**Table 4.3 Agreement that ‘I would be a happier person if I was in paid work’, by whether had drug or alcohol dependency**

	No drug or alcohol dependency		Has drug or alcohol dependency	
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA %	ESA %
Agree	93	68	93	76
Disagree	4	15	4	17
Neither agree nor disagree	2	5	1	1
Don't know/Not applicable	1	12	1	6

*Base: JSA with no drug or alcohol dependency (1,051); ESA with no drug or alcohol dependency (648); JSA with drug or alcohol dependency (71); ESA with drug or alcohol dependency (100)*

Homeless claimants were more likely to want to be in work (81 per cent) than ESA claimants who were not homeless (69 per cent). The base size for the homeless group is too small to explore variation between JSA and ESA homeless claimants.

**Table 4.4 Agreement that ‘I would be a happier person if I was in paid work’, by whether was homeless**

	Not homeless		Homeless
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA and ESA %
Agree	93	69	81
Disagree	4	15	12
Neither agree nor disagree	2	5	3
Don't know/Not applicable	1	11	5

*Base: JSA who are not homeless (1,061); ESA who are not homeless (672); JSA and ESA who are homeless (68)*

These findings indicate that claimants in the three groups were generally positive about wanting to find work, which previous research has shown to be a key factor in the success of provision.<sup>29</sup> Further evidence of this is that around three-quarters of claimants in one of the three groups agreed that having any kind of paid job is better than not working (78 per cent claimants with a criminal record; 74 per cent claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency; and 78 per cent of homeless claimants).

### 4.1.2 Anxiety about work

A potentially demotivating factor for job seekers can be a sense of anxiety about the prospect of being in work. This was expressed by a substantial minority of claimants within each of the three groups.

Around a third of claimants with a criminal record who were not in work at the time of the interview said that ‘*the thought of being in paid work makes me nervous*’ (35 per cent). Table 4.5 shows that, within this group, it was those on ESA who were most likely to express anxiety (62 per cent ESA compared with 14 per cent JSA). Anxiety was more common amongst ESA claimants who were ex-offenders (62 per cent) than ESA claimants who were not (48 per cent). There was no difference in anxiety between JSA claimants who did, or did not, have a criminal record.

**Table 4.5 Agreement that ‘The thought of being in paid work makes me nervous’, by whether had criminal record**

	No criminal record		Has criminal record	
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA %	ESA %
Agree	18	48	14	62
Disagree	79	42	81	30
Neither agree nor disagree	2	4	3	3
Don't know	1	6	2	5

*Base: Claimants not in work at time of interview: JSA with no criminal record (430); ESA with no criminal record (605); JSA with criminal record (50); ESA with criminal record (119)*

<sup>29</sup> Hasluck, C. and Green, A. (2007). *What Works for Whom? A review of evidence and meta-analysis for the Department for Work and Pensions*, DWP Research Report No. 407.

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Claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency who were not in work were more likely than claimants in the other two groups to be nervous about the prospect of employment. Half (49 per cent) said they felt anxious, though Table 4.6 illustrates that this high proportion was chiefly driven by the views of ESA claimants with a dependency (69 per cent ESA compared with 16 per cent JSA). Anxiety was more common amongst ESA claimants with a dependency than those without (69 per cent compared with 47 per cent).

**Table 4.6 Agreement that ‘The thought of being in paid work makes me nervous’, by whether had drug or alcohol dependency**

	No drug or alcohol dependency		Has drug or alcohol dependency	
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA %	ESA %
Agree	17	47	16	69
Disagree	80	42	75	26
Neither agree nor disagree	3	4	6	2
Don't know/Not applicable	1	6	3	4

*Base: Claimants not in work at time of interview: JSA with no drug or alcohol dependency (444); ESA with no drug or alcohol dependency (599); JSA with drug or alcohol dependency (65); ESA with drug or alcohol dependency (104)*

Two-fifths of homeless claimants who were not in work felt nervous about the prospect of working (41 per cent). Anxiety was as common amongst this group as it was amongst ESA claimants who were not homeless (47 per cent).

**Table 4.7 Agreement that ‘The thought of being in paid work makes me nervous’, by whether was homeless**

	Not homeless		Homeless
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA and ESA %
Agree	17	47	41
Disagree	79	42	50
Neither agree nor disagree	2	4	5
Don't know	1	6	5

*Base: Claimants not in work at time of interview: JSA who are not homeless (451); ESA who are not homeless (622); JSA and ESA who are homeless (63)*

### 4.1.3 Confidence in job search

Tables 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10 show the proportions of claimants who disagreed with the statement ‘I am confident that I will be able to find a job that suits me’ or who said that they were not very or not at all confident about different aspects of their job search.

Ex-offenders were as likely as JSA claimants who did not have a criminal record to feel that they would be able to find a suitable job, they could do well in interviews, and could cope with rejections and knock-backs (Table 4.8); however, they were more likely than JSA

claimants with no criminal record to feel apprehensive about all other aspects of their job search, with particular concerns around the currency of their skills and whether employers would want to offer them interviews. Whilst many in this group felt a lack of confidence, they were less likely to express reservations about their job search than ESA claimants without a criminal record who were looking for work.

**Table 4.8 Confidence in job search, by whether had criminal record**

	No criminal record		Has criminal record
	JSA	ESA looking for work	JSA and ESA looking for work
	%	%	%
Not confident that ...			
Will be able to find a job that suits me	15	50	19
Skills are sufficiently up-to-date for the current job market	13	40	26
Employers will want to offer you an interview	19	48	31
Can do well in interviews	11	17	18
Can cope with rejections and knock-backs	7	17	8
Can learn new skills or re-train	5	9	8

*Base: JSA with no criminal record (1,025); ESA who are looking for work with no criminal record (58); JSA and ESA who are looking for work with criminal record (146)*

Claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency were more likely than other JSA claimants to feel unsure about every aspect of their job search (Table 4.9). Their confidence levels were similar to those of ESA job seekers who did not have a drug or alcohol dependency. The only exception to this was in the proportion who disagreed with the statement *'I am confident that I will be able to find a job that suits me'*: claimants with a dependency were less likely to disagree with this (28 per cent) – and were therefore more confident about their job prospects – than ESA claimants without a dependency who were looking for work (49 per cent).

The confidence levels of homeless claimants were broadly on a par with those of JSA claimants who were not homeless (Table 4.10). In general, this group was less apprehensive about their job search than non-homeless ESA job seekers. However, caution is advised in interpreting these results, given the small base sizes involved.

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**Table 4.9 Confidence in job search, by whether had drug or alcohol dependency**

	No drug or alcohol dependency		Has drug or alcohol dependency
	JSA %	ESA looking for work %	JSA and ESA looking for work %
Not confident that ...			
Will be able to find a job that suits me	15	49	28
Skills are sufficiently up-to-date for the current job market	14	40	42
Employers will want to offer you an interview	19	51	37
Can do well in interviews	12	18	24
Can cope with rejections and knock-backs	7	17	16
Can learn new skills or re-train	5	12	10

*Base: JSA with no drug or alcohol dependency (1,051); ESA who are looking for work with no drug or alcohol dependency (58); JSA and ESA who are looking for work with drug or alcohol dependency (83)*

**Table 4.10 Confidence in job search, by whether homeless**

	Not homeless		Homeless
	JSA %	ESA looking for work %	JSA and ESA looking for work %
Not confident that ...			
Will be able to find a job that suits me	15	52	17
Skills are sufficiently up-to-date for the current job market	14	39	20
Employers will want to offer you an interview	19	49	23
Can do well in interviews	11	17	23
Can cope with rejections and knock-backs	7	17	3
Can learn new skills or re-train	5	12	3

*Base: JSA who are not homeless (1,061); ESA who are looking for work who are not homeless (58); JSA and ESA who are looking for work who are homeless (30)*

#### 4.1.4 Perceived barriers to employment

Claimants who were looking for work and either had a criminal record, a drug or alcohol dependency, or were homeless were asked to state what barriers, if any, they felt they faced in trying to get a job. This was an open question and respondents were permitted to cite barriers spontaneously. The results are shown in Table 4.11.

**Table 4.11 Main perceived barriers to finding work**

	Criminal record	Drug or alcohol dependency	Homeless
	%	%	%
Job availability	27	30	20
Issues relating to criminal record	26	21	23
Health issues	10	18	7
Lack of skills/qualifications	4	6	–
Caring responsibilities	4	1	3
Issues relating to drug or alcohol misuse	3	7	10
Lack of work experience	3	3	–
Transport	2	3	–

*Base: JSA and ESA who are looking for work and: have a criminal record (146); have a drug or alcohol dependency (83); are homeless (30)*

One of the first things to note is that issues relating to drug or alcohol dependency were mentioned by less than one in ten claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (seven per cent) although a fifth did mention health problems more generally (18 per cent). This may be because claimants feel they do not need to disclose their dependency to prospective employers. By contrast, ex-offenders need to reveal information about their previous convictions to prospective employers; accordingly a fairly large proportion (26 per cent) reported that issues relating to their criminal record – including presenting their past convictions, and issues around probation and curfew restrictions – were preventing them from finding work.

Only one homeless claimant mentioned housing as a barrier to finding work. The main concern for most claimants in any of the three groups was the availability of jobs, similar to other job seekers.

#### 4.1.5 Perceptions of Jobcentre Plus in helping claimants' confidence and motivation

The role of the Offer is to help claimants move closer to work, a key element of which is having confidence about finding work and motivation to find employment. All claimants were asked whether they felt that the advice and support they had received from Jobcentre Plus had helped to increase their confidence about finding a job they can do, their motivation to find work, and their chances of finding employment.

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Table 4.12 below shows the results for claimants with, or without, a criminal record. Around half of JSA claimants with a criminal record felt there were improvements to their motivation to find work (51 per cent) and their chances of finding suitable employment (52 per cent) as a result of the advice and support they received, whilst slightly fewer (44 per cent) felt that their confidence had developed during their contact with Jobcentre Plus. The proportions who felt this way were lower amongst ESA claimants with a criminal record.

Notably, the views of ex-offenders regarding the effect of the Offer on their confidence, motivation and prospects were no different to those of claimants who did not have a criminal record.

**Table 4.12 Whether Jobcentre Plus helped to improve confidence and motivation, by whether had criminal record**

	No criminal record		Has criminal record	
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA %	ESA %
Build up confidence about finding a job they could do	44	27	44	21
Increase motivation to find work	50	25	51	19
Increase chances of finding suitable work	48	21	52	23

*Base: JSA with no criminal record (1,025); ESA with no criminal record (655); JSA with criminal record (135); ESA with criminal record (93)*

As shown in Table 4.13, around half of JSA claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (51 per cent) reported increases in their motivation to find work, and even more (59 per cent) felt that their job prospects had improved. In fact, JSA claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency were more likely than other JSA claimants to feel that their chances of finding suitable work had increased after their contact with Jobcentre Plus (59 per cent compared with 47 per cent). In other respects, however, the views of JSA claimants with a dependency were similar to those without a dependency.

Between a fifth and a quarter of ESA claimants with a dependency reported feeling more confident of finding a job they could do (26 per cent), that their motivation to find employment had increased (21 per cent) and that their chances of finding suitable work were better (26 per cent) after receiving advice and support from Jobcentre Plus. The views of this group were similar to those of ESA claimants who did not have a dependency.

**Table 4.13 Whether Jobcentre Plus helped to improve confidence and motivation, by whether had drug or alcohol dependency**

	No drug or alcohol dependency		Has drug or alcohol dependency	
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA %	ESA %
Build up confidence about finding a job they could do	43	25	42	26
Increase motivation to find work	49	25	51	21
Increase chances of finding suitable work	47	20	59	26

*Base: JSA with no drug or alcohol dependency (1,051); ESA with no drug or alcohol dependency (648); JSA with drug or alcohol dependency (71); ESA with drug or alcohol dependency (111)*

There were also perceived improvements amongst homeless claimants in terms of their confidence, motivation and perceived prospects (Table 4.14). The proportion who felt that their chances of finding suitable work had improved was higher amongst the overall group of homeless claimants (33 per cent) than amongst ESA claimants who were not homeless (21 per cent), though still lower than amongst JSA claimants who were not homeless (48 per cent).

**Table 4.14 Whether Jobcentre Plus helped to improve confidence and motivation, by whether homeless**

	Not homeless		Homeless
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA and ESA %
Build up confidence about finding a job they could do	43	26	30
Increase motivation to find work	49	25	29
Increase chances of finding suitable work	48	21	33

*Base: JSA who are not homeless (1,061); ESA who are not homeless (672); JSA and ESA who are homeless (68)*

## 4.2 Adviser support

This section looks at the contact and relationships that claimants with a criminal record, claimants who had a drug or alcohol dependency, and claimants who were homeless had with their Jobcentre Plus advisers. It explores the discussions they had, including whether claimants disclosed these issues to advisers; claimants' views on the level and continuity of adviser contact; how claimants viewed advisers' understanding of their circumstances; and information about the basic support and advice claimants received from advisers, both with regards to job seeking and dealing with any particular barriers to work.

## 4.2.1 Discussion with advisers

In order for Jobcentre Plus to be able to help claimants move closer to work it is important that any circumstances which form potential barriers to employment are correctly identified and appropriate support is offered. This can be done either at the initial interview between claimant and adviser (NJI or NJWFI), or during regular meetings.

Claimants who had a criminal record or drug or alcohol dependency and claimants who were homeless were asked whether they had discussed criminal convictions, a dependency, housing circumstances and debt with advisers. The proportions who had discussed these issues are presented in Table 4.15.

**Table 4.15 Topics discussed with advisers**

	Criminal record	Drug or alcohol dependency	Homeless
	%	%	%
Issues relating to...			
criminal conviction	77	51	35
alcohol or drug dependency	43	83	38
housing or homelessness	40	40	46
debt	17	17	12

*Base: JSA and ESA with criminal record (228); JSA and ESA with drug or alcohol dependency (182); JSA and ESA who are homeless (68)*

Three-quarters of ex-offenders (77 per cent) discussed their criminal conviction with an adviser. Around two-fifths also spoke about a drug or alcohol dependency (43 per cent) and their living arrangements (40 per cent), which is unsurprising as over half of ex-offenders faced more than one constraining condition or circumstance (see Table 4.1).

Around four-fifths of claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (83 per cent) discussed their dependency with an adviser. It is worth noting that three-quarters of claimants with a dependency who disclosed this during these discussions (77 per cent) were already participating in a structured treatment programme. It was also common for these claimants to discuss criminal convictions (51 per cent) and housing or homelessness (40 per cent).

Less than half of homeless claimants (46 per cent) discussed their housing circumstances with advisers. It is not clear why such a low proportion talked about this subject, though this may perhaps be explained by the fact that around two-thirds of homeless claimants had a criminal record or a drug or alcohol dependency as well, and the focus of discussions may have been on these other issues.

All claimants, including those who did not disclose having a criminal record, a drug or alcohol dependency or housing difficulties, were asked whether they had discussed a range of other issues with an adviser and the results are shown in Tables 4.16, 4.17 and 4.18.

**Table 4.16 Topics discussed with advisers, by whether had criminal record**

	No criminal record		Has criminal record	
	JSA	ESA	JSA	ESA
	%	%	%	%
Type of work looking for, availability	94	74 <sup>1</sup>	93	67 <sup>2</sup>
Previous jobs and work experience	88	73	84	57
How far willing to travel for work	87	59 <sup>1</sup>	87	75 <sup>2</sup>
Skills and qualifications	85	66	84	56
Changing career or retraining	54	47	64	42
Caring responsibilities	52	35	39	25
Possibility of working in the future	n/a	73 <sup>3</sup>	n/a	53 <sup>4</sup>
Support you might need to prepare for work	n/a	57 <sup>3</sup>	n/a	43 <sup>4</sup>

Base: JSA with no criminal record (1,025); ESA with no criminal record (655); JSA with criminal record (135); ESA with criminal record (93);

<sup>1</sup> ESA looking for work with no criminal record (103);

<sup>2</sup> ESA looking for work with criminal record (12);

<sup>3</sup> ESA not looking for work with no criminal record (552);

<sup>4</sup> ESA not looking for work with criminal record (81)

JSA claimants with a criminal record most commonly discussed the types of work they were looking for, their work experience and skills, and the flexibility (with regards to location) that claimants were willing to show in finding work. These discussions were as common amongst JSA ex-offenders as JSA claimants who did not have a criminal record. However, JSA claimants with a criminal record were more likely than other JSA claimants to discuss retraining or a change of career (64 per cent compared with 54 per cent), perhaps because their previous conviction limited the types of jobs they could apply for.

Ex-offenders in receipt of ESA were less likely than ESA claimants with no criminal record to cover topics such as their previous work experience, their skills and qualifications, or how work might fit around their caring commitments. Moreover, for ESA claimants who were not looking for work, discussions around the possibility of working in the future and the support they would need to prepare for work were less common if the claimant had a criminal record than if they did not. These discrepancies may result from focusing on non-work related issues during discussions with advisers, which perhaps overrode concerns with general job seeking, but it is not clear why this should not also be the case for JSA claimants with a criminal record (although the requirement to be actively seeking work is a condition of JSA receipt).

Table 4.17 shows the topics discussed between advisers and those with, or without, a dependency on drugs or alcohol.

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**Table 4.17 Topics discussed with advisers, by whether had drug or alcohol dependency**

	No drug or alcohol dependency		Has drug or alcohol dependency	
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA %	ESA %
Type of work looking for, availability	94	73	91 <sup>1</sup>	60 <sup>2</sup>
Previous jobs and work experience	88	72	90	57
How far willing to travel for work	87	59	90 <sup>1</sup>	60 <sup>2</sup>
Skills and qualifications	85	65	86	54
Changing career or retraining	54	47	64	35
Caring responsibilities	51	34	46	21
Possibility of working in the future <sup>3</sup>	n/a	73 <sup>3</sup>	n/a	57 <sup>4</sup>
Support you might need to prepare for work <sup>3</sup>	n/a	56 <sup>3</sup>	n/a	41 <sup>4</sup>

*Base: JSA with no drug or alcohol dependency (1,051); ESA with no drug or alcohol dependency (648); JSA with drug or alcohol dependency (71); ESA with drug or alcohol dependency (111);*

<sup>1</sup> *ESA looking for work with no drug or alcohol dependency (101);*

<sup>2</sup> *ESA looking for work with drug or alcohol dependency (15);*

<sup>3</sup> *ESA not looking for work with no drug or alcohol dependency (547);*

<sup>4</sup> *ESA not looking for work with drug or alcohol dependency (96)*

There was no difference between the topics discussed by JSA claimants who had a dependency and those who did not: around nine in ten from both groups discussed the types of jobs they were looking for, previous work experience, their willingness to travel for work, and their skills and qualifications, and similar proportions from both groups discussed the possibility of changing career or retraining, as well as caring commitments.

The range of topics covered by advisers in discussions with ESA claimants who had a dependency were more limited than in discussions with ESA claimants who did not have a dependency. Claimants who had a drug or alcohol dependency were less likely to discuss all job searching issues, including the types of jobs they were interested in, previous work experience, skills and qualifications, or the possibility of changing career. It was also less common for ESA claimants with a dependency who were not looking for work to talk about the possibility of working in the future and the support they might need to move closer to work. These findings suggest that advisers were treating ESA claimants with a dependency as if they were further away from the labour market than their counterparts who did not have a dependency.

It was not possible to disaggregate the proportions of JSA and ESA homeless claimants who spoke about each topic due to the small base size of this group, so Table 4.18 presents a breakdown of the topics covered by the entire group of homeless claimants.

**Table 4.18 Topics discussed with advisers, by whether homeless**

	Not homeless		Homeless
	JSA	ESA	JSA and ESA
	%	%	%
Previous jobs and work experience <sup>1</sup>	88	73	62
Skills and qualifications <sup>1</sup>	85	66	58
Changing career or retraining <sup>1</sup>	55	47	32
Caring responsibilities <sup>1</sup>	52	34	20
Type of work looking for, availability <sup>2</sup>	94	75	78
How far willing to travel for work <sup>2</sup>	87	61	72
Possibility of working in the future <sup>3</sup>	n/a	73	38
Support you might need to prepare for work <sup>3</sup>	n/a	57	27

Base:

1 JSA who are not homeless (1,061); ESA who are not homeless (672); JSA and ESA who are homeless(68);

2 JSA who are not homeless (1,061); ESA looking for work who are not homeless (102); JSA and ESA looking for work who are homeless (32);

3 ESA not looking for work who are not homeless (570); ESA not looking for work who are homeless (36)

In general, the proportion of homeless claimants discussing each topic is lower than amongst JSA claimants who were not homeless, and comparable or higher than the proportions of ESA claimants who were not homeless. Homeless ESA claimants who were not looking for work were less likely than their non-homeless counterparts to discuss the possibility of working in the future and steps they could take to achieve this.

## 4.2.2 Claimant views on level of contact with advisers

Table 4.19 shows the views of claimants with a criminal record or drug or alcohol dependency, and of homeless claimants, regarding the amount of contact they had with advisers. Three-fifths of claimants with a criminal record (60 per cent) or a drug or alcohol dependency (62 per cent), and half of all homeless claimants (53 per cent) felt that they spent the right amount of time with their adviser, although there was a significant minority who felt they needed more time and support. A quarter of claimants with a criminal record (25 per cent) or who were homeless (27 per cent) wanted more time with their adviser as did around a fifth of claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (20 per cent).

**Table 4.19 Views regarding amount of contact with advisers**

	Criminal record	Drug or alcohol dependency	Homeless
	%	%	%
About right	60	62	53
Not enough time	25	20	27
Too much time	8	8	7
Don't know or Refused	7	10	13

*Base: JSA and ESA with criminal record (228); JSA and ESA with drug or alcohol dependency (182); JSA and ESA who are homeless (68)*

While most claimants in one of the three groups felt that their advisers had given them the right amount of time, the proportions who described the time as 'about right' was often lower than amongst other claimants. Ex-offenders were less likely (60 per cent) than either JSA claimants with no criminal record (68 per cent) or ESA claimants with no criminal record (72 per cent) to feel satisfied in this respect. The same applied to homeless claimants: whereas 53 per cent said that their advisers spent the right amount of time with them, the proportions of non-homeless claimants who felt this way were higher (68 per cent JSA and 72 per cent ESA). Similarly, claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency were less likely to report satisfaction with the amount of time they spent with advisers than ESA claimants who did not have a dependency (62 per cent compared with 72 per cent).

### 4.2.3 Adviser continuity

Two-fifths of claimants who had a criminal record (41 per cent) or a drug or alcohol dependency (41 per cent), and three in ten homeless claimants (31 per cent), said that they met with multiple advisers during their claim.

The proportions seeing multiple advisers were higher for claimants in these three groups than for other claimants. Only a third of JSA claimants without a criminal record, without a drug or alcohol dependency, or who were not homeless met with more than one adviser, and just a fifth of other ESA claimants did the same.

Those who saw more than one adviser were asked how they felt about seeing different advisers. Around half of claimants with a criminal record (53 per cent) said they had no preference about the adviser they saw, although most of the claimants who said this added the proviso that the adviser should know a bit about their circumstances. For claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency, there was a slight preference for seeing the same adviser (51 per cent) rather than different ones (45 per cent), even if the advisers knew about their circumstances. The number of homeless claimants who saw multiple advisers is too small to allow further analysis.

### 4.2.4 Adviser support: understanding personal circumstances

In order to tailor support to the requirements of individual claimants, advisers need to have a good understanding of claimants' personal circumstances. Claimants were asked whether they thought that their advisers understood their circumstances. Their responses are shown in Tables 4.20, 4.21 and 4.22.

Less than three-fifths of JSA claimants with a criminal record (56 per cent) agreed that advisers appreciated their circumstances (Table 4.20). There was no significant difference between the views of ex-offenders and JSA claimants who did not have a criminal record.

Fewer ESA claimants than JSA claimants with a criminal record felt that advisers understood them (43 per cent compared with 56 per cent). ESA claimants with a criminal record were also markedly less likely than ESA claimants without a criminal record to feel advisers understood their circumstances (43 per cent compared with 70 per cent).

**Table 4.20 Agreement that ‘Jobcentre Plus advisers understood your particular circumstances’, by whether had criminal record**

	No criminal record		Has criminal record	
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA %	ESA %
Agree	64	70	56	43
Disagree	29	22	28	36
Neutral/Don't know	8	8	16	21

*Base: JSA with no criminal record (1,025); ESA with no criminal record (655); JSA with criminal record (135); ESA with criminal record (93)*

Table 4.21 shows that almost three-fifths of claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency agreed that ‘Jobcentre Plus advisers understood your particular circumstances’ (59 per cent JSA and 55 per cent ESA with a dependency). JSA claimants with a dependency were as likely to agree as other JSA claimants. However ESA claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency were less likely to feel advisers understood their circumstances than other ESA claimants (55 per cent and 70 per cent, respectively).

**Table 4.21 Agreement that ‘Jobcentre Plus advisers understood your particular circumstances’, by whether had drug or alcohol dependency**

	No drug or alcohol dependency		Has drug or alcohol dependency	
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA %	ESA %
Agree	63	70	59	55
Disagree	29	23	23	32
Neutral/Don't know	8	8	19	13

*Base: JSA with no drug or alcohol dependency (1,051); ESA with no drug or alcohol dependency (648); JSA with drug or alcohol dependency (71); JSA with drug or alcohol dependency (111)*

Relatively few homeless claimants (41 per cent) believed that their circumstances were known and appreciated by advisers (Table 4.22). This group was less likely to acknowledge advisers’ understanding than either ex-offenders or claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency, and they were also less likely to feel advisers understood their circumstances than claimants who were not homeless (63 per cent JSA and 70 per cent ESA). Their views may be linked to the fact that only a small proportion had spoken to their adviser about their housing circumstances.

**Table 4.22 Agreement that ‘Jobcentre Plus advisers understood your particular circumstances’, by whether was homeless**

	Not homeless		Homeless
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA and ESA %
Agree	63	70	41
Disagree	29	22	34
Neutral/Don't know	8	8	25

*Base: JSA who are not homeless (1,061); ESA who are not homeless (672); JSA and ESA who are homeless (68)*

### 4.2.5 Adviser support: job search advice

An important element of the advisers’ role is to assist claimants with their job search. Claimants who were looking for work were asked whether advisers had signposted them to job vacancies and offered them advice on writing a CV or job application, or preparing and carrying out job interviews. Tables 4.23, 4.24 and 4.25 display the responses given by claimants.

Seven in ten claimants with a criminal record who were looking for work (70 per cent) said they were offered suggestions about where to look for job vacancies (Table 4.23). Signposting was less common for this group than for JSA claimants without a criminal record (86 per cent), but more common than for ESA job seekers without a criminal record (62 per cent). Similar proportions of ex-offenders and JSA claimants without a criminal record received advice about CVs, job applications, and job interviews (62 per cent and 65 per cent respectively).

**Table 4.23 Job search advice received, by whether had criminal record**

	No criminal record		Has criminal record
	JSA %	ESA looking for work %	JSA and ESA not looking for work %
Suggestions about where you should look for job vacancies	86	54	70
Advice about how to write a CV or job application, or how to prepare and carry out a job interview	65	39	62

*Base: JSA with no criminal record (1,025); ESA looking for work with no criminal record (103); JSA and ESA looking for work with criminal record (146)*

Table 4.24 shows that over three-fifths of job seekers with a drug or alcohol dependency were signposted to vacancies (65 per cent) or given advice that could help them apply or secure jobs (62 per cent). This group was less likely to be offered suggestions for where to look for job vacancies than JSA claimants without a dependency, but no less likely to be given advice about CVs, applications and job interviews. A similar pattern applied to homeless claimants (Table 4.25).

**Table 4.24 Job search advice received, by whether had drug or alcohol dependency**

	No drug or alcohol dependency		Has drug or alcohol dependency
	JSA %	ESA looking for work %	JSA and ESA looking for work %
Suggestions about where you should look for job vacancies	86	57	65
Advice about how to write a CV or job application, or how to prepare and carry out a job interview	64	41	62

*Base: JSA with no drug or alcohol dependency (1,051); ESA looking for work with no drug or alcohol dependency (101); JSA and ESA looking for work with drug or alcohol dependency (86)*

**Table 4.25 Job search advice received, by whether homeless**

	Not homeless		Homeless
	JSA %	ESA looking for work %	JSA and ESA looking for work %
Suggestions about where you should look for job vacancies	87	55	67
Advice about how to write a CV or job application, or how to prepare and carry out a job interview	65	40	57

*Base: JSA who are not homeless (1,061); ESA looking for work who are not homeless (102); JSA and ESA looking for work who are homeless (30)*

Job seekers in the three groups were asked whether their adviser had suggested any jobs they could apply for. Just under two-thirds of claimants with a criminal record (65 per cent) said they had, similar to the proportion of ESA claimants without a criminal record (65 per cent). Over half of claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (53 per cent) and 19 of the 32 homeless people who were looking for work also said they had received suggestions for particular vacancies. These proportions are well below the proportions of other claimants who were looking for work who received suggestions, and suggests that advisers may be reluctant to offer suggestions for jobs to claimants with particularly challenging circumstances.

Over three-quarters of claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency who received suggestions said that the suggested jobs were appropriate (76 per cent) as did just over two-thirds of claimants with a criminal record (68 per cent), and 14 of the 19 homeless claimants.

## **4.2.6 Adviser support: with regards to the three potential barriers to work**

As well as offering practical advice to help claimants find, apply for, and secure jobs, claimants may need advice or support to help them manage or overcome their specific circumstances in order to move closer to work. Claimants in the three groups were asked whether they had received advice of this kind.

### **Advice or support on how to declare a previous criminal conviction**

Only a quarter of claimants with a criminal record (25 per cent) said they had received advice on how to declare a criminal conviction when speaking to an adviser. Even among claimants who had discussed their criminal conviction with an adviser, the proportion receiving advice was only around one in three (31 per cent). Three-fifths of claimants who received advice on how to declare a conviction said this was helpful.

### **Advice or support on treatment options for a drug or alcohol dependency**

Around three in ten claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (29 per cent) said that they had been offered advice about treatment options for their dependency. In view of the fact that most of the claimants in this category (83 per cent) had discussed their dependency with advisers, this suggests that advisers may be reluctant to broach the issue of treatment options with claimants. A further indication of their reluctance is that advice was offered to only five of the 32 claimants who were not already on a structured treatment programme but had discussed their dependency with their adviser.

Nearly three-fifths of those who received advice took up some kind of treatment option (59 per cent) and nearly all of those who took up the option said that they found it helpful (87 per cent).

### **Advice regarding homelessness**

A quarter of homeless claimants (25 per cent) were offered advice regarding homelessness. This is a surprisingly low proportion, but may be explained by the fact that less than half of homeless claimants (46 per cent) had discussed their homelessness with advisers. Five of the 17 homeless claimants who received advice said they found the advice helpful.

## **4.3 Flexible menu of back-to-work support**

Claimants with a criminal record, drug or alcohol dependency, or who are homeless may need more support than other claimants to help move them closer to work. Aside from any advice they may receive from advisers, further support may come from measures on the flexible menu of support.

The analysis below focuses on the support offered to claimants in the three groups. The number of claimants taking up each type of support is too small to allow robust analysis.

### 4.3.1 Types of support offered

Table 4.26 shows the proportion of claimants with, and without, a criminal record who were offered various types of support.

The most common support offered to ex-offenders in receipt of JSA was signposting to work clubs (50 per cent) or a discussion about work experience (35 per cent). Ex-offenders were as likely to be offered these, along with other support such financial assistance or the opportunity to go on a skills or training course, as JSA claimants who did not have a criminal record.

Ex-offenders in receipt of ESA were most commonly offered some form of health support (24 per cent) or volunteering support (17 per cent). However, the offer of these types of support was less commonly made to ex-offenders than to ESA claimants who did not have a criminal record. Ex-offenders were also less likely to be offered financial support, a discussion about caring responsibilities for adults, or information about local work clubs.

**Table 4.26 Support offered from the flexible menu, by whether had criminal record**

	No criminal record		Has criminal record	
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA %	ESA %
Discussed opportunities to develop some work experience (including volunteering)	41	**	35	**
Offered an opportunity to go on a skills or training course	24	8	25	7
Discussed self-employment support	7	-	7	1
Discussed volunteering support	**	49	**	17
Discussed some form of health support	12	45	12	24
Offered financial support	26	14	24	6
Signposted to local work clubs	53	8	50	4
Discussed support with caring responsibilities for adults	8	12	7	3
Discussed childcare support	4	2	5	-

*Base: JSA with no criminal record (1,025); ESA with no criminal record (655); JSA with criminal record (135); ESA with criminal record (93)*

\*\* For JSA claimants, volunteering is included under 'Discussed opportunities to develop some work experience'; for ESA claimants this is shown under 'Discussed volunteering support'.

Table 4.27 shows the support offered to claimants with, or without, a drug or alcohol dependency.

JSA claimants with a dependency were as likely to be offered items from the flexible menu of support as JSA claimants who did not have a dependency, and more likely to be offered some type of health support, which included treatment options for substance abuse (30 per cent compared with 10 per cent). It is also worth noting that claimants with a dependency were more likely to be offered health support than those with a criminal record, as might be expected for people with their condition.

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There was a discrepancy between the offer of support to ESA claimants with, and without, a dependency: those with a dependency were less likely to be signposted to organisations and websites that offer volunteering (48 per cent compared with 20 per cent); to be signposted to work clubs (nine per cent compared with three per cent); or to be offered one-off expenses to support them with their job search (14 per cent compared with eight per cent). This is despite the fact that the proportion looking for work – and arguably in need of these types of support – was similar within both groups (11 per cent amongst ESA claimants with a dependency, and 16 per cent amongst ESA claimants without a dependency).

**Table 4.27 Support offered from the flexible menu, by whether had drug or alcohol dependency**

	No drug or alcohol dependency		Has drug or alcohol dependency	
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA %	ESA %
Discussed opportunities to develop some work experience (including volunteering)	41	**	35	**
Offered an opportunity to go on a skills or training course	24	9	29	5
Discussed self-employment support	7	-	6	-
Discussed volunteering support	**	48	**	20
Discussed some form of health support	10	42	30	38
Offered financial support	24	14	26	8
Signposted to local work clubs	52	9	42	3
Discussed support with caring responsibilities for adults	7	11	10	8
Discussed childcare support	4	2	6	-

*Base: JSA with no drug or alcohol dependency (1,051); ESA with no drug or alcohol dependency (648); JSA with drug or alcohol dependency (71); ESA with drug or alcohol dependency (111)*

\*\* For JSA claimants, volunteering is included under 'Discussed opportunities to develop some work experience'; for ESA claimants this is shown separately under 'Discussed volunteering support'.

The base sizes for homeless claimants are small, but the findings for this group indicate that it was less common for this group than other claimants to be offered most of the elements from the flexible menu of support (Table 4.28).

**Table 4.28 Support offered from the flexible menu, by whether homeless**

	Not homeless		Homeless
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA and/or ESA %
Discussed opportunities to develop some work experience (including volunteering)	41	**	24 <sup>1</sup>
Offered an opportunity to go on a skills or training course	25	9	12
Discussed self-employment support	7	-	1
Discussed volunteering support	**	49	20 <sup>2</sup>
Discussed some form of health support	12	45	22
Offered financial support	25	13	10
Signposted to local work clubs	53	9	19
Discussed support with caring responsibilities for adults	8	12	6
Discussed childcare support	4	2	-

*Base: JSA who are not homeless (1,061); ESA who are not homeless (672); JSA and ESA who are homeless (68);  
<sup>1</sup> JSA who are homeless (29); <sup>2</sup> ESA who are homeless (39)*

\*\* For JSA claimants, volunteering is included under 'Discussed opportunities to develop some work experience'; for ESA claimants this is shown separately under 'Discussed volunteering support'.

### 4.3.2 Assessment of support on offer

Claimants gave their views on the level of support they were offered and the extent to which the support matched their personal needs and circumstances. They also rated their satisfaction with the service offered by Jobcentre Plus in helping them find employment.

As shown in Table 4.29, the views of claimants with a criminal record were sharply divided, with those on JSA more likely to have a positive perception of the support offered by Jobcentre Plus than those in receipt of ESA.

Ex-offenders on JSA had very similar views to other JSA claimants: over three-fifths felt they were offered the right amount of support and that the advice and support they were offered was tailored to their needs and circumstances, and almost as many were satisfied with the service offered by Jobcentre Plus in helping them find employment. By contrast, less than two-fifths of ESA claimants with a criminal record gave a positive assessment of the support on offer, well below the proportion of ESA claimants without a criminal record who expressed positive views.

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**Table 4.29 Positive assessment of support, by whether had criminal record**

	No criminal record		Has criminal record	
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA %	ESA %
Offered the right amount of support by Jobcentre Plus	63	61	65	39
Advice and support matched personal needs and circumstances	65	63	60	38
Satisfied with the service Jobcentre Plus offers in helping find employment	58**	48**	58	38

*Base: JSA with no criminal record (1,025); ESA with no criminal record (655); JSA with criminal record (135); ESA with criminal record (93)*

\*\* Question only asked in Wave 2 of main survey. Base: JSA with no criminal record (593); ESA with no criminal record (618).

The views of JSA and ESA claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency were more aligned to one another, with no significant differences in the proportions saying the level of support they were offered felt right, that the support was tailored, and that they were satisfied with the service offered by Jobcentre Plus (Table 4.30). Furthermore, there were no differences between the views of JSA claimants with, and without, a dependency. However, ESA claimants with a dependency were slightly less likely (50 per cent) than ESA claimants without a dependency (65 per cent) to feel that the support they were offered matched their personal needs and circumstances.

**Table 4.30 Positive assessment of support, by whether had a drug or alcohol dependency**

	No drug or alcohol dependency		Has drug or alcohol dependency	
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA %	ESA %
Offered the right amount of support by Jobcentre Plus	63	60	64	50
Advice and support matched personal needs and circumstances	65	62	64	50
Satisfied with the service Jobcentre Plus offers in helping find employment	57**	48**	59	49

*Base: JSA with no drug or alcohol dependency (1,051); ESA with no drug or alcohol dependency (648); JSA with drug or alcohol dependency (71); ESA with drug or alcohol dependency (111)*

\*\* Question only asked in Wave 2 of main survey. Base: JSA with no drug or alcohol dependency (613); ESA with no drug or alcohol dependency (611)

Homeless claimants gave a less positive assessment of the level and tailoring of support than either JSA claimants or ESA claimants who were not homeless (Table 4.31). However, their satisfaction with the service offered by Jobcentre Plus in helping them find employment was similar to that of claimants who were not homeless.

**Table 4.31 Positive assessment of support, by whether homeless**

	Not homeless		Homeless
	JSA %	ESA %	JSA and ESA %
Offered the right amount of support by Jobcentre Plus	63	61	47
Advice and support matched personal needs and circumstances	64	63	52
Satisfied with the service Jobcentre Plus offers in helping find employment	57**	48**	49

*Base: JSA who are not homeless (1,061); ESA who are not homeless (672); JSA and ESA who are homeless (68)*

\*\* Question only asked in Wave 2 of main survey. Base: JSA who are not homeless (622); ESA who are not homeless (636).

## 4.4 Summary

This chapter focused on three potential barriers to moving into work and explored the views and experiences of the Offer amongst claimants who indicated that they were in one or more of the following groups: claimants with a criminal record; claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency; and homeless claimants.

### 4.4.1 Claimant attitudes

Claimants in the three groups expressed attitudes indicating that they want to work. Their motivation was as high as that of claimants who were not in one of these three groups; in fact, ESA claimants with a criminal record were even more likely than ESA claimants without a criminal record to say they would be happier in work. Despite the presence of initial motivation there were also high levels of anxiety about the prospect of being in paid work, particularly amongst ESA claimants. This was true of all ESA claimants but anxiety was especially common amongst ESA claimants with a criminal record or a drug or alcohol dependency.

Ex-offenders and homeless claimants shared similar reservations about succeeding in their job search and finding a suitable job as JSA claimants who did not have a criminal record or were not homeless. Claimants with a criminal record had particular concerns around the currency of their skills and whether employers would want to offer them interviews. Meanwhile, claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency were less confident than JSA claimants without a dependency about most elements of their job search.

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In terms of barriers to finding work, issues relating to past convictions were mentioned by a quarter of ex-offenders; issues to do with a drug or alcohol dependency were mentioned by a fifth of those with a dependency; and only one homeless claimant cited housing and homelessness as an issue preventing them from finding work. Instead, the biggest concern for all three groups was around the availability of jobs.

Substantial minorities of claimants in all three groups felt that the advice and support they received from Jobcentre Plus had increased their confidence in finding a job they could do and their motivation to find work, and improved their perceived job prospects. Positive views were as common amongst claimants with a criminal record as those without; the same was true of claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency and those without.

### **4.4.2 Adviser support**

Advisers discussed a range of topics with claimants in the three groups, including issues to do with the specific challenges they were facing. The majority of ex-offenders reported receiving advice about their criminal record; similarly, the majority of claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency received advice about their dependency; however, relatively few homeless claimants discussed housing and homelessness. There was a notable amount of cross-over between these topics, owing to the fact that many claimants were in more than one group.

Discussions on specific job search-related issues were also very common. JSA claimants in the three groups were as likely to cover these topics as other JSA claimants, but the range of topics covered by advisers in discussions with ESA claimants with a criminal record or a dependency were more limited than in discussions with other ESA claimants.

Three-fifths of claimants with a criminal record or with a drug or alcohol dependency, and a half of homeless claimants felt that they maintained the 'right' amount of contact with advisers. Although these proportions indicate that most were satisfied with their level of contact, it is worth noting that satisfaction was not as high as amongst other claimants.

The majority of claimants with a criminal record or a dependency felt that advisers understood their particular circumstances. There was variation between the views of JSA and ESA claimants, with the latter less likely to feel their circumstances were understood. Homeless claimants were less likely than claimants in the other two groups to indicate that advisers appreciated their circumstances; this may be linked to the fact that few had actually discussed their housing circumstances with advisers.

Certain types of job-specific advice were less commonly offered to claimants in the three groups than other claimants. These included signposting to places where they might find jobs or suggestions for specific vacancies. A quarter of claimants with a criminal record also received advice about their previous conviction, while a quarter of homeless claimants received advice about their housing circumstances. Three in ten claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency received advice about their dependency, with half going on to take up a treatment option.

### 4.4.3 Flexible menu of back-to-work support

The flexible menu of support options present claimants with further sources of support. JSA claimants in the three groups were offered a similar range of options, and in similar numbers, as other JSA claimants. By contrast, ESA claimants who had a criminal record or a drug or alcohol dependency were less likely than other ESA claimants to receive most types of support.

When it came to assessing the support on offer by Jobcentre Plus, JSA claimants with a criminal record or dependency gave similar ratings of the support they were offered as other JSA claimants. Around three in five in each group gave a positive assessment of the amount of support they were offered; the tailoring of the support to their personal needs and circumstances; and their satisfaction with the service offered by Jobcentre Plus in helping claimants find employment.

A positive assessment was less common amongst ESA claimants, and especially so amongst ESA claimants who had a criminal record, while ESA claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency were less likely than those without a dependency to perceive the support they were offered as personalised. The less positive views held by ESA claimants in the three groups may tie in with several of the findings stated above including: the high levels of anxiety amongst these claimants about the prospect of being in paid work; the limited range of topics discussed by such claimants in their discussions with advisers; the tendency of ESA claimants in the three groups to view advisers as less understanding; and the differences in terms of what they were offered from the flexible menu of support compared to other ESA claimants (and of JSA and ESA claimants who were in each of the three groups).

## 5 A focus on IS claimants: lone parents whose youngest child is aged 3 or 4

Lone parents with a youngest child aged below five are eligible to claim Income Support (IS). When their youngest child reaches the age of five, they lose their eligibility for IS, and instead may claim Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) if they are capable of work or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) if their capability for work is limited by a disability or health condition.<sup>30</sup> The main survey includes lone parents with a youngest child aged five or over claiming JSA and ESA, but not those with younger children.<sup>31</sup>

Lone parents on IS have voluntary access to the Jobcentre Plus Offer.<sup>32</sup> They are also subject to mandatory interventions, including attendance of Work Focused Interviews (WFI), the frequency of which depends on the age of their youngest child.<sup>33</sup> In the year before lone parents lose eligibility to IS, they attend quarterly WFIs, with the intention that greater preparation for an eventual move into work, if they move onto JSA, may be needed.

This chapter considers whether lone parents are taking up the support available through the Offer, particularly as their child approaches the age when they lose entitlement to IS (i.e. parents with a youngest child aged three or four). It explores the extent to which these claimants volunteer for Jobcentre Plus Offer activities, their perceptions of this support and how they perceive it has influenced them in looking for work. Where appropriate, findings for this group of lone parents are compared with other benefit claimants: lone parents claiming JSA, as well as claimants of JSA and ESA as a whole, to provide context.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> There are groups of lone parents who are exempt from Lone Parent Obligations (LPO): those in receipt of Carer's Allowance; foster carers; parents whose child is eligible for the middle or higher rate of Disability Living Allowance. There are also cases where lone parents can be exempt from LPO for a transitional period: those on full-time study or who are on an approved full-time training course.

<sup>31</sup> These comprise lone parents who have transferred from IS, as well as those making a new benefit claim.

<sup>32</sup> Through European Social Fund (ESF) funding, IS claimants in England are also able to volunteer for the Work Programme.

<sup>33</sup> Lone parents with a youngest child aged under one are not subject to any conditionality but will be able to volunteer for Jobcentre Plus support if they choose. Lone parents with a youngest child aged between one and three will be required to attend regular WFIs every six months; Lone parents with a youngest child aged four are required to attend WFIs every three months. As well as attending regular WFIs, lone parents on IS are encouraged by advisers to volunteer for additional flexible interventions. Take-up enables advisers to assess their needs and consider other appropriate activities and support to move them closer to the labour market.

<sup>34</sup> Where comparisons are made, findings for other groups are taken from the main Wave 1 survey, which asked similar questions to those covered in this chapter.

## 5.1 Claimant attitudes

This section explores lone parents' commitment to work, and the perceived constraints to finding employment amongst those looking for work.

### 5.1.1 Looking for work

Around a third of lone parents on IS whose youngest child was aged between three and four (35 per cent) were looking for work at the time of the interview. Looking for work was strongly associated with the length of time since lone parents had last worked. More than half (59 per cent) of respondents who had worked in the previous 12 months were looking for work, compared with 26 per cent of those who had not worked for more than a year.

The length of time since lone parents had last worked varied considerably (see Table C.28 in Appendix C) and was, in turn, linked to the age of their child. Around half (47 per cent) said that they left their last job because they were pregnant or to look after children. This group of lone parents had typically spent longer away from work than JSA claimants, including lone parents on JSA.

Lone parents who were not looking for work were asked why they were not looking. Family commitments were given as the main reason: 47 per cent said that their child(ren) were too young to be left in childcare, while 24 per cent mentioned family or caring commitments. One in four (24 per cent) said a lack of suitable or affordable childcare stopped them from looking for work.

Claimants who were not looking for work gave a range of answers regarding when they thought they might start looking for work: 36 per cent said they would start looking in the next few months, but 29 per cent said it would be a year or two, and 29 per cent said it would be 'some time in the future'. When asked what single thing would need to change before they started to look for work, the most common answer (given by 28 per cent) related to childcare (e.g. more available/cheaper childcare), while 22 per cent said that they were waiting for their youngest child to start school. Other answers related to improving health (10 per cent) and gaining new qualifications (nine per cent).

On the whole there appears to be a division between those who have worked recently (since their youngest child was born) and who were looking for work again, and others who have not worked since their youngest child was born, and who were waiting for them to get older before looking for work. The findings suggest that lone parents' expectations for work are often related to when their children will start school and their ability to find appropriate childcare.

### 5.1.2 Motivation to find work

All lone parents on IS whose youngest child was aged between three and four were asked a series of statements about their attitudes towards being in work and their job search prospects.

Most claimants expressed positive attitudes about their motivation to work. Four in five (82 per cent) agreed that having almost any type of paid work is better than not working, and 83 per cent agreed that they would be a happier person if they were in paid work. As many as 88 per cent agreed that they were willing to change career or re-train to find a job they can do.

### 5.1.3 Anxiety about work

While it is encouraging to note that most lone parents want to work, one potential demotivating factor for job seekers can be a sense of anxiety about the prospect of being in work. All lone parents on IS, whose youngest child was aged between three and four and who had not yet found a job, were asked whether they agreed with the statement: *'the thought of being in paid work makes me nervous'*.

Around one in five (21 per cent) said that the thought of being in paid work made them nervous. This was higher among respondents with a long-term health problem or disability (35 per cent), and also those that had not worked for more than five years/at all (33 per cent).

As Table 5.1 shows, the majority of IS claimants of this type (68 per cent) agreed that they would be happier in work and were not nervous about the prospect, while 15 per cent said they would be happier in work but remain nervous.

**Table 5.1 Attitudes towards employment**

	%
Happier in work and not nervous	68
Happier in work but nervous	15
Not happier in work but not nervous	13
Not happier in work and nervous	4
<i>Base: All lone parents on IS</i>	<i>341</i>

These findings are similar to those for lone parents on JSA, and are closer to JSA claimants overall than to ESA claimants. This indicates that although only a minority of these lone parents are currently looking for work, they have positive attitudes towards working.

### 5.1.4 Confidence in job search

Lone parents on IS whose youngest child was aged between three and four and who were currently looking for work were asked how confident they were in different elements of their job search activities – the results are shown in Table 5.2.

**Table 5.2 Confidence in job search**

	Very confident %	Fairly confident %	Not confident %
Your skills are sufficiently up-to-date for the current job market	29	41	27
Employers will want to offer you an interview	22	54	23
You can do well in interviews	30	56	14
You can cope with rejections and knock-backs	44	47	8
You can learn new skills or retrain	66	27	7
<i>Base: All lone parents on IS currently looking for work</i>		<i>110</i>	

IS claimants were confident about their ability to learn new skills or retrain (66 per cent were very confident) and to cope with rejections and knock-backs (44 per cent). They were also at least fairly confident in their ability to do well in interviews. The majority were very or fairly confident that their skills were sufficiently up-to-date for the current job market and that employers would want to offer them an interview, although around a quarter (27 per cent and 23 per cent respectively) were not confident about these two items. Overall, these findings suggest that lone parents on IS feel confident in their own ability, but are slightly less confident about their position in the labour market.

Once again, these findings are similar to those observed for lone parents on JSA.

### 5.1.5 Perceived barriers to employment

All IS claimants who were lone parents of a three to four-year-old and were looking for work were asked what they thought was preventing them from finding a job. This question was answered spontaneously by respondents and the results are shown in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3 Barriers to finding work**

	%
Family or caring commitments	45
Lack of suitable/affordable childcare	16
Lack of jobs in local area	13
Lack of jobs for people with caring responsibilities	10
Lack of vacancies/too much competition for jobs interested in	9
Not having right skills for jobs interested in	7
Transport/travel difficulties	4
Lack of work experience	4
Health issues/disability limit kind of work I can do	3
Time involved in getting to workplace/interviews	1
Language difficulties	1
Other	16
<i>Base: All lone parents on IS currently looking for work</i>	<i>110</i>

The main barrier that lone parents felt was preventing them from finding work was family or caring commitments (45 per cent); a further 16 per cent said that the lack of suitable or affordable childcare was a barrier. The other main barrier was in relation to job vacancies: 13 per cent said that lack of jobs in the area was a barrier, and nine per cent said there was too much competition for the jobs they were interested in; ten per cent specifically mentioned the lack of jobs for people with caring responsibilities.

### 5.1.6 Perceptions of Jobcentre Plus in helping claimants' confidence and motivation

All lone parents on IS were asked whether they felt that the advice and support they had received from Jobcentre Plus had helped to increase their confidence about finding a job they can do, their motivation to find work, and their chances of finding employment. As shown in Table 5.4, lone parents were equally divided as to whether Jobcentre Plus support had helped them or not, and in each case around one in five said that the question did not apply to them (generally those that had not had any recent meetings).

**Table 5.4 Perceived soft outcomes**

<i>Do you believe the advice and support you have received from Jobcentre Plus has helped ...?</i>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
To build up your confidence about finding a job that you could do	40	40	1	18
To increase your motivation to find work	44	35	1	21
To increase your chances of finding suitable work	34	42	3	21

*Base: All lone parents claiming IS*

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There were no differences in any of the measures in terms of whether lone parents were looking for work or not. However, there were other variations for the first two measures (building up confidence about finding a job and increasing motivation to find work). In both cases, respondents were more likely to say the support had helped them if they had spent longer out of the labour market. For example, 51 per cent of those that had not worked for five or more years (or at all) said that the support had increased their motivation to find work, compared with 36 per cent of those who had worked in the previous 12 months. Related to this, lone parents who were nervous about the prospect of work (generally those who had been out of work for longer) were also more likely to say the support had helped them.

The other main variation was in relation to adviser meetings. Lone parents who had attended frequent meetings were more likely to say the support had helped them; for example, 58 per cent of those that attended meetings at least every three months said that the advice had helped them build up confidence about finding work, compared with 39 per cent of those that had attended meetings less frequently.

There was less variation in relation to increasing chances of finding suitable work. Lone parents who had seen an adviser in the previous 12 months were more likely to say they had been helped in this way (39 per cent compared with 21 per cent who had not seen an adviser), but otherwise the findings were consistent by respondent characteristics.

Overall, these findings were similar to those seen for lone parents on JSA (although lone parents on JSA were less likely to give a 'not applicable' answer). The main difference was that lone parents on JSA were more likely to say that the advice and support they had received had increased their chances of finding suitable work (51 per cent).

## 5.2 Adviser support

### 5.2.1 Level of contact with advisers

Just three-quarters of lone parents on IS whose youngest child was aged between three and four (76 per cent) said that they had attended any meetings with a Jobcentre Plus adviser in the previous 12 months. This is surprising, given that lone parents would normally be expected to attend six-monthly or quarterly WFIs. Sub-group analysis gives no indication as to the reasons why lone parents had not attended any meetings; for example, this attendance rate is similar for those looking for work and not looking for work.

### 5.2.2 Discussions with advisers

This section examines the issues that lone parents claiming IS had discussed with Jobcentre Plus advisers since the start of their claim. These discussions are likely to have taken place at WFIs, which take place every six months for lone parents with a youngest child aged under four, and every three months if the youngest child is aged four.

The content of the WFI is largely shaped by the claimant's intentions regarding job attainment in the medium and short term. The analysis below therefore separates out the results for lone parents who said they were looking for work and those who were not.

Around seven in ten lone parents who were looking for work discussed their previous jobs and work experience with an adviser (72 per cent), and similar proportions discussed their skills and qualifications (73 per cent) and the availability of the type of work they were looking for (75 per cent). A slightly lower proportion discussed how far they were willing to travel to work (63 per cent). In addition, the majority of lone parents who were looking for work discussed their caring responsibilities (73 per cent) and the possibility of changing career or retraining (57 per cent).

Most lone parents who were not looking for work discussed the possibility of working in the future (71 per cent), as well as their previous jobs and work experience (58 per cent) and their skills and qualifications (57 per cent). A similar proportion (57 per cent) discussed their caring responsibilities (Table 5.5).

**Table 5.5 Topics discussed with advisers**

	Looking for work %	Not looking for work %
Type of work looking for and its availability	75	n/a
Caring responsibilities	73	57
Skills and qualifications	73	57
Previous jobs and work experience	72	58
How far willing to travel for work	63	n/a
Changing career or retraining to do something else	57	47
Possibility of working in the future	n/a	71
Steps or support needed to prepare for work	n/a	60

*Base: All lone parents on IS and looking for work (109); not looking for work (199)*

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Overall, this analysis indicates that most WFIs appear to cover a range of important issues. However, given the importance of caring commitments and childcare (as seen above in relation to barriers to work), it is possibly surprising that discussion of caring responsibilities was limited to 73 per cent of those looking for work and 57 per cent of those not looking for work; also that only 71 per cent of those not looking for work discussed the possibility of working in the future, given the strong motivation to working seen in the previous section. However, to some extent these figures reflect the fact that not all respondents had seen an adviser in the previous 12 months: for example, if looking only at respondents who had seen an adviser in the previous 12 months, 74 per cent discussed caring arrangements (82 per cent of those looking for work and 68 per cent of those not looking for work), while 86 per cent of those not looking for work discussed the possibility of working in the future.<sup>35</sup>

A small proportion of lone parents also said that they had discussed the following issues with an adviser: issues relating to housing or homelessness (nine per cent); issues relating to a criminal conviction (six per cent), to debt (five per cent) and to drug or alcohol dependency (three per cent).

When asked about the things they agreed as part of their action plan, around two in five lone parents said that these things would genuinely increase their chances of finding work (42 per cent), took account of their personal circumstances (48 per cent) and were achievable (46 per cent). However, many respondents said that these issues did not apply to them, presumably because they did not recall agreeing an action plan or (as noted above) because they had not attended any recent meetings with an adviser (Table 5.6). Findings were very similar between lone parents on IS looking for work and those who were not looking for work.

**Table 5.6 Perceptions of action plan**

<i>Whether felt that all things agreed ...?</i>	<b>Would genuinely increase chances of finding work (in future)</b>	<b>Took account of your personal circumstances</b>	<b>Were achievable</b>
	%	%	%
Yes	42	48	46
Some of them	2	*	3
No	12	8	6
Not applicable	41	41	41
Don't know	3	4	4
<i>Base: All lone parents on IS</i>		341	

The majority of lone parents on IS (73 per cent) said they were clear on how often they would need to meet with a Personal Adviser.

### 5.2.3 Claimant views on level of contact with advisers

Most lone parents claiming IS felt that they had spent about the right amount of time with staff or advisers at Jobcentre Plus (74 per cent), although one in six (16 per cent) said they had not spent enough time and two per cent felt they had spent too much time.

<sup>35</sup> It should be noted that the base size for IS claimants who had seen an adviser in the past 12 months and were looking for work was 85.

Table 5.7 shows how these findings differ for those looking for work and not looking for work. Views were less positive among lone parents who were looking for work, with fewer saying the amount of time was about right (65 per cent compared with 82 per cent of those not looking for work), and more saying they did not spend enough time with advisers (25 per cent compared with 11 per cent). There were no differences according to the actual frequency of meetings (e.g. quarterly, rather than more or less often).

**Table 5.7 Views on amount of time spent with advisers**

	Looking for work	Not looking for work
	%	%
Too much time	4	1
About right	65	82
Not enough time	25	11
Don't know	6	7

*Base: All lone parents on IS and looking for work (109); not looking for work (199)*

The overall figures for lone parents on IS are similar to those seen for other groups in the survey, including lone parents on JSA. However, lone parents on JSA were more likely to say that they spent too much time with advisers (13 per cent) than this group of lone parents on IS (two per cent).

### 5.2.4 Adviser continuity

Lone parents on IS were asked whether they had always dealt with the same adviser when they had meetings at Jobcentre Plus. Some respondents did not answer (if they had only met with an adviser once or could not remember who they saw). Of those giving an answer, 56 per cent said they always dealt with the same adviser.

If lone parents had not always seen the same adviser, they were asked how they felt about it. Around one in three said they would have preferred to see the same adviser (34 per cent), although other respondents did not have any preference on who they saw (23 per cent), and 36 per cent said that they did not mind as long as they knew a bit about their circumstances.

### 5.2.5 Adviser support: understanding personal circumstances

As shown in Table 5.8, the majority of lone parents on IS agreed that Jobcentre Plus advisers understood their particular circumstances (77 per cent) and that they were offered the right amount of support by Jobcentre Plus (74 per cent). However, respondents who were looking for work were again less positive than those not looking for work. They were less likely to agree that advisers understood their particular circumstances (70 per cent compared with 81 per cent of those not looking for work) and that they were offered the right amount of support (64 per cent compared with 83 per cent).

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**Table 5.8 Attitudes to adviser support**

	Agree %	Disagree %
Jobcentre Plus advisers understood your particular circumstances	77	11
You were offered the right amount of support by Jobcentre Plus	74	16
<i>Base: All lone parents on IS</i>		341

Lone parents who saw the same adviser all the time were more positive than those who saw different advisers, with 90 per cent agreeing that advisers understood their particular circumstances (compared with 70 per cent of those seeing different advisers) and 88 per cent agreeing that they were offered the right amount of support (compared with 66 per cent).

These findings indicate that adviser support may currently be better suited to lone parents who are more distant from the labour market, rather than those looking for work, and that views tend to be more positive when lone parents see the same adviser.

Overall, the findings for this group of lone parents were similar to those for other groups of claimants included in the main survey (JSA and ESA claimants). However, these findings were more positive than for lone parents on JSA, who were less likely to think advisers understood their particular circumstances (60 per cent agreed) or that they were offered the right amount of support (59 per cent).

### 5.2.6 Adviser support: job search advice

Lone parents who were looking for work were asked whether they had been offered various types of advice or support regarding their job search. More than half (56 per cent) were offered advice about looking for work online, while a third or more were offered the other types of support shown in Table 5.9.

**Table 5.10 Discussion of job search activities**

	%
Offered:	
Advice about how to write a CV or job application, or how to prepare and carry out a job interview	32
Suggestions about where you should look for job vacancies	40
Information about the local jobs market	33
Advice about looking for work online, particularly through the DirectGov website	56
<i>Base: All lone parents on IS currently looking for work</i>	110

In addition, 45 per cent of those looking for work said that the adviser tried to identify types of jobs that might be suitable for them. Among lone parents on IS who were given advice about potentially suitable jobs, 63 per cent said that the jobs that were suggested were suitable for them, while 12 per cent said that some of the jobs were suitable.

Around one in four lone parents who were looking for work (23 per cent) said that they had been given information by an adviser about work clubs. Only one of the 25 respondents given this information said that they had actually been along to a work club.

## **5.3 Flexible menu of back-to-work support**

This section examines the take-up of support options by lone parents on IS and attitudes to this support. The level of take-up of all of the various types of support was lower among this group of lone parents than among other groups in the survey, including lone parents on JSA. This is to be expected, given the less intensive level of advice and support provided on IS compared with JSA, and the voluntary nature of participation for lone parents on IS.

### **5.3.1 Work experience**

Three per cent of lone parents said that they had been offered an opportunity to develop some work experience by a Jobcentre Plus adviser. This was higher among lone parents who had not worked for more than five years or at all (six per cent) than those who had worked more recently (two per cent).

### **5.3.2 Skills and training**

Nine per cent of lone parents said that they had received a skills assessment or been offered some sort of training by an adviser; specifically, two per cent had received both types of support, while a further one per cent had received a skills assessment, and six per cent some sort of training. Base sizes are too small to provide further analysis on the type of training or whether respondents attended.

### **5.3.3 Self-employment support**

Just one per cent of lone parents said that they had been offered help with setting up their own business by an adviser. This was higher among those who were looking for work (three per cent) and those who had worked in the previous 12 months (four per cent).

### **5.3.4 Volunteering**

Around one in six lone parents (15 per cent) said that they had been advised about volunteering by an adviser. Among those that had been given this advice (50 respondents), the majority said that the adviser had told them that they could look for voluntary positions at local organisations that had agreed to support unemployed people (36 respondents) and at a local volunteer centre (29 respondents), while 23 respondents said they were told they could look for voluntary positions on-line.

Of those who were advised about volunteering, three people said they had taken up a volunteering opportunity.

### **5.3.5 Childcare**

Around a quarter of lone parents (27 per cent) said that they had been offered information or help with childcare by an adviser at Jobcentre Plus. This was higher among lone parents who were looking for work (36 per cent compared with 24 per cent of those not looking for work).

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The overall proportion who were offered information or help on childcare was similar to that seen among lone parents on JSA (25 per cent).

The types of support offered are shown in Table 5.10.

**Table 5.11** Types of childcare support offered

	%
Advice and support with childcare through tax credits when you find work	77
Information about how working hours can fit around caring commitments	67
Information about childcare costs for attending interviews or Jobcentre Plus activities	52
None of these	16
Don't know	1
<i>Base: All lone parents on IS who were offered information or help with childcare</i>	92

In almost every case, lone parents who were offered information or help with childcare said that they found the support helpful. Specifically, 97 per cent of those who received advice and support with childcare through tax credits found it helpful, while 91 per cent said the information they received about how working hours can fit around caring commitments was helpful.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, 43 of the 47 claimants who were offered information on childcare costs for attending interviews or Jobcentre Plus activities felt that this had been helpful.

### 5.3.6 Financial support

Eleven per cent of lone parents said that they had been offered financial help by their adviser for one-off expenses, and a further four per cent were not offered this type of financial help but asked their adviser for it. The proportion that was offered financial help was similar to that seen among other groups in the survey (JSA and ESA claimants).

Of those who were offered this type of help, or who asked for it, a quarter (25 per cent) said that they received financial help. Because of the small base size (n=53), it is not possible to examine what the financial help was for or why some respondents did not receive it.

### 5.3.7 Work Programme

One per cent of lone parents said that they had been on the Work Programme since the start of their IS claim (three respondents), and a further four per cent said that they had discussed the Work Programme with an adviser (13 respondents). It is not possible to provide further details on Work Programme discussions or participation because of the small number of respondents concerned.

### 5.3.8 Barriers to take up of support options

One in seven lone parents on IS (14 per cent) had not taken up any of the support covered in this section. The 46 claimants who had not taken up support were asked the reasons for this. Twelve said that they were not offered any support while a further 11 said that they were already taking, or were planning to take, steps to find work independently.

<sup>36</sup> The base sizes for those who received advice and support about childcare through tax credits was 71; for how working hours can fit around childcare was 61.

### 5.3.9 Assessment of support on offer

Claimants gave their views on the extent to which the support they were offered was tailored to their requirements. They were asked whether the advice and support they were offered matched their personal needs and circumstances, and whether they felt pressure to take part in unsuitable activities (Table 5.11).

**Table 5.12 Tailoring of support**

	Agree %	Disagree %
The advice and support you were offered matched your personal needs and circumstances	75	14
You felt under pressure to take part in activities that were not suited to your needs and circumstances	10	70
<i>Base: All lone parents claiming IS</i>	<i>341</i>	

The majority of lone parents on IS agreed that the advice and support they were offered matched their personal needs and circumstances (75 per cent), while 14 per cent disagreed. Lone parents who were looking for work were less likely to agree with this than those who were not looking for work (68 per cent compared with 82 per cent), and views were also more positive when respondents saw the same adviser all the time (89 per cent compared with 68 per cent of those who saw different advisers). These patterns are the same as those seen above in relation to adviser support.

Very few lone parents agreed that they felt under pressure to take part in activities that were not suited to their needs and circumstances (10 per cent)

These findings were more positive than among lone parents on JSA, 26 per cent of whom disagreed that the advice and support they received matched their needs and circumstances, and 27 per cent of whom agreed that they felt under pressure to take part in unsuitable activities.

When asked if there was any additional support they could receive from Jobcentre Plus that they would find helpful, there were few suggestions. Six per cent said that support in relation to childcare would be helpful, while two per cent said that each of the following would be helpful: information or availability of courses or training, help to find work, and more information or explanation about eligibility and benefit rules.

Claimants were also given the chance to rate their satisfaction with the service offered by Jobcentre Plus in helping them find employment. Most lone parents on IS said they were satisfied with the service (60 per cent), although 12 per cent were dissatisfied. As shown in Table 5.12, views were less positive among those looking for work, who were less likely to be very satisfied (25 per cent compared with 34 per cent) and more likely to be very dissatisfied (ten per cent compared with three per cent), compared with those who were not looking for work.

**Table 5.13 Satisfaction with service that Jobcentre Plus offers in helping find employment**

	Looking for work	Not looking for work
	%	%
Very satisfied	25	34
Fairly satisfied	30	30
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	24	20
Fairly dissatisfied	7	5
Very dissatisfied	10	3
Don't know	5	9

*Base: All lone parents claiming IS and looking for work (109); not looking for work (199)*

Views were more positive among those who had seen an adviser frequently. Among those who had seen an adviser at least every three months, 44 per cent were very satisfied, compared with 26 per cent of those who had seen an adviser less often.<sup>37</sup> In addition, lone parents on IS who had seen the same adviser all of the time were more likely to be very satisfied (39 per cent compared with 21 per cent of those who had seen different advisers).

There was also a difference among lone parents who had a longstanding illness or disability, 16 per cent of whom were very satisfied with the service offered, compared with 33 per cent of lone parents without a longstanding illness or disability.

Overall, these findings suggest that lone parents were generally happy with the service they received, but that views were less positive among those with more specific needs (those looking for work and those with a longstanding illness or disability). The findings also suggest that more frequent contact and adviser continuity help to produce more positive views.

## 5.4 Summary

This chapter focused on the experiences and views of the Jobcentre Plus Offer given by lone parents claiming IS whose youngest child was aged between three and four. On most characteristics, this group is similar to other lone parents who are claiming JSA.

### 5.4.1 Claimant attitudes

Lone parents on IS with a youngest child aged three or four expressed a strong commitment towards work, although only around one in three were currently looking for work. The findings also showed that these lone parents have distinctive constraints to working, notably in relation to caring commitments and childcare, but also other barriers such as low qualifications and lack of recent work experience.

<sup>37</sup> There were 63 respondents who had seen their adviser more frequently than every three months.

## 5.4.2 Adviser support

Only three-quarters of respondents had attended meetings with an adviser in the previous 12 months. Where respondents had attended meetings, they discussed a range of topics, including work options and caring responsibilities. There was also some discussion of job search activities: over half said they received advice about looking for work online.

While the majority (74 per cent) said that the amount of time spent with advisers overall was about right, one in six said that they did not spend enough time with advisers. Views regarding the amount of time spent with advisers were less positive among lone parents who were looking for work, who were more likely than those who were not looking for work to say they did not spend enough time with advisers.

Three-quarters agreed that Jobcentre Plus advisers understood their particular circumstances and that they were offered the right amount of support by Jobcentre Plus. However, respondents who were looking for work were again less positive than those not looking for work.

## 5.4.3 Flexible menu of back-to-work support

One in four lone parents were offered information or help with childcare, while around one in six were advised about volunteering. Otherwise, very few lone parents were offered support options (such as skills assessment, training or work experience).

Overall, most lone parents were satisfied with the support they received, and the majority felt that the support was appropriate to their needs and circumstances. On a number of items, lone parents who were looking for work were less positive towards the support they were receiving; for example, they were less likely than those not looking for work to say that the support they were offered matched their personal needs and circumstances or that they were satisfied with the service that Jobcentre Plus offers in helping find employment. This suggests that current support may be more tailored to preparing lone parents for an eventual move into work (when they move onto JSA as a result of LPO) rather than identifying and actively supporting those who want to move into work earlier.

The other consistent pattern was that lone parents who had more frequent adviser meetings, and those who saw the same adviser all the time, were more positive towards the support they received than other lone parents.

Comparisons with lone parents receiving JSA indicate that those on IS tended to be more positive about the support they were receiving, but acknowledged that it was less likely to increase their chances of finding suitable work.

## 6 Conditionality and sanctions

This chapter examines the extent to which claimants recalled being told about the conditions attached to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), and specifically whether they were told that their benefit might be stopped or reduced if they did not agree to certain conditions. It also looks at the perceived effect of this information: did claimants change their behaviour as a result of being told about benefit conditions?

The second half of the chapter explores whether claimants experienced their benefit being stopped or reduced, and if so why this happened. It also looks at whether these claimants were told about or applied for hardship payments.

Findings are analysed for both JSA and ESA claimants, as well as by lone parents on Income Support (IS) (where appropriate).

### 6.1 Conditionality

The initial interview between claimant and adviser presents an opportunity to inform claimants of the conditions associated with receipt of their benefit. For JSA claimants this includes the need to be available for and actively seeking work, having a signed and up-to-date Jobseekers' Agreement (JSAg), as well as attending regular Jobsearch Review meetings and participating in other activities, as required. For ESA claimants in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG), this includes attending Work Focused Interviews (WFIs), as well as undertaking work-related activity, as required.

Advisers are expected to give an explanation of the conditions that might lead to claimants having their benefit stopped or reduced. This section explores how well these issues were explained during the initial interviews between advisers and claimants, and claimants' understanding of the conditions that may lead to the reduction or withdrawal of their benefit payments.

#### 6.1.1 Explanation of conditionality

All JSA claimants ought to receive an explanation from an adviser of what they need to do in order to keep claiming JSA, as well as the requirement to attend regular Jobsearch Review meetings. In reality, nine per cent said they were not given an adequate explanation of the conditions associated with JSA. Around one in eight JSA claimants (13 per cent) and one in three ESA claimants (31 per cent) said they were never told by an adviser that their benefit would be affected if they did not agree to certain conditions.

#### Analysis of JSA claimants

More than half of JSA claimants (57 per cent) felt that the conditions associated with receipt of their benefit were explained 'very well'. Where the New Jobseeker's Interview (NJI) had been split into two separate meetings, claimants were slightly more likely to say that conditions were explained very well (62 per cent compared to 55 per cent). However, they were no more likely to say they had been told about the repercussions of failing to agree to the conditions.

Whilst nine per cent of all JSA claimants reported not having been given an adequate explanation of JSA conditionality, around one in six JSA claimants with a criminal record (16 per cent), a similar proportion of JSA claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (16 per cent), and five of the 29 homeless JSA claimants said the same. The proportion of claimants in these groups who were told that their benefits might be stopped or reduced if they failed to agree to certain conditions was also lower than amongst the rest of the JSA population: only one in 20 ex-offenders (five per cent) and claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (six per cent) and four out of 29 homeless JSA claimants said that they were told this.

### Analysis of ESA claimants

Compared with JSA claimants, substantially fewer ESA claimants reported being told that their benefit could be stopped or reduced if they did not agree to certain conditions (82 per cent compared with 62 per cent). The proportion of ESA claimants with a criminal record who were given this information was even lower (52 per cent).

### Analysis of lone parents on IS

Just over half (55 per cent) of lone parents on IS with a youngest child aged three or four said they were told that their benefit could be stopped or reduced if they did not agree to certain conditions.

## 6.1.2 Understanding of conditionality

Respondents were asked what conditions may lead to their benefit being stopped or reduced. Their answers represent their understanding of conditionality.

When asked to name the conditions that might lead to the reduction or withdrawal of benefit, one in ten JSA claimants (10 per cent) were unable to answer, but this rose to almost half of ESA claimants (45 per cent), indicating a relatively low level of awareness surrounding the conditions associated with ESA. The conditions cited by claimants on JSA and ESA are shown in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1 Conditions that may lead to benefit being stopped or reduced**

	JSA %	ESA looking for work %	ESA not looking for work %
Inadequate attendance or participation	63	40	37
Inadequate efforts to find work <sup>1</sup>	56	17	7
Fraud	11	4	5
No longer eligible	4	3	5
Failure to produce written evidence	1	6	4
Other conditions	2	3	2
Don't know	10	40	46

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,069); all ESA claimants looking for work (104); all ESA not looking for work (572)*

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that ESA claimants are not sanctioned for inadequate efforts to find work, as the requirement to be available and actively seeking work does not apply to ESA claimants.

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At the top of most claimants' minds were examples of inadequate attendance or participation in the support options offered by Jobcentre Plus, including failing to sign on (for JSA claimants only) or failing to attend a meeting with an adviser. Over half of JSA claimants (56 per cent) indicated that inadequate efforts to find a job could lead to their benefit being stopped or reduced. Interestingly, nine per cent of ESA claimants said that inadequate efforts to find work could lead to their benefit being stopped or reduced even though this is not the case<sup>38</sup> – this was even higher among ESA claimants who were looking for work (17 per cent).

### Analysis of JSA claimants

A key determinant of the number of conditions JSA claimants put forward was whether or not an adviser had explicitly told them their benefit could be stopped or reduced. Claimants who were not given this information were much more likely than other claimants to fail to name any conditions (34 per cent compared with five per cent).

Older claimants seemed less aware of the need to attend meetings and the support options organised by Jobcentre Plus. While 70 per cent of the under-25s said that failure to do this could lead to the withdrawal or reduction of their benefit, only 50 per cent of claimants aged 50 or above did the same.

### Analysis of ESA claimants

ESA claimants who were warned by their adviser that their benefit could be stopped or reduced if they failed to agree to certain conditions were far more likely (70 per cent) than those who were not given this information (30 per cent) to be able to name at least one condition.

### 6.1.3 Attitudes regarding conditionality

Claimants who were aware their benefit could be reduced or stopped if they did not comply with certain conditions were asked whether this made them more likely to follow the rules associated with their benefit. Around seven in ten JSA claimants (72 per cent) and six in ten ESA claimants (63 per cent) replied that it would. However, fewer JSA and ESA claimants felt this information made them more liable to look for work or take steps that would move them closer to work (Table 6.2).

The responses of lone parents on IS were very similar to those given by JSA claimants: 73 per cent said that knowledge of potential sanctions made them more likely to follow the rules, while 60 per cent said it made them more likely to look for, or take steps to prepare for, work.

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<sup>38</sup> Even though there is no requirement on ESA claimants to be available and actively seeking work, they may be required to undertake work-related activity, which may be what ESA claimants were thinking of when answering this question.

**Table 6.2 Attitudes regarding conditionality**

<i>Whether knowing benefit could be reduced or stopped if certain rules are not followed makes you ...</i>	<b>JSA</b>	<b>ESA looking for work</b>	<b>ESA not looking for work</b>	<b>IS lone parents</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
More likely to follow rules	72	61	64	73
Makes no difference	27	27	31	21
Don't know	1	12	5	6
More likely to look for work/ take steps to prepare for work	63	44	32	60
Makes no difference	35	47	59	34
Don't know	2	9	9	7

*Base: All JSA claimants told their benefit could be stopped or reduced (915); all ESA claimants looking for work told their benefit could be stopped or reduced (66); all ESA not looking for work told their benefit could be stopped or reduced (349); all lone parents on IS told their benefit could be stopped or reduced (186)*

## Analysis of JSA claimants

Knowing the impact that conditions can have on JSA payments had a varying effect on different types of claimant. The impact was greater on younger claimants aged under 25: around four in five (81 per cent) felt this knowledge made them more likely to follow the rules (compared with 68 per cent of 25-49 year-olds and 63 per cent of those aged 50 or over), while 74 per cent said it made them more likely to look for work (compared with 58 per cent of 25-49 year-olds and 54 per cent of those aged 50 or over).

Women were more likely than men to say that knowledge of the impact of JSA conditions had affected their behaviour. This applied in relation to both following the rules (78 per cent compared with 69 per cent) and looking for work (68 per cent compared with 61 per cent). Claimants who had spent longer out of work were also more likely to say that knowledge of conditions had affected them: among those who had not worked for more than two years (or at all), 79 per cent said that they were more likely to follow the rules, and 75 per cent more likely to look for work. By contrast, those who had worked in the previous three months were much less likely to say they were affected by this knowledge (66 per cent for following the rules, and 55 per cent for looking for work).

The risk of benefit reduction or loss evidently serves as a motivating factor for some claimants more than others.

We can also examine responses on this issue against outcomes. However, there was no evidence from the survey that knowledge of JSA conditions led to actual movement into work. Respondents who said they were more likely to look for work because of their knowledge of JSA conditions were no more likely than other respondents to have moved into work when they left JSA.

## Analysis of ESA claimants

Around two in three ESA claimants who were told that their benefit could be stopped or reduced if they failed to meet certain conditions said that this made them more likely to follow the rules associated with claiming ESA (64 per cent). There was no perceptible difference between the opinions of those who were looking for work and those who were not, although opinions did vary

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by age: claimants under the age of 50 (69 per cent) were more likely than older claimants (56 per cent) to say that this knowledge made them more liable to follow the rules.

Only in a third (34 per cent) of cases did this knowledge impact on claimants' inclination to search for jobs or prepare themselves for work. The claimants most likely to be motivated by this knowledge were those who started claiming ESA without previously having been on Incapacity Benefit (IB) (53 per cent). ESA claimants aged under 50 were more likely than those 50 or over to say that conditionality motivated them to find work (39 per cent compared with 26 per cent). Again, there was no statistically significant difference between the opinions of those who were looking for work and those who were not.

Amongst ESA claimants, there was a link between responses on these issues and outcomes. ESA claimants who said that knowledge of conditions had made them more likely to look for work (or take steps towards this) were more likely to leave ESA for employment (eight per cent) than ESA claimants who said this knowledge made no difference to them (two per cent). This analysis should not be taken as evidence of any direct impact, but at least suggests that messages around conditionality may encourage some ESA claimants to take steps towards moving into work.

In the depth interviews it was apparent that claimants believed conditionality requirements had increased over time. There was a perception of higher expectations being placed on claimants over the years, particularly through the JSAG, where claimants felt they were required to undertake more job searches and applications per week. This was combined with recognition of increased penalties (under the new sanctions regime) to create an impression that Jobcentre Plus was becoming increasingly tough on claimants. In general, this was accepted by claimants, who saw sanctions as a fair consequence of failing to meet job seeker responsibilities. Among those who had direct experience of being sanctioned, many accepted that this was justified, particularly in situations where claimants described having a good relationship with their adviser.

*'Well I think it was my second week I was there [when I was sanctioned] so I didn't fully understand, I was still learning and getting to grips with the system. But it's alright now ... that's the rules, it's the way it goes ... it's self-inflicted, my fault for not doing enough job searches.'*

(Male, JSA 16-24)

A view that both the conditionality rules and the consequences of not adhering to them had become stricter over time was pertinent among claimants suffering from health conditions. Such claimants felt that Jobcentre Plus did not provide them with an adviser who was sympathetic to their condition when drawing up their JSAG or Action Plan. Added to this was the view that they were not work ready and believed that the conditionality requirements of JSA exacerbated their condition. Many of these claimants had previously received ESA and felt that their adviser was cynical towards any continuing health condition that they might suffer from.

*'After I passed that [Work Capability] Assessment I had to go back to the jobcentre to look for jobs. She said to me "you should look for jobs" ... I said "yeah I will apply for jobs that I can do with my leg like this otherwise it's a waste of time me applying to it". I couldn't find very much and they stopped my money. It wasn't until my leg gave way and I fell in the jobcentre that she believed me that I couldn't stack shelves or be a waitress.'*

(Female, JSA 50+)

## 6.2 Experience of having benefit stopped or reduced

All respondents who were interviewed at Wave 2 (i.e. excluding those that had already left benefit by the time of the Wave 1 survey) were asked whether their benefit had been stopped or reduced for any reason by Jobcentre Plus (Table 6.3). It is important to bear in mind that claimants who said that their benefit was stopped or reduced did not necessarily receive a sanction, as there are other reasons for benefit payments being reduced (e.g. repayment of Social Fund loans, utility payments) or stopped (including terminating a claim for a particular benefit).

Around one in five JSA claimants (22 per cent) said that their benefit had been stopped at some point in their claim, while six per cent said that it had been reduced. Similar proportions of ESA claimants said that their benefit had been stopped (21 per cent) or reduced (eight per cent), while the proportions for lone parents who were claiming IS and whose youngest child was aged between three and four were somewhat lower for stoppages (nine per cent) and similar for reductions (10 per cent).

**Table 6.3 Whether benefits stopped or reduced by Jobcentre Plus**

	JSA %	ESA looking for work %	ESA not looking for work %	IS lone parents %
Yes – stopped	22	22	20	9
Yes – reduced	6	7	8	10
No	70	72	70	81
Don't know	1	0	1	*

*Base: All JSA claimants interviewed at Wave 2 (627); all ESA claimants looking for work interviewed at Wave 2 (98); all ESA not looking for work interviewed at Wave 2 (541); all lone parents on IS with a youngest child aged 3 or 4 (341)*

The occurrence of benefit reductions or stoppages did not vary by whether or not claimants were told about this possibility at their initial interview with their adviser. Moreover, there was no variation in this regard between claimants who said that their knowledge of sanctions made them more willing to comply with the rules associated with their benefit, and those who said the knowledge made no difference to them. This was true of both JSA and ESA claimants.

### Analysis of JSA claimants

The proportion of JSA claimants who said that their benefit had been stopped or reduced was consistent across most sub-groups. The only differences were that JSA claimants with a criminal record were more likely (33 per cent) than other claimants (22 per cent) to say that their benefit had been stopped or reduced; the same was true of JSA claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (30 per cent) and those with lower qualifications (32 per cent of those with basic qualifications or none at all, compared with 20 per cent of those with GCSEs or higher qualifications).

### Analysis of ESA claimants

ESA claimants aged 50 or over were more likely to say their benefit had been stopped (26 per cent), compared with those aged below 50 (16 per cent). Respondents who had started claiming ESA without previously having been on IB were also more likely to say their benefit had been stopped (31 per cent).

### Comparison with administrative data

As part of the analysis, administrative data on sanctions was compared with the answers given by survey respondents. The proportion of claimants recorded as sanctioned in the administrative data was lower than the proportion of claimants in the survey who said their benefit had been stopped or reduced; specifically:

- In the JSA sample, 11 per cent of claimants were recorded in the administrative data as having received a sanction in their current claim, compared with 28 per cent (in the survey) who said that their benefit had been stopped or reduced.
- In the ESA sample, one per cent were recorded in the administrative data as having received a sanction in their current claim, compared with 29 per cent (in the survey) who said that their benefit had been stopped or reduced.
- In the sample of lone parents on IS, two per cent were recorded in the administrative data as having received a sanction in their current claim, compared with 19 per cent (in the survey) who said that their benefit had been stopped or reduced.

These findings suggest either that some claimants thought they had been sanctioned when this was not actually the case; that claimants were thinking about sanctions in previous claims; or perhaps that the administrative data was not fully complete or up-to-date for all claimants.<sup>39</sup> It is also possible that claimants may have had their benefit stopped temporarily, delayed, or reduced for a reason other than a sanction.

Further analysis of JSA claimants shows that around half (56 per cent) of those recorded as sanctioned in the administrative data confirmed in the survey that their benefit had been stopped or reduced (the remainder said that this had not happened to them). However, 23 per cent of those recorded as not being sanctioned in the administrative data said that their benefit had been stopped or reduced.

#### 6.2.1 Reasons for benefits being stopped or reduced

Claimants were asked why their benefits had been stopped or reduced. This question was partially open-ended, and some of the responses were not read out as options but provided spontaneously by respondents themselves. Table 6.4 shows claimants' responses.

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<sup>39</sup> There are various reasons for a reduction in benefit which are not related to a claimant being sanctioned. Previous research has shown that many claimants do not know they have been sanctioned, or think they have been sanctioned when they have not. Because of this, administrative data on sanctions is generally considered more reliable than reports given by claimants.

**Table 6.4 Reasons for benefit being stopped or reduced by Jobcentre Plus**

	JSA %	ESA %
Missed a signing on appointment	26	-
Not entitled	13	63
Got a job/was working	13	1
Missed an appointment at Jobcentre Plus	12	-
Told not actively seeking work	8	-
Missed an appointment with an outside organisation	7	1
Did not undertake required activities	7	1
Out of country/on holiday	7	-
Left previous employment voluntarily	4	-
Result of a medical	-	9
Failed to provide a fit note from doctor	-	3
Other	13	14
No answer	1	*
Don't know	4	5

*Base: All JSA claimants whose benefit was stopped or reduced (173); all ESA claimants whose benefit was stopped or reduced (194)*

Among JSA claimants, the most common reason mentioned for benefits being stopped or reduced was missing a signing-on appointment (26 per cent), while there were also instances of benefit reductions or stoppages resulting from claimants missing other appointments at Jobcentre Plus (12 per cent) or at outside organisations (seven per cent). Some respondents said their benefit had been stopped or reduced because they were working (13 per cent) or were no longer eligible for JSA (13 per cent).

By far the most common reason given by ESA claimants for having their benefit stopped or reduced was that they were no longer entitled to ESA (63 per cent). It should be noted that this would not be considered a sanction.

Among those who had been sanctioned in the depth interviews, claimants with complex needs and relatively chaotic lifestyles, such as those that were homeless, with a drug or alcohol dependency or suffered from mental health issues, described being significantly affected by the experience. For this group, sanctions were more likely to be deemed unjustified, with claimants believing that their barriers to finding work had not been taken into account when the sanction was applied. Examples included claimants who lacked internet access and therefore could not regularly use Universal Jobmatch, or described health issues that impacted on their ability to meet their JSAG.

*'I've had my money stopped because there were jobs they said that I had to apply for, and I didn't understand how to fill my book in properly ... stopping my two weeks money that put me into big hole, like, no food, no electric, no gas.'*

(Male, JSA 25-49)

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*'I was sanctioned because I missed one appointment as my anxiety means I am quite forgetful ... if I write things down I am fine but if I don't I find it hard to remember an appointment in my head.'*

(Female, JSA 16-24)

### 6.2.2 Hardship payments

JSA and ESA claimants who said their benefit had been stopped or reduced were asked whether they were told about hardship payments and whether they applied for one. Around a quarter of JSA claimants who said their benefit had been stopped or reduced (23 per cent) said they were told about hardship payments when their benefit was stopped or reduced, with half of these (22 claimants) saying they applied for a hardship payment. The equivalent figures for ESA claimants were lower: 13 per cent said they were told about hardship payments and about half of them (13 claimants) applied for one (Table 6.5).

**Table 6.5 Whether told about or applied for hardship payments**

	JSA	ESA
	%	%
Told about hardship payments	23	13
Applied for hardship payment	13	6

*Base: All JSA claimants whose benefit was stopped or reduced (173);  
all ESA claimants whose benefit was stopped or reduced (194)*

Only 35 of all JSA and ESA claimants interviewed for the survey said they had applied for a hardship payment. These respondents were asked whether they received a payment, and 21 claimants said that they had.

The depth interviews highlighted that the process for applying for hardship payments was seen as a challenging experience, with people struggling to cover household bills and day-to-day living costs whilst making the claim. This was particularly problematic for claimants who suffered from mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, for whom the stress of dealing with the situation could exacerbate their existing conditions. Even once the hardship payment was received, the effects from their condition would continue.

*'They wanted [me] looking for six jobs a week ... so I said "how can I apply for the jobs if I ain't got a car, got no driving license or anything like that ..." so the money was stopped. I went to my doctor, as my blood pressure went up high again so then they did give the hardship money as I couldn't cope.'*

(Female, JSA 50+)

## 6.3 Summary

This chapter examined the extent to which claimants recalled being told about the conditions attached to JSA and ESA, and claimants' experiences of having their benefits stopped or reduced.

### 6.3.1 Conditionality

Nine per cent of JSA claimants said they were not given an adequate explanation of the conditions associated with JSA, while 13 per cent said they were never told by an adviser that their benefit would be affected if they did not agree to certain conditions. Around one in three ESA claimants said they were never told by an adviser about the repercussions of failing to agree to the conditions.

Seven in ten JSA claimants and six in ten ESA claimants who were aware their benefit could be reduced or stopped if they did not comply with certain conditions felt this information made them more likely to follow the rules, but lower proportions said it made them more likely to look for work or take steps that would move them closer to work. The effect of this knowledge on JSA claimants aged 50 or above and those who had been in work within three months of starting their claim was minimal; these groups may have been more inclined to follow the rules anyway.

### 6.3.2 Experience of having benefit stopped or reduced

Around one in five JSA claimants said that their benefit had been stopped at some point in their claim, while six per cent said that it had been reduced. The figures for ESA claimants were very similar (21 per cent and eight per cent respectively). Among lone parents with a youngest child aged 3 or 4 who were claiming IS, nine per cent said that their benefit had been stopped at some point, and 10 per cent said it had been reduced.

The most common reason given by JSA claimants for benefits being stopped or reduced was missing a signing-on appointment, while by far the most common reason given by ESA claimants was that they were no longer entitled (though this would not be considered a sanction).

Among claimants whose benefit had been stopped or reduced, 23 per cent of JSA claimants said they were told about hardship payments, and 13 per cent applied for one. The proportions of ESA claimants were lower (13 per cent and six per cent respectively).

# 7 Conclusions

## 7.1 Delivery of the Offer from a staff perspective

From an organisational perspective, the implementation of the Jobcentre Plus Offer was seen as a success. There has been a clear move away from nationally determined process-based working towards more tailored approaches, where districts, and in some cases individual offices, feel able to decide how best to implement support to get claimants back into work. There were variations in the extent to which these decisions were influenced by national, district, and local pressures, resulting in a range of diverging practices – which further confirms the degree of shift from the previous nationally-determined structure.

A key finding in relation to delivery of the Offer was that greater flexibility was particularly embraced at senior district and office level management, allowing managers to tailor approaches in their area to more directly address local conditions. For frontline staff this sometimes meant that they did not always see much change in their working practices, describing process-driven working that was not dissimilar to previous practices. Although there had been a shift to more tailored approaches, frontline staff did not always feel that they had the discretion to respond to the needs of individual claimants on their caseloads and provide more personalised support.

At local level, delivery of the Offer was driven by national, district and office-level initiatives, and also by local area conditions. These resulted in a wide ranging and continually evolving range of delivery models. One of the key recommendations from the first year of the evaluation was the need for greater learning from these different models, to share and disseminate best practice. Over the course of the evaluation, this was increasingly recognised by senior managers, resulting in a number of mechanisms for identifying and sharing lessons within and between districts. However, there were remaining issues around how these lessons could be used more effectively at office level. In particular, staff wanted evidence on how certain practices worked on the ground, in order to make informed decisions about whether they would be appropriate in different settings.

In addition to national, district and local pressures, the extent to which flexibility was devolved within districts was also influenced by senior managers' views about advisers' ability to adapt to new ways of working and whether they had the necessary resources to make use of this new found flexibility. For example, managers were concerned about current practices around diagnosing claimant needs and had introduced processes to better monitor claimant progress to help with decisions about support provision. There is some anecdotal evidence from the six case study districts that this was a particular issue for larger offices, where more structured approaches were felt to be necessary to monitor claimant progress. In contrast, some of the smaller offices appeared to be more open to allowing frontline staff to determine how best to prioritise and support claimants.

To some extent, advisers' ability to respond to new ways of working were also influenced by the cycle of continuous improvements that were directly associated with increased flexibility. Changes to working practices were symptomatic of managers' experiments to improve delivery; however, some staff felt this had an adverse effect on them. In particular, leaving advisers confused with limited understanding of why changes had been implemented and what this meant in terms of how they should be supporting claimants. The findings overall suggest that there are issues around the variability of adviser skills and adaptability which

could be supplemented by further training and support, especially if the use of greater flexibility relies on the quality and training of advisers.

The year one evaluation findings showed how the Offer enabled more personalised provision with fewer restrictions on when support options could be offered in claimants' journeys. There had been substantial success in addressing barriers to access highlighted in the first year evaluation report, which included: lack of availability and awareness of local provision, limited confidence and knowledge of the provision available; access to non-contracted funding; and, challenges purchasing services from other organisations. Improvements in these areas resulted in a package of support that was seen to provide more flexible provision to meet claimants' needs. However, there were ongoing challenges noted around providing tailored support for all claimants, particularly for those with complex or multiple needs. There were also remaining issues around ensuring access to more bespoke or non-contracted provision and whether Jobcentre Plus is best placed to provide or signpost provision where more structured and/or tailored support is required.

Linked to this point, the Offer for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) claimants continued to involve a relatively 'light touch' approach to supporting and preparing claimants to feel ready for work. There were concerns from staff about whether the Offer provides a tailored and flexible approach to best meet this claimant groups' needs.

## 7.2 Claimant experience of the Offer

The relationship between the support claimants received through the Offer and their subsequent outcomes is not straightforward. This evaluation research was not designed to measure the impact of the Offer on claimants, so any relationship observed between support that has been offered by Jobcentre Plus and the destinations of claimants cannot be interpreted as causally linked. On the surface, the fact that claimants who received no support were more likely to off flow in to work could be taken to mean that support has not had a positive effect on outcomes. However, this is actually more likely to reflect the fact that support is being tailored effectively and is not being directed towards claimants who are close to the job market and in relatively little need of it.

Most JSA claimants began their claim wanting to work, and the fact that the types of jobs that claimants off-flow into often do not meet the requirements they discussed with their advisers and their hopes for future progression, suggests that they are willing to be flexible, taking up jobs that are available rather than holding out for options that fully meet their needs.

The challenge for the Offer is to help claimants move into or closer to the labour market, but for those who do not succeed in finding a job over the course of 12 months, the Offer needs to play a part in maintaining positive attitudes. In general, the motivation of JSA claimants remained high, but confidence that they would actually find work declined. In contrast to this, among ESA claimants looking for work there were positive attitudinal shifts during their time on the Offer across all key aspects of job search, and just as importantly a reduction in anxiety about the thought of being in paid work.

From the claimant's viewpoint, the nature of the relationship and contact they have with advisers are important factors in the success of the Offer. Claimants felt that it was important that advisers knew their circumstances so that they would not need to explain their situation multiple times, and this requirement seemed to become more important over the course of their claim and matter more to claimants with a disability or health condition. The majority

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of claimants agreed that advisers they had come into contact with during their claim understood their circumstances, although JSA claimants with a mental health condition were less likely to feel that advisers treated them with understanding compared to other JSA claimants. Additionally, ESA claimants who maintained higher levels of adviser contact or greater continuity of contact were more likely to acknowledge advisers' understanding of their circumstances. There was also evidence that claimants' perceptions of tailoring were typically dependent on what they considered to be the quality of the adviser and how well the complexity of their needs were understood through the development of good rapport and relationships.

While the majority of claimants felt the amount of time they spent with advisers was sufficient, certain key groups felt they would have benefited from more adviser support. This was particularly the case for ESA claimants who were looking for work.

In terms of the flexible menu of back-to-work support, work experience seemed to be a particularly successful tool in helping claimants progress towards work. Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants who found work were more likely to say that they got their job 'through Jobcentre Plus' if they had taken up a work experience opportunity. Claimants who had been offered or taken up work experience options but did not manage to find work showed positive attitudinal shifts during the course of their claim, both in terms of being less nervous about the prospect of paid work and in their confidence that they can do well in interviews. Findings from the case studies also indicated that claimants who had attended work experience placements felt this had contributed to them having a better understanding of what a job might entail, therefore increasing their confidence.

More generally, being offered any support from the flexible menu was linked to positive perceptions of the Offer. Claimants who had been offered support were more likely to be satisfied with the service provided by Jobcentre Plus in helping them find employment, more likely to agree that Jobcentre Plus offered them the 'right amount' of support, and more likely to feel that the advice and support they were offered matched their personal needs and circumstances. This suggests that support options are generally being used for the right people at the right time.

However, not all groups felt this benefit to an equal extent. Disadvantaged JSA claimants – particularly those with mental health conditions – and ESA claimants looking for work were less positive about the Offer, while others were more so.

### 7.2.1 18-24 year-old JSA claimants

The result of recent policies and the introduction of the Youth Contract mean that young claimants are increasingly being targeted for back-to-work support, and this is clearly reflected in their experiences of the Offer. This group was more likely than other claimants to meet with advisers on a weekly or more frequent basis, and be offered a host of support options, ranging from the more standard job search advice and signposting to vacancies, to financial assistance, support regarding homelessness or caring responsibilities, and discussions about work experience opportunities. Their perceptions of the Offer were accordingly more positive than those of other claimants, with many reporting that the support felt tailored to their personal circumstances. Those who did not manage to off-flow into work within a year benefited from increased motivation to find work.

### **7.2.2 JSA claimants aged 50 or above**

Those in the 50+ age group described a lack of relevant support from Jobcentre Plus. This was linked to a perception by these claimants that employers were less interested in employing them, as their age could be indicative of a limited skill set and meant they would not be able to make a long-term commitment to the business. Claimants in this age group believed they could benefit if Jobcentre Plus offered them specific support to make them more attractive to employers, such as further skills training. Instead, several described feeling forced onto support measures that were inappropriate for them, and high proportions reported receiving unsuitable recommendations for job vacancies from advisers. For some, a lack of IT skills presented a range of barriers in terms of job searching online, using Universal Jobmatch, communicating with employers over email and generally lacking the necessary IT skills required by employers. Consequently, this group was less likely to off-flow into work, while those who remained on their benefit for a year experienced a notable loss of confidence that they could find 'a job that suits me'.

### **7.2.3 JSA claimants who are disadvantaged or have complex or multiple needs**

The Offer is clearly less well suited to assisting those with a disability, or facing complex or multiple needs. Claimants with a disability were more likely to see an adviser just once a month, and many felt that they did not spend enough time with advisers and that the support they were offered did not meet their personal needs or suit their circumstances. Amongst claimants with complex or multiple needs there was a widespread perception that their requirements were not properly identified, and that the support they were offered was not tailored to their personal needs and circumstances. Such claimants felt that it was more important to deal with the immediate barrier they were facing – whether homelessness, having a criminal record, or health constraints – rather than embarking on support measures aimed at moving them into work. At the same time, many reported that advisers did not address the limited information and communications technology (ICT), basic literacy and numeracy skills and lack of work experience associated with these barriers. On average, those with a disadvantage were less likely to off-flow into work, with large proportions still claiming the same benefit a year later.

### **7.2.4 ESA claimants looking for work**

There were several indications that claimants in this group were dissatisfied with their experience of the Offer. Compared with other ESA claimants, they were more likely to disagree that the support they received matched their personal needs and circumstances, and relatively few were satisfied with the level of contact they had with advisers or with the service that Jobcentre Plus offered in helping them find employment. This is not to say that their needs were wholly overlooked; offers of financial assistance, for example, were more commonly received by this group than other ESA claimants. In general, however, further adviser support may be required to ensure they maintain confidence during their journey through the Offer, and are being signposted and referred to appropriate support to help them back into employment.

One concerning finding is the indication that ESA claimants have limited knowledge of the wider provision of support options available due to their limited contact with Jobcentre Plus and less discussion of options for going back to work. Depth interviews with claimants found that there was limited awareness and use of the provision available. Linked to this, ESA claimants often did not understand why they were at Jobcentre Plus, so did not know what

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to ask for and had limited contact with advisers. The experience of the New Joiner's Work Focused Interview (NJWFI) for ESA claimants, and discussion of the basic points related to job search and preparation for a future move into work, was much more variable when compared to the New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) for JSA claimants, with nearly half of all ESA claimants not discussing next steps at this meeting. ESA claimants were significantly more likely to report that they left their initial meeting with their adviser without an appointment for their next meeting and without a clear indication of when they would next meet their adviser. These factors indicate that advisers still take a 'light touch' approach with ESA claimants. As indicated in the first year evaluation report, this partly reflects the fact that ESA claimants are further from work and that advisers are consequently working with harder to help claimants, but it may also reflect the varying skill levels of advisers.

Despite moves at head office level to provide additional clarification for advisers on how to support and guide ESA WRAG group claimants across their journey, there continues to be the need for a more structured approach to the delivery of NJWFI in terms of the topics covered and confirming next steps. The findings also indicate issues around the following through of initial discussions of support so claimants know how and where they can access support options. As discussed in the first year report, this could be improved by ensuring that claimants are explicitly asked if they are interested in taking up support options.

There were similar experiences of limited tailoring and guidance for lone parents claiming Income Support (IS), which could potentially be restricting the help that Jobcentre Plus provides for claimants who are keen to get back to work. Most lone parents on IS were satisfied with the support they received and the majority felt that the support was appropriate to their needs and circumstances. However, lone parents looking for work were less likely than those not looking for work to say that Jobcentre Plus understood their circumstances, and less likely to say that they spent enough time with advisers. Again this suggests a more structured and tailored approach is required for those on inactive benefits (both ESA and IS) who want further support in finding or preparing for work.

### 7.3 Recommendations

At an organisational level there is appetite and need for effective sharing of best practice. There have been increased mechanisms for this, yet more concrete evidence would be helpful to understand what impact different delivery models have, and how they could be made to work in different local contexts. This suggests the need for greater evidence and monitoring of the effectiveness and impacts of new processes and initiatives. The need for greater outcome evidence is supported by other research carried out on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), which considers the role the Department can play in facilitating greater exchange of knowledge and lessons learned to local policy makers.<sup>40</sup>

Further adviser support would help to meet the needs of ESA claimants looking for work to ensure they are being signposted and referred to appropriate support to help them back into employment. As discussed in the first year evaluation report, it would be beneficial to implement specific monitoring to identify advisers who are struggling in this area as simple off-flow metrics will not work in identifying where this is the case.

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<sup>40</sup> Anne Green, A., Atfield, G. and Adam, D. (2013). *Local worklessness policy analysis case studies*, DWP Research Report No. 844. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/207539/rrep844.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/207539/rrep844.pdf)

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The delivery of the Offer has seen gains in increasing flexibility at a local level and enabling practices that are more tailored to local conditions. There is currently uncertainty around how upcoming changes to the benefits system will impact both on claimants and Jobcentre Plus office working practices. It is important that the successes of the Offer are sustained in the new world of welfare reform, particularly in light of the introduction of Universal Credit.

# Appendix A

## Claimant survey technical details

TNS BMRB undertook two telephone surveys with claimants who had experienced the Jobcentre Plus Offer. One was a longitudinal survey with the two main claimant groups mandated to the Jobcentre Plus Offer at the time of the research: Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants in the 12-month prognosis Work Related Activity Group (WRAG). The longitudinal survey consisted of two waves of fieldwork. A separate survey was used to boost the number of survey responses from claimants on JSA and ESA who either had a criminal record, a drug or alcohol dependency, or who were homeless, and to collect information about lone parents on IS whose youngest child was aged between three and four.

The two surveys are referred to as the 'longitudinal survey' and 'boost survey' respectively, and this appendix outlines the sampling, fieldwork and weighting procedures used to collect and process the data from the two surveys.

### A.1 Samples

#### A.1.1 JSA sample

The first wave of the longitudinal survey was intended to capture the views and experiences of new JSA claimants shortly after having attended a New Jobseeker Interview (NJI). New JSA claims were identified by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) analysts during a period of a week in mid-March 2012 and were checked a few weeks later, shortly before the dataset was transferred to TNS BMRB, to ensure that they were still a live claim (and had not already off-flowed from benefit). The sample was proportionately stratified by district, gender and age for the three age bands of interest (16-24, 25-49 and 50+).

The sample received from DWP was checked by TNS BMRB, and any records with invalid, incomplete or missing addresses and telephone numbers were removed from the sample. The remaining records were again stratified by age group, region, district, and gender to ensure representative coverage of claimants. A total of 6,300 records were randomly selected and these claimants were sent advance letters inviting them to participate in the survey. Any claimants who contacted TNS BMRB to opt out were removed from the sample, and 5,400 of the remaining records were issued to the telephone centre in May 2012 for the first wave of the survey.

The second wave of the longitudinal survey was carried out in three tranches: the first two tranches took place shortly after claimants off-flowed from the Offer either into work or onto the Work Programme; the final tranche was used to reinterview all remaining claimants who had not yet had a second interview. In August 2012, and then again in November 2012, DWP provided a list of records for any claimants from the initial sample who had completed a first interview and had since then either closed their benefit claim or had started on the Work Programme. The lists were used to identify claimants who had moved off the Jobcentre Plus

Offer and were therefore ready to be incorporated into the second wave of the survey. These records were issued to the telephone centre in September and December 2012, respectively, for the first two tranches of the second wave. Any records which were not included in the lists provided by DWP were presumed to be ongoing claims; these records were issued to the telephone centre in March 2013, when the third and final tranche of follow-up interviews was carried out, to capture those who had off-flowed or moved onto the Work Programme since December 2012 or were still on the Offer.

### **A.1.2 ESA sample**

The first wave of the longitudinal survey was aimed at ESA claimants who had recently attended a New Joiner's Work Focused Interview (NJWFI), which takes place once the outcome of the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) is known, roughly 13 weeks after claimants make their claim for ESA. New ESA claimants (and those transferred from Incapacity Benefit (IB) and had also undergone a WCA) were identified during a period of three weeks, from mid-December 2011 to early January 2012. The list of claimants was checked just before the sample was transferred to TNS BMRB to ensure that their claim was still live.

In order to identify ESA claimants with a 12-month or longer prognosis, TNS BMRB crossed the sample received from DWP against a list which identified ESA claimants currently on the Work Programme. All cases of claimants who had already volunteered to enter the Work Programme were removed, along with cases which had invalid, incomplete or missing addresses and telephone numbers. The remaining records were stratified by whether they had previously been on IB or not, age, region, district, and gender to ensure the survey coverage was representative of the population of ESA claimants in the 12 month WRAG group. A total of 5,200 records were randomly selected and sent advance letters inviting them to participate in the survey. Any claimants who opted out were removed from the sample, and the remaining 4,918 records were issued to the telephone centre for the first wave of the survey, which took place in May 2012.

Following this, DWP provided lists of records for any claimants from the initial sample who had either closed their benefit claim or had started on the Work Programme since completing their first interview. Up-to-date lists were provided twice, in August and November 2012, and used to identify claimants who had moved off the Jobcentre Plus Offer and could therefore be invited to take part in the second wave of the survey. Fieldwork for the second wave was carried out in three tranches: in September 2012, December 2012, and March 2013. The last tranche included interviews with any claimants who had not been recorded as off-flows or Work Programme starters, and were presumed to be on the same ESA claim and still experiencing the Offer.

### **A.1.3 Boost sample**

The boost survey was designed to collect data on four groups of claimants:

- JSA and ESA claimants with a criminal record
- JSA and ESA claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency
- JSA and ESA claimants who were homeless
- IS claimants who were lone parents, and whose youngest child was aged between three and four.

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Claimants in these groups were identified by DWP analysts on the basis of their current claim (in early 2013), disadvantage markers, marital status and age of children. The sample was transferred to TNS BMRB where it was checked and any cases which had invalid, incomplete or missing addresses and telephone numbers were removed. A total of 3,169 records were randomly selected and sent advance letters inviting them to participate in the survey. Any claimants who opted out were removed from the sample, and the remaining 2,972 records were issued to the telephone centre. These consisted of 1,143 records for Income Support (IS) lone parents, and 1,829 records covering the remaining groups.

## A.2 Fieldwork and response

### A.2.1 Longitudinal survey

Telephone interviews for the first wave of the longitudinal survey were conducted between 16 May and 1 July 2012. This resulted in 3,034 telephone interviews which, together with an additional 25 completed postal questionnaires, gave a total of 3,059 interviews for the first wave. Response details from the first wave are shown in Appendix A of the first year report.<sup>41</sup>

Telephone interviews for the second wave of the longitudinal survey were carried out in three tranches. These were conducted between 24 September and 16 November 2012; between 4 December 2012 and 14 January 2013; and between 22 March and 11 June 2013 (excluding a period in late April and early May in the run-up to local elections). A total of 1,443 interviews were completed, consisting of 788 interviews with JSA claimants and 655 interviews with ESA claimants. The response details for the second wave of the survey are shown in Table A.1.

**Table A.1 Response details**

<b>Completed Wave 1 interview</b>	<b>3,034</b>
<b>Sample issued to telephone unit</b>	<b>2,875</b>
<b>Invalid sample data</b>	<b>422</b>
Invalid telephone number	306
Unknown at number	114
Respondent died	2
<b>Ineligible</b>	<b>36</b>
Respondent long-term ill/incapable of interview	36
<b>Valid sample (in scope of fieldwork)</b>	<b>2,417</b>
Refusal	592
Abandoned interview	31
Unavailable during fieldwork	21
Non-contact with respondent/unresolved	330
<b>Interview</b>	<b>1,443</b>
Interviews with claimants with ongoing claims at the end of Wave 1	1,275
Interviews with claimants who had off-flowed at the end of Wave 1	168

<sup>41</sup> Coulter, A. Day, N. Howat, H. Romanou, E and Coleman, N. (2012). *The Jobcentre Plus Offer: Findings from the first year of the evaluation*, DWP Research Report No. 814

## A.2.2 Boost survey

Telephone interviews for the boost survey were carried out between 29 May and 4 August 2013. A total of 751 interviews were completed. These consisted of 341 interviews with lone parents on IS, and 410 interviews with JSA and ESA claimants whose records had a disadvantage marker indicating that they had a criminal record or drug or alcohol dependency, or that they were homeless.<sup>42</sup> Response details for the boost survey are shown in Table A.2.

**Table A.2 Response details**

<b>Sample issued to telephone unit</b>	<b>2,957</b>
<b>Invalid sample data</b>	<b>1132</b>
Invalid telephone number	336
Unknown at number	206
Respondent died	2
No contact at all after 10 or more calls	588
<b>Ineligible</b>	<b>58</b>
Respondent long-term ill/incapable of interview	58
<b>Valid sample (in scope of fieldwork)</b>	<b>1,767</b>
Refusal	266
Abandoned interview	83
Unavailable during fieldwork	14
Non-contact with respondent/unresolved	653
<b>Interview</b>	<b>751</b>

## A.3 Weighting

The survey data was weighted before analysis. Weighting is carried out for two reasons:

- to correct for differences in sampling fractions across the sample (using so-called design weights);
- to try and reduce bias arising from non-response (using non-response weights).

The longitudinal sample was designed to provide sufficient numbers of interviews with JSA claimants in each age-group and equal numbers of interviews with ESA claimants who had, and had not, previously been on IB. It was therefore necessary to apply design weights to correct these imbalances. The same design weight was applied to data from both waves of the longitudinal survey. No design weight was applied to the boost data, as the true distribution of claimants who have a criminal record, who have a drug or alcohol dependency, or who are homeless within the overall population of JSA and ESA claimants was not known.

<sup>42</sup> During their interviews, 92 of these 410 claimants did not disclose having a criminal record, drug or alcohol dependency or being homeless. For this reason these records were excluded from the analysis for those three groups.

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In order to create the non-response weight for data from Wave 1 of the longitudinal survey, the profile of the Wave 1 respondents was compared to the true population profile of JSA and ESA claimants. This weight was used to correct for any discrepancies in terms of age, gender and claimant type. By comparing the profile of the Wave 2 survey population to the corrected profile of the Wave 1 survey population a non-response weight was created for data from Wave 2 of the longitudinal survey. This weight was used to correct any discrepancies in terms of age and gender, and any differences in answers regarding the presence of children and whether the claimant would feel happier if they were in paid work (as these were assumed to be relevant factors contributing to participation in the second wave of interviews).

# Appendix B

## Case study technical details

### B.1 Developmental stage

Telephone interviews were undertaken with District Managers between December 2011 and January 2012 to ascertain the varied characteristics of the districts and to obtain a broad understanding of national activity. From the data gathered at this stage, the six case study districts were selected to ensure a balanced mix of characteristics in relation to the organisation and delivery of the Offer in their district. These characteristics primarily included: the size of district; the geographical location; the number of offices within the district; the size of their budget; the Offer characteristics (for example, types of interventions/ support available, how the Offer had been implemented); the strength of the local labour market and labour market variation within the area; and whether there was other research activity occurring which would make it an unsuitable case study.

To ensure the anonymity of the staff and claimants observed and interviewed, the districts are not identified.

### B.2 Case study research

The case study approach included three elements:

- Ethnographic site visits
- Staff interviews
- Claimant interviews

#### B.2.1 Ethnographic site visits

Across Wave 1 and 2, observational and interviewing techniques were used in each of the six districts (two offices were selected in each district). Specifically the following were undertaken in all twelve offices:

- **Observations of adviser interviews:** A variety of adviser interviews were observed covering a range of touch-points (set time periods along the claimant journey), as well as interviews with different types of claimants (Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support (IS)).

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- **Follow up interviews with claimants:** Claimants who had been observed with their advisers were asked if they would be happy to take part in a short 15-20 minute follow up interview to discuss their views on the interview and other aspects of the Offer where relevant. These took place in the jobcentre in a private room set aside for this purpose. Claimants were provided with clear information about the purpose and nature of the interview and gave informed written consent.
- **Informal discussions with front line staff:** in addition to the interviews with claimants, informal ongoing discussions with staff were undertaken regarding their experiences of the Offer and the interviews observed throughout the course of the site visits.

### B.2.2 Staff interviews

A broad range of staff within each district were interviewed using different qualitative techniques depending on the needs of each staff group. These were group discussions, mini groups, paired depths and individual depth interviews. This tended to vary depending on how the different districts and Jobcentre Plus offices were organised on the ground. In Wave 2, additional telephone depth interviews were undertaken with District Managers (DMs) of the six case study districts.

The observations and interviews undertaken at each case study across Wave 1 are summarised in in Appendix B of the first year report.<sup>43</sup> Table B.1 (overleaf) shows the observations and interviews undertaken at each case study across Wave 2.

### B.2.3 Claimant interviews: Wave 1

Between April and May 2012, 169 telephone interviews were undertaken with claimants across the six case study districts. Claimants were sampled at different touch points along the claimant journey in order to capture the full range of support offered as part of the Offer; therefore sample was drawn at three, six and 12 months.

The primary and secondary variables were the following:

Primary variables

- Range of benefit streams: including JSA, ESA and IS and a range of specific benefit claimants within this which were: JSA 18-24; JSA 25-49; JSA 50+; ESA WRAG 3-6 months prognosis; ESA Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) 12-month prognosis; ESA voluntary; and IS voluntary.
- Geographic locations: claimants who accessed the Offer in the case study districts only.

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<sup>43</sup> Coulter, A. Day, N. Howat, H. Romanou, E and Coleman, N. (2012). *The Jobcentre Plus Offer: Findings from the first year of the evaluation*, DWP Research Report No. 814.

**Table B.1 Site visit – staff interviews & observations Wave 2**

	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5	District 6
<b>Staff type</b>						
PAs, DEAs, Assistant Advisers	1 Group and 2 Depths	2 Groups	1 Group	1 Group	1 Group	2 Groups
ATMs/PTLs	1 Depth	2 Depth	1 group and 1 depth	2 Depths	2 Depths	4 Depths
LOMs, CSOMs, DMs**, TPPMs, External relationship managers, Partnership managers	2 Depths	1 Depth	2 depths	2 Depths	2 Depths	2 Depths
DMs	1 Depths	1 Depth	1 Depth	1 Depth	1 Depth	1 Depth
<b>Staff interviews (Total)</b>	10	15	18	9	15	17
<b>Observations (Total)</b>	6	10	11	8	10	12
JSA	6	9	9	7	8	12
ESA	0	1	2	1	2	0
IS	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Follow up interviews</b>						
Staff	6	4	12	7	8	12
Claimants	5	4	7	7	10	12

Secondary variables

- Disadvantaged claimants: including problem drug users, homeless and ex-offenders.
- Sanctions: target of two claimants per case study who had received a sanction from Jobcentre Plus.
- Early entry JSA stock: target of two per case study area.
- A mix of demographic characteristic: including age, gender, and ethnicity.

The achieved sample quotas for Wave 1 are displayed in Appendix B of the first year report.

**B.2.4 Claimant interviews: Wave 2**

Between March and May 2012, 95 telephone interviews were undertaken with claimants across the six case study districts. Claimant sample were drawn at different touch points, related to when they were been expected to off-flow into work or on to the Work Programme: nine months (JSA 18-24) or 12 months (JSA 25+ and ESA 12-month prognosis).

The primary and secondary variables were the following:

Primary variables

- Range of benefit streams: JSA 18-24; JSA 25-49; JSA 50+; ESA WRAG 12-month prognosis;
- Geographic locations: claimants who accessed the Offer in five of the six case study districts only<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> The overall numbers of claimant interviews were reduced in Wave 2 to focus on JSA and ESA WRAG claimants and as result it was decided to draw sample from five instead of six districts.

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### Secondary variables

- Disadvantaged claimants: including problem drug users, homeless and ex-offenders.
- Sanctions: target of two claimants per case study who had received a sanction from Jobcentre Plus.
- JSA from ESA as a result of a Fit for Work Assessment: target of two per case study area.
- Lone parents: target of two per case study area.
- A mix of demographic characteristic: including age, gender, and ethnicity.
- Early claimant off-flow three to six months: target eight across the whole sample

The achieved sample quotas for Wave 2 are listed in Table B.2.

**Table B.2 Achieved sample quotas**

	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5	District 6	Total
<b>Total</b>							
<b>Primary variable:</b>							
JSA 18-24	4/4	4/4	5/5	5/5	5/5	–	<b>JSA</b>
JSA 25-49	5/5	5/5	5/5	4/4	4/4	–	
JSA 50+	5/5	5/5	4/4	5/5	5/5	–	
ESA 12 months	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5		<b>ESA</b>
<b>Secondary variables</b> (NB these are all cross-cutting variables, operating across the sample as a whole rather than area-specific):							
Disadvantaged	Problem drug users						6
	Homeless						5
	Ex-offenders						9
Sanctioned	Target of 2 per case study area				Total across districts		15
Lone parents	Target of 2 per case study area				Total across districts		12
JSA from ESA as a result of a Fit for Work Assessment	Target of 2 per case study area				Total across districts		12
Gender	Balanced across sample						M:47 F:48
Age	18-24						26
	25-49						34
	50+					Total across sample	35
Ethnicity	Non-white claimants per case study area						15
Early off-flow months	3 – 6 months						8

# Appendix C

## Claimant profile

This appendix provides additional information on the characteristics of the Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants analysed in Chapter 3; the characteristics of JSA and ESA claimants with a criminal record, a drug or alcohol dependency, or who are homeless analysed in Chapter 4; and the characteristics of lone parents on Income Support (IS) analysed in Chapter 5.

### C.1 JSA and ESA claimants in the longitudinal survey

It is important to note that the profile information presented here is for a specific cohort of claimants: JSA claimants who made a claim in March 2012, and ESA claimants in the 12-month Work Related Activity Group (WRAG) who made a claim in December 2011 or January 2012. The profiles are therefore not representative of all benefit recipients.

#### C.1.1 Sex and age

Table C.1 displays the sex of JSA and ESA claimants.

**Table C.1 Sex**

	JSA	ESA
	%	%
Male	67	48
Female	33	52

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,749); all ESA claimants (1,285)*

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Table C.2 shows the age of JSA and ESA claimants.

**Table C.2 Age**

	<b>JSA</b>	<b>ESA</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
16 – 17	1	*
18 – 19	12	*
20 – 24	23	3
25 – 29	12	5
30 – 34	10	6
35 – 39	9	9
40 – 44	10	14
45 – 49	9	20
50 – 54	7	18
55 – 59	5	20
60 – 64	2	4
65 – 69	*	*
Refused	-	*

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,749); all ESA claimants (1,285)*

### C.1.2 Caring responsibilities

Table C.3 displays the percentage of JSA and ESA claimants who had caring responsibilities at the start of their claim.

**Table C.3 Caring responsibilities**

	<b>JSA</b>	<b>ESA</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Caring responsibilities within household	6	11
Caring responsibilities outside of household	2	3
Both	*	*
No caring responsibilities	92	85

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,749); all ESA claimants (1,285)*

Table C.4 shows the impact which caring for someone had on the work which JSA and ESA claimants could undertake.

**Table C.4 Caring responsibilities – effect on work**

	JSA %	ESA %
Yes – availability to work	29	42
Yes – types of work can do	9	25
No	66	48
Don't know	2	6

*Base: JSA claimants (143); ESA claimants (190) who care for someone*

Table C.5 depicts who JSA and ESA claimants with caring responsibilities cared for.

**Table C.5 Caring responsibilities – who care for**

	JSA %	ESA %
Adult/s	35	33
Children	65	67

*Base: JSA claimants (23); ESA claimants (3) whose main activity is caring for someone*

### C.1.3 Highest qualification

Table C.6 shows the highest qualification attained by JSA and ESA claimants, as recorded at the start of their claim.

**Table C.6 Highest qualification**

	JSA %	ESA %
No qualifications	8	18
Don't know	4	7
Entry level qualifications	5	11
GCSEs D-G, Vocational Level 1 qualifications and equivalent	11	14
GCSEs A*-C, Vocational Level 2 qualifications and equivalent	30	24
A Levels, Vocational Level 3 qualifications and equivalent	18	10
Certificates of Higher Education or equivalent	5	4
Higher National Certificates (HNC), Diplomas (HND) or equivalent	4	4
First degree or equivalent	11	7
Postgraduate degree (Masters) or equivalent	4	2
PhD (Doctoral degree) or equivalent	*	*

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,749); all ESA claimants (1,285)*

## C.1.4 Ethnicity

Table C.7 displays the ethnicity of JSA and ESA claimants.

**Table C.7 Ethnicity**

	<b>JSA</b>	<b>ESA</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
White	82	94
Black	6	2
Mixed	3	*
Asian	7	3
Other	2	*

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,749); all ESA claimants (1,285)*

## C.1.5 Language

Table C.8 shows the proportion of JSA and ESA claimants who consider English to be their first language.

**Table C.8 Whether English is first language**

	<b>JSA</b>	<b>ESA</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Yes	93	97
No	7	3

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,749); all ESA claimants (1,285)*

## C.1.6 Marital status and children

Table C.9 shows the marital status of JSA and ESA claimants at the start of their claim.

**Table C.9 Marital status**

	<b>JSA</b>	<b>ESA</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Single (or engaged but not living with partner as a couple)	63	36
Married	12	32
Civil partnership	*	*
Living with partner	4	6
<b>Married, civil partnership or living with partner (NET)<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>24</b>	<b>41</b>
Widowed	*	2
Divorced	7	15
Separated	4	6

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,749); all ESA claimants (1,285)*

<sup>1</sup> Sum of married, civil partnership and living with partner does not equal NET as a proportion of claimants surveyed were not asked to specify their relationship status beyond 'married, civil partnership and living with partner'.

Table C.10 displays the claimants' number of children, divided into those who did not have a partner and those who did.

**Table C.10 Partner status and number of children by claimant type**

	<b>JSA</b>	<b>ESA</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
No children	79	72
Single		
1 Child	4	6
2 Children	2	2
3 Children	*	1
More than 3 Children	*	*
Partner present		
1 Child	6	6
2 Children	4	7
3 Children	2	3
More than 3 Children	*	2

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,749); all ESA claimants (1,285)*

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### C.1.7 Tenure

Table C.11 shows the living accommodation of JSA and ESA claimants at the start of their claim.

**Table C.11 Tenure**

	<b>JSA</b>	<b>ESA</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Rented privately	20	15
Rented from a council or local authority	14	27
Rented from a Housing Association	7	16
Owned outright	7	13
Being bought on a mortgage/bank loan	16	18
Shared ownership where you pay part rent and part mortgage	1	1
Living with friends/relatives	33	9
Supported housing	*	1
Living in hostel (including foyers)	*	*
Homeless (squatting or other temporary accommodation)	1	-
Living in caravan	*	*
Other	1	1

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,749); all ESA claimants (1,285)*

### C.1.8 Driving

Table C.12 shows the proportion of JSA and ESA claimants who either possessed a driving licence and a car, just a driving licence or no driving licence at all.

**Table C.12 Driving**

	<b>JSA</b>	<b>ESA</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Driving licence and car	39	40
Driving licence without car	15	13
No driving licence	46	48

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,749); all ESA claimants (1,285)*

## C.1.9 Sexual identity

Table C.13 shows the sexual identity of JSA and ESA claimants.

**Table C.13 Sexual identity**

	JSA	ESA
	%	%
Heterosexual or straight	93	94
Gay or lesbian	2	2
Bisexual	1	*
Other	*	*
Refused	2	2
Don't know	1	*

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,749); all ESA claimants (1,285)*

## C.1.10 Ex-armed forces

Table C.14 displays the proportion of JSA and ESA claimants who were members of the armed forces.

**Table C.14 Ex-armed forces**

	JSA	ESA
	%	%
Yes	*	*
No	99	100

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,749); all ESA claimants (1,285)*

## C.1.11 Criminal record

Table C.15 shows the percentage of JSA and ESA claimants with a criminal record.

**Table C.15 Ex-offenders**

	JSA	ESA
	%	%
Yes	6	5
No	95	96

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,749); all ESA claimants (1,285)*

### C.1.12 Drug or alcohol dependency

Table C.16 shows the percentage of JSA and ESA claimant who revealed a drug or alcohol dependency at the start of their claim.

**Table C.16 Drug or alcohol dependency**

	JSA	ESA
	%	%
Yes	2	5
No	98	95

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,749); all ESA claimants (1,285)*

### C.1.13 Homeless

Table C.17 shows the percentage of JSA and ESA claimants who reported that they were homeless at the start of their claim.

**Table C.17 Homeless**

	JSA	ESA
	%	%
Yes	1	*
No	99	100

*Base: All JSA claimants (1,749); all ESA claimants (1,285)*

## C.2 JSA and ESA claimants with a criminal record, drug or alcohol dependency, or who were homeless

This section presents the demographic characteristics of JSA and ESA claimants who were interviewed in the boost survey and fell into the following groups: those with a criminal record; those with a drug or alcohol dependency; and those who were homeless.

## C.2.1 Groups in boost sample

Table C.18 shows which groups the claimants belonged to.

**Table C.18 Groups in boost sample**

	JSA and ESA in boost sample
	%
<b>One group only</b>	<b>56</b>
Criminal record	31
Drug or alcohol dependency	18
Homelessness	7
<b>Two groups only</b>	<b>39</b>
Criminal record and drug or alcohol dependency	30
Criminal record and homelessness	5
Drug or alcohol dependency and homelessness	3
<b>All three groups</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Base: All claimants in at least one group</i>	<i>318</i>

## C.2.2 Type of claim

Table C.19 shows the proportion of claimants in each group who were claiming JSA, and the proportion claiming ESA.

**Table C.19 Type of claim**

	Criminal record	Drug or alcohol dependency	Homeless
	%	%	%
JSA claimant	58	38	42
ESA claimant	42	62	58
<i>Base: Claimants with a criminal record (228); claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (182); homeless claimants (68)</i>			

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### C.2.3 Health

Table C.20 shows the proportion of claimants in one of the three groups who had physical health conditions, or mental, cognitive, or intellectual health conditions.

**Table C.20 Health barriers**

	<b>Criminal record</b>	<b>Drug or alcohol dependency</b>	<b>Homeless</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Physical health condition only	6	6	6
Mental health condition only	8	15	9
Physical and mental health conditions	34	47	49
No health conditions	52	33	37

*Base: Claimants with a criminal record (228); claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (182); homeless claimants (68)*

### C.2.4 Sex and age

The age and gender profile the three groups are shown in Tables C.21 and C.22.

**Table C.21 Sex**

	<b>Criminal record</b>	<b>Drug or alcohol dependency</b>	<b>Homeless</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Male	86	83	87
Female	14	17	13

*Base: Claimants with a criminal record (228); claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (182); homeless claimants (68)*

**Table C.22 Age**

	<b>Criminal record</b>	<b>Drug or alcohol dependency</b>	<b>Homeless</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
18 to 24	18	9	15
25 to 49	70	79	75
50+	12	13	10

*Base: Claimants with a criminal record (228); claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (182); homeless claimants (68)*

## C.2.5 Caring responsibilities

Table C.23 shows the proportion of claimants in the three groups who were caring for someone sick or disabled.

**Table C.23 Caring responsibilities**

	<b>Criminal record</b>	<b>Drug or alcohol dependency</b>	<b>Homeless</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Caring responsibilities within household	3	6	-
Caring responsibilities outside of household	2	3	3
Both	1	1	-
No caring responsibilities	92	91	96

*Base: Claimants with a criminal record (228); claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (182); homeless claimants (68)*

## C.2.6 Highest qualification

Table C.24 shows the highest qualification of claimants in the three groups.

**Table C.24 Highest qualification**

	<b>Criminal record</b>	<b>Drug or alcohol dependency</b>	<b>Homeless</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
No qualifications	28	41	35
Entry level qualifications	5	8	4
GCSEs D-G, Vocational Level 1 qualifications and equivalent	21	16	21
GCSEs A*-C, Vocational Level 2 qualifications and equivalent	28	22	22
A-levels, Vocational Level 3 qualifications and equivalent	8	6	4
Certificates of Higher Education or equivalent	1	1	2
Higher National Certificates (HNC), Diplomas (HND) or equivalent	2	-	3
First degree or higher	3	2	4
Don't know	5	5	4

*Base: Claimants with a criminal record (228); claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (182); homeless claimants (68)*

## C.2.7 Marital status and children

Table C.25 displays the marital status and Table C.26 the presence of children for claimants in the three groups.

**Table C.25 Marital status**

	Criminal record %	Drug or alcohol dependency %	Homeless %
Single (or engaged but not living with partner as a couple)	76	74	90
Married, civil partnership or living with partner	11	9	-
Widowed	*	1	-
Divorced	7	8	4
Separated	5	6	6

*Base: Claimants with a criminal record (228); claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (182); homeless claimants (68)*

**Table C.26 Number of children**

	Criminal record %	Drug or alcohol dependency %	Homeless %
No children	89	91	99
1 Child	8	5	1
2 Children	1	3	-
3 Children	1	1	-
More than 3 Children	*	1	-

*Base: Claimants with a criminal record (228); claimants with a drug or alcohol dependency (182); homeless claimants (68)*

## C.3 Lone parents on IS

This section provides an overview of the demographic profile of lone parents on IS with a youngest child aged three or four. These claimants were interviewed as part of the boost survey.

### C.3.1 Marital status and children

All lone parents included in the boost sample had a youngest child aged three or four. More than one in three (39 per cent) had just one child living with them, while 30 per cent had two children, 19 per cent had three and 11 per cent had four or more.

By the time of the interview, five per cent were married or living with a partner, but the majority (62 per cent) described themselves as single, with five per cent divorced and 28 per cent separated.

### C.3.2 Health

One in five lone parents reported having a long-term health problem or disability (20 per cent). This is similar to the proportion of lone parents claiming JSA (19 per cent).

Overall, 15 per cent said they had a **limiting** health problem or disability, and nine per cent said their health problem or disability made it difficult for them to find work.

Nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of those with a long-term health problem or disability said they had a mental health condition, while 31 per cent had a mobility impairment, 26 per cent had a condition related to stamina, breathing or fatigue, and 23 per cent had a dexterity impairment.

### C.3.3 Sex and age

Most lone parents were female (94 per cent) and were mostly aged between 25 and 34 (52 per cent) or between 35 and 44 (29 per cent).

### C.3.4 Caring responsibilities

One in seven lone parents (14 per cent) said that they cared for someone sick, disabled or elderly. This is the same as the proportion of lone parents claiming JSA (also 14 per cent).

### C.3.5 Highest qualification

One in six lone parents (16 per cent) had no qualifications, while just eight per cent had a first degree or higher qualification. These figures are similar to those observed for lone parents claiming JSA, who are less well qualified than JSA claimants as a whole (for example, just eight per cent of JSA clients had no qualifications). Full details of lone parents' highest qualifications are included in Table C.27.

**Table C.27 Highest qualification**

	IS %
No qualifications	16
Entry level qualifications	3
GCSEs D-G, Vocational Level 1 qualifications and equivalent	14
GCSEs A*-C, Vocational Level 2 qualifications and equivalent	30
A-levels, Vocational Level 3 qualifications and equivalent	17
Certificates of Higher Education or equivalent	1
Higher National Certificates (HNC), Diplomas (HND) or equivalent	6
First degree or higher	8
Don't know	5
<i>Base: All lone parents on IS</i>	341

### C.3.6 Length of time since last worked

Table C.28 shows the length of time since lone parents were last in employment. This group of lone parents had typically spent longer away from work than lone parents on JSA.

**Table C.28 Length of time since last worked**

	<b>IS</b>
	<b>%</b>
Less than 6 months	5
6-12 months	24
1-3 years	19
3-5 years	21
Over 5 years	25
Never worked	5
<i>Base: All lone parents on IS</i>	<b>341</b>

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