

# 2009 Jobcentre Plus Customer Satisfaction Research

Findings from quantitative and qualitative research

by Andrew Thomas, Nick Coleman,  
Jenny Turtle, Sarah Bone, Claire Bassett  
and James Mason

**Department for Work and Pensions**

**Research Report No 657**

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and James Mason**

A report of research carried out by TNS-BMRB Social Research on behalf of the  
Department for Work and Pensions

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# Abbreviations

<b>BOC</b>	Better Off Calculation
<b>DEA</b>	Disability Employment Adviser
<b>DSO</b>	Departmental Strategic Objective
<b>DSO7</b>	Departmental Strategic Objective 7
<b>DWP</b>	Department for Work and Pensions
<b>ESA</b>	Employment and Support Allowance
<b>FJR</b>	Fortnightly Job Review
<b>IB</b>	Incapacity Benefit
<b>IBPA</b>	Incapacity Benefit Personal Adviser
<b>IS</b>	Income Support
<b>JRFND</b>	Jobseeker's Regime and Flexible New Deal
<b>JSA</b>	Jobseeker's Allowance
<b>LPA</b>	Lone Parent Adviser
<b>SOC</b>	Standard Occupational Classification
<b>WCA</b>	Work Capability Assessment
<b>WFHRA</b>	Work-Focused Health-Related Assessment
<b>WFI</b>	Work Focused Interview

# Glossary

**Contact channels**

Ways in which customers can contact Jobcentre Plus, e.g. by telephone, in writing, face to face or by email.

**Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)**

ESA is a benefit for people who cannot work because of illness or disability. ESA replaced Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Income Support (IS) paid on the grounds of incapacity for new claimants from 27 October 2008.

**ESA1 form (ESA claim form)**

The ESA1 form is used to make the initial claim for ESA. This form is usually completed over the telephone by the Contact Centre. Following this, a statement is posted out to the claimant for them to check and return if required. In some circumstances they may complete it face to face.

**ESA50 form**

The ESA50 form asks claimants about how their illness or disability affects their ability to complete everyday tasks. It is sent to them after they have made their initial claim and helps the health-care professional to advise whether it is necessary to invite them to a face-to-face medical assessment.

**Fortnightly Job Reviews (FJR)** FJR is relatively short contacts, but the length will vary to a degree to take into account individual customer needs. The primary purpose of an FJR is to:

- discuss with the customer what they have been doing to find work to make sure they are actively seeking work and therefore entitled to Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA); and
- see what help, if any, is needed.

Matching and submitting people to jobs is not routinely undertaken at FJR. Instead, customers are provided with information, advice and guidance on how to make best use of self-help vacancy channels such as Jobseeker's Direct and the Internet Job Bank. Where additional help is identified as required at the FJR, this will be provided there and then where possible and practical. Where this cannot be accommodated, the customer would be referred to an adviser for additional help.

**Pathways to Work** This is a back-to-work programme for customers claiming IB and ESA. It is delivered in 40 per cent of the country by Jobcentre Plus and in the remaining 60 per cent by private and voluntary providers.

**New Jobseeker Interview** Everyone claiming JSA has a New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) with an adviser to discuss and agree some:

- realistic and achievable job goals; and
- job search activities that, if taken, will offer the best chance of success.

As part of this, the adviser will provide information, advice and guidance on appropriate vacancy sources, including Jobcentre Plus self-help channels such as Jobseeker Direct (telephone matching service) and the Internet Job Bank.



**Support group**

ESA claimants are placed in the Support Group if they have an illness or disability that severely limits what they can do. They receive the highest rate of benefit and are not expected to take part in any work-related activity although they can volunteer to do so.

**Work Capability Assessment (WCA)**

Between 1 and 13 weeks into the application process ESA claimants undergo a WCA. The WCA includes evaluation of the ESA50 form and other evidence, and can be paper-based, or involve a face-to-face assessment. This is conducted by a health-care professional from Atos Healthcare, who are contracted by Jobcentre Plus to undertake the ESA medical assessments. The WCA enables the health-care professional to provide independent and robust advice to the decision maker on an individual's functional capability.

**Work-Related Activity Group**

ESA claimants are placed in the Work-Related Activity Group if they are assessed as having limited capability for work. They are expected to take part in Work Focused Interviews with a personal adviser. They receive support to help them prepare to get into work.

**Work Focused Health Related Assessment (WFHRA)**

ESA claimants allocated to the Work-Related Activity Group are required to undergo a WFHRA. This is conducted by a health-care professional from Atos and explores a claimant's motivations about moving into work and any health-related interventions which would support this. The WFHRA originally took place on the same day as the face-to-face WCA, but has since been moved to a separate appointment.

**WFHRA report**

The WFHRA report is completed by a health-care professional during an ESA claimant's WFHRA. Copies are sent to the claimant and their personal adviser. This report is designed to support advisers' work with claimants in Work Focused Interviews.

# Notes on terminology

A large number of tables appear in this report. The following conventions have been used:

0 = a "true zero" (i.e. no responses in that category)

\* = less than 0.5 per cent, but more than zero responses

Significance testing has been carried out at the five per cent level, unless otherwise stated. All comparative data described in the report is significant, unless otherwise stated.

Where net figures are described in the body of the report these have been taken directly from the raw data and therefore may not always equal the sum of the figures in the charts due to rounding. Similarly, figures may not always total 100 per cent due to rounding.



# Summary

## Background and objectives

Jobcentre Plus has regularly undertaken Customer Satisfaction Surveys. The 2009 National Customer Satisfaction Research was commissioned in order to provide an up-to-date assessment of customer satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus services, and it involved a quantitative customer survey and qualitative interviews with staff and customers. As well as measuring the overall level of satisfaction, the survey aimed to assess differences in satisfaction amongst different benefit groups and across diverse demographic groups, as well as by region. It also determined which aspects of the service customers are the most and least satisfied with, including satisfaction with the various contact channels. An additional aim of the 2009 survey was to examine the impact of the economic downturn on Jobcentre Plus customer satisfaction. The survey also aimed to provide feedback on aspects of customer service that relate to Departmental Strategic Objective 7 (DSO7): 'Make DWP an Exemplar of Effective Service Delivery'<sup>1</sup>, specifically the four indicators that form the basis of the DWP Customer Charter<sup>2</sup>: *Ease of access*, *Treatment*, *Timely response* and *Right outcome*. The qualitative research included a follow-up study that sought to investigate key issues that arose from the survey and an exploration of satisfaction amongst Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claimants.

## Methodology

The Customer Satisfaction Research involved three elements, all three of which were undertaken during the recession:

- A representative quantitative survey of Income Support (IS), Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) customers between July and October 2009.
- Qualitative follow-up research took place between October 2009 and January 2010 with Jobcentre Plus staff and customers to further investigate issues that arose from the quantitative survey.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/dsopsa/dso7.asp>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/customer-charter-dwp.pdf>

- A qualitative study of satisfaction amongst ESA claimants, involving 30 depth interviews between August and November 2009.

## Quantitative survey

The survey was based on working-age benefit claimants, specifically recipients of JSA, IS and IB. However, the survey excluded those who were currently receiving only the new ESA, given the relatively small number of claimants expected to be receiving ESA at the time of the survey. These claimants were however covered in separate qualitative research. The 2009 survey focused on customers who had both claimed/received benefit and had had contact with Jobcentre Plus within the last 12 months.

The sample was generated by Jobcentre Plus, from the Department for Work and Pensions' National Benefits Database, and was based on customers claiming or receiving benefit in December 2008. In total, 4,125 interviews were completed between 20 July and 2 October 2009: 3,998 interviews by telephone and 127 by post. Twenty-nine of the telephone interviews were conducted using a non-English language interpreter. The overall response rate was 52 per cent.

## Qualitative research

The qualitative follow-up research involved depth interviews with JSA, IS and IB customers who had taken part in the preceding quantitative survey, and a range of Jobcentre Plus operational staff from Contact Centres, Jobcentre Plus offices and Benefit Delivery Centres. The research sought to follow-up key issues arising from the survey.

The third strand of the research involved a qualitative study of satisfaction amongst ESA claimants, who for sampling reasons were not included in the main quantitative survey. It involved 30 face-to-face depth interviews with ESA claimants which sought to explore their experiences of making a claim for ESA.

## Findings

### **Customer profile and use of Jobcentre Plus services**

The quantitative survey sample comprised 37 per cent of JSA customers, 39 per cent of IS customers and 25 per cent of IB customers. The proportion of JSA customers was higher than in previous years. The customer profile varied by benefit type: JSA customers were younger and mostly male, IS customers were predominantly female, while IB customers had an older age profile. One in six JSA customers (17 per cent) were in professional, managerial or technical occupations in their most recent job.

JSA customers were more likely than other customers to have used the various face-to-face and telephone channels for contacting Jobcentre Plus, with IB customers

least likely to have done so. In particular, JSA customers were more likely to have attended face-to-face meetings at Jobcentre Plus offices in the previous 12 months (92 per cent, compared with 78 per cent of IS customers and 44 per cent of IB customers). The level of written contact (both in terms of sending and receiving correspondence) was similar for the three benefit types.

It is to be expected that JSA customers will have more contact than IS or IB customers with Jobcentre Plus because of the more intensive elements of support provided, including Fortnightly Job Reviews. The survey findings confirm that, over the previous 12 months, JSA customers had a more intensive relationship with Jobcentre Plus than IS or IB customers. Although claims tended to be shorter, contact was more frequent and covered more contact channels. By contrast, some IB customers had very little contact with Jobcentre Plus at all.

Overall, around one in four customers (24 per cent) said they had been in contact with an external provider in the previous 12 months.

### **Overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus**

The majority of customers (75 per cent) said they were satisfied with the services provided by Jobcentre Plus, including one in three (33 per cent) who were *very* satisfied, while 12 per cent were dissatisfied. IS customers were the most satisfied (82 per cent satisfied), followed by IB customers (75 per cent), while JSA customers were the least satisfied (68 per cent satisfied and 19 per cent dissatisfied). This pattern by benefit type applies throughout the survey.

The qualitative research found that JSA, IS and IB customers were generally very satisfied with the service they received but where dissatisfaction arose this was usually only in respect of a single aspect of the service delivery, with all other aspects being positively viewed. In some instances, dissatisfaction arose because of a single incident, such as an adviser being abrupt or insufficient information being provided in response to an enquiry; in others it was due to repeated experience of the same issue, such as a lack of privacy or lengthy waiting times to use the Jobpoints.

Satisfaction varied for different types of customer, as follows:

- 1.** Findings were generally very consistent by region. Only in the North West were customers significantly more satisfied than average (80 per cent satisfied), while London was the one region where customers were less satisfied (69 per cent).
- 2.** Women were more likely than men to be satisfied (80 per cent compared with 69 per cent). This is mainly the result of a marked difference within the sample of IS customers (84 per cent of female IS customers satisfied compared with 73 per cent of male IS customers).
- 3.** Also within the sample of IS customers, those with a limiting long-standing illness or disability were less satisfied than other IS customers (75 per cent compared with 86 per cent). Alongside the difference by gender, this indicates a general pattern between the two main types of IS customer who claim on the grounds of either incapacity (less satisfied) or as a lone parent (more satisfied).

4. Asian customers were more satisfied than other customers, specifically those whose first language is not English (87 per cent). Black customers were less satisfied than other customers, but this was the result of the high proportion of Black customers in London (where satisfaction was generally lower).
5. Amongst JSA customers, 16–24-year-olds were more satisfied than older customers (75 per cent compared with 65 per cent). There was no age difference in satisfaction amongst IS customers, while amongst IB customers, those aged 50 or over were more satisfied than younger customers (78 per cent compared with 72 per cent).
6. In the JSA sample, respondents in professional, managerial or technical occupations were less satisfied (57 per cent) and were more likely to be dissatisfied (27 per cent) than other JSA customers. An increase in the proportion of these customers in the total JSA population is therefore likely to reduce overall satisfaction, although comparisons cannot be made with previous surveys, as this is the first time that this analysis on this sub-group of the JSA population has been carried out. In this context, it is worth noting that JSA customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds gave much lower satisfaction ratings than other JSA customers for providing information relevant to needs and circumstances, at both office-based meetings and in telephone contact.
7. JSA customers who had been made redundant in their last job (another important group of customers in the recent economic downturn) were also less satisfied than other JSA customers (64 per cent satisfied and 23 per cent dissatisfied).
8. IB customers in the qualitative research were generally unsure whether they had been seen by an IB Personal Adviser (IBPA) or a Disability Employment Adviser (DEA). Nevertheless, they tended to be critical about the service provided by the specialist advisers. Whilst delays in making appointments was a key issue, there were some concerns about the level of knowledge that some of the specialist advisers had about health conditions and how these might affect a person in the working environment.

Although direct comparisons with the 2007 survey are not possible due to the differences in methodology and sample design, analysis indicates that there has been no substantive change in overall satisfaction since 2007<sup>3</sup>.

Respondents mostly said that Jobcentre Plus services were as good as (47 per cent) or better than (37 per cent) they expected, while 13 per cent said they were worse than they had expected. One in three customers said that Jobcentre Plus does not need to make any improvements to services (32 per cent), while 46 per cent felt that *some* or a *slight* improvement is needed. However, 15 per cent said that *much* or a *huge* improvement is needed.

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<sup>3</sup> See Section 1.4.2 and Appendix C for further details.

## Interaction with Jobcentre Plus office and staff

Face-to-face meetings at Jobcentre Plus offices were often work-related (e.g. Work-Focused Interviews or review meetings, Fortnightly Job Reviews), whereas telephone contact was more likely to concern an actual benefit claim (e.g. to discuss a claim or to check eligibility for benefits). However, the reasons for contact with Jobcentre Plus (whether face to face or by telephone) were extremely varied, and findings that summarise customer satisfaction by contact channel will inevitably generalise the individual nature of each interaction.

Where customers had an appointment for a meeting or telephone call with Jobcentre Plus, most said that the meeting/telephone call happened at the appointed time (88 per cent for meetings at Jobcentre Plus offices, 77 per cent for telephone calls). Most customers who had recently made telephone contact also said that the amount of time they waited for the call to be answered was reasonable (71 per cent). Similarly, customers who had written to Jobcentre Plus and had received a reply generally felt that the time they waited was reasonable (81 per cent).

Overall satisfaction with various contact channels was also high. The proportion of respondents *very satisfied* was 62 per cent for home visits, 56 per cent for office-based meetings, 50 per cent for telephone contact and 45 per cent for written contact. Satisfaction with office-based meetings was greater where the meeting was to talk about jobs or finding work and lower for Fortnightly Job Reviews. Satisfaction with telephone contact was lower when the reason for contact was to discuss an existing claim or to report non-receipt of payment.

Ratings of specific aspects of service were also generally positive, with at least half of respondents rating each aspect *very good*. Across the contact channels, the highest ratings were given for being treated in a friendly and polite way, while ratings were least positive in relation to providing information that was relevant to needs and circumstances.

One in ten customers who had attended a meeting at an office said that there were issues that had not been addressed (10 per cent). A slightly higher proportion of respondents who had made contact by telephone said there were issues that had not been addressed (15 per cent), while in relation to written contact, nine per cent who had received a reply said that it had not dealt fully with their query. The qualitative research identified a number of issues that were not resolved to the satisfaction of the customer. These included a lack of explanation about why expected benefit payments were outstanding and customers having to resubmit information repeatedly because it was lost in the process of being sent to Jobcentre Plus or misplaced by the relevant Jobcentre Plus staff.

Customers who had visited a Jobcentre Plus office for any purpose in the previous 12 months were mostly satisfied with the conditions at their local office (82 per cent, including 42 per cent who were *very satisfied*). Just eight per cent were dissatisfied. When rating various aspects of office conditions, respondents were most positive in relation to the safety of the environment (58 per cent *very good*),



while views were slightly less positive in relation to privacy (41 per cent *very good*, but 14 per cent *very* or *fairly poor*).

### **Self service contact channels**

At least three in four customers were aware of self service contact channels: Jobpoints, the touch-screen job search machines in Jobcentre Plus offices, (87 per cent), the Jobcentre Plus website<sup>4</sup> (82 per cent) and Customer Access Phones (78 per cent). Customers were more likely to have used a Jobpoint (46 per cent) or the website (45 per cent) than the Customer Access Phones (25 per cent) in the last year. Awareness and use of the channels was much higher amongst JSA customers than IS or IB customers; figures were lowest for IB customers.

The majority of customers who had used each of the channels found them at least *fairly* helpful. Customer Access Phones were more likely to be rated as helpful (87 per cent) than the website (80 per cent), and both of these were more likely to be considered helpful than the Jobpoints (76 per cent). A key issue with the Jobpoints and website was the search facility. Jobs in distant locations were displayed alongside local roles when using both channels. In addition to this, customers mentioned that the job roles displayed on Jobpoints were not detailed enough (generic descriptions such as 'office professional' and 'office manager') and that unrelated job sectors were advertised together on the website (for example, administration and hospitality roles). Jobcentre Plus is in the process of improving its job search facilities.

### **Access to Jobcentre Plus and problems experienced by customers**

Three in four customers (76 per cent) said that they found it *very* or *fairly* easy to get in contact with Jobcentre Plus, although one in six (16 per cent) found it difficult. Similar proportions found their local office convenient to get to (80 per cent) rather than inconvenient (13 per cent). Customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability were less likely to have found it easy to contact Jobcentre Plus (71 per cent) and to say that their local office was convenient to get to (76 per cent).

Customers who said their access to Jobcentre Plus was limited in some way (15 per cent overall) gave a range of reasons, including distance, services not accommodating their physical requirements, and problems with staff.

Seven per cent of customers had encountered problems with their benefit payment in the previous 12 months, immediately after notifying a change in personal details or circumstances. The qualitative research identified a number of examples, including problems with benefit payment following a change of address or moving into a different Jobcentre Plus catchment area, and when customers

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of the research fieldwork customers were providing feedback on the Jobcentre Plus website. Since April 2010 the content and functionality of the Jobcentre Plus website has been switched over to the Direct.gov website.

changed from claiming IS to JSA. Ten per cent said they had received incorrect or contradictory information from Jobcentre Plus. Examples of this included different explanations being given by staff as to why a customer's JSA was cancelled.

One in six customers (17 per cent) said they had felt like complaining in the previous 12 months, and three per cent had actually made a complaint. Respondents were most likely to have felt like complaining about staff attitudes, while other respondents mentioned lack of knowledge amongst staff, mistakes or unclear information, or the speed of service. JSA customers were more likely than IS or IB customers to have complained, or to have felt like complaining. Customers who had complained were likely to be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled (59 per cent dissatisfied, 31 per cent satisfied). The qualitative research suggested reasons for this, including the length of time taken for a response to be received, the disinterested manner of staff dealing with the complaint and the customer being passed around from one staff member to another without the complaint being resolved. Equal numbers were satisfied and dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint (35 per cent satisfied, 36 per cent dissatisfied).

### **Key drivers of customer satisfaction**

Multivariate analysis indicates that, from a range of measures and specific aspects of service, 'ease of getting in contact with Jobcentre Plus' had the greatest impact on overall satisfaction (*very satisfied*). The next strongest measures were 'providing information relevant to needs and circumstances' and 'convenience of the local Jobcentre Plus office'.

For both face-to-face and telephone contact, the driver with the strongest impact on satisfaction was 'providing information relevant to needs and circumstances'. For face-to-face contact, aspects of service delivery based on customer *treatment*, including 'being treated with respect as an individual' and 'respecting privacy', and those aspects which rely on achieving a *timely response* including 'completing business in a reasonable length of time' had the next strongest impact on satisfaction. For telephone contact, 'completing business in a reasonable length of time' and 'treating you with respect as an individual' were also factors that had a strong impact on satisfaction.

The analysis also distinguished the three benefit types. This found that 'providing information relevant to needs and circumstances' was the aspect of service that had the strongest impact on satisfaction for each of JSA, IS (face-to-face contact only) and IB customers. In addition:

- For JSA customers, other drivers with a strong impact on customer satisfaction were 'being treated with respect as an individual' and 'completing business in a reasonable length of time'.
- Amongst IS customers, 'completing business in a reasonable length of time', 'being treated with respect as an individual' and 'respecting privacy' (face-to-face contact) were important aspects of service.

- Amongst IB customers, respect for privacy was a key driver of satisfaction with face-to-face contact, while being treated with respect as an individual was a key driver with telephone contact. 'Completing business in a reasonable length of time' also had a strong impact on satisfaction, particularly so for telephone contact.

Overall, the survey confirms that indicators 1-4 of DSO7 (*Ease of access, Treatment, Timely response* and *Right outcome*) are aspects of service that are considered important by customers, and that Jobcentre Plus is generally performing well in these areas.

### **New customers**

The qualitative research suggested that customers from professional, managerial and technical occupational backgrounds have high levels of expectation about Jobcentre Plus services. These expectations covered different aspects of service such as speed of service, quality of training courses and adviser knowledge, and understanding of customer background. Customers in this group tended to be dissatisfied with the service that they received. Staff noted that this group were particularly difficult to satisfy, and felt that their higher expectations would need to be more carefully managed.

New customers from other employment backgrounds, who had recently been made redundant and had not claimed benefits before or recently, were a lot more positive about the services in comparison to those from a professional, managerial or technical background. Their expectations were quite different from professional and managerial customers; they expected to be given simple information about the benefit system and Jobcentre Plus services, as well as being provided with basic training and advice (basic CV writing skills, interview training and job search advice). These expectations tended to be met by Jobcentre Plus and as a result this group was generally satisfied with the service they received.

### **ESA claimants**

The qualitative research with ESA claimants found that the satisfaction levels tended to vary, depending on their situation. Those who were entitled to receive ESA tended to be much more satisfied with the claim process; those who were still waiting for a decision or were assessed as fit for work tended to be less satisfied.

Timeliness of service and being treated in the right way were key elements of satisfaction for telephone and face-to-face services. The friendly manner of the service (*Treatment*) was felt to be the most important element of satisfaction amongst ESA claimants. A positive attitude was appreciated from all staff that claimants came into contact with, including Contact Centre staff and Personal Advisers. Getting the right treatment was especially important in cases where the claimant thought that the wrong decision had been made about their ESA status. Although these claimants tended to be dissatisfied, their experience was often improved by staff engaging with them in the right way. Also, face-to-face contact

particularly added to satisfaction, creating a sense of reassurance because it made claimants feel that their questions could be more easily answered.

Delays were seen as key elements of dissatisfaction for ESA claimants regardless of their situation, demonstrating the importance of timely response, although there were differing expectations as to how long certain processes would take. Examples of this included waiting times for Work Capability Assessment appointments. Those who were waiting to receive a decision and those who were assessed as fit for work tended to have additional reasons for dissatisfaction: lack of explanation as to why a decision about entitlement was made (explaining the right outcome) and not being told when a decision is to be expected.

## Conclusions and ideas for improvement

Although the majority of customers (75 per cent) said they were satisfied with the services provided by Jobcentre Plus, a key focus of the qualitative follow-up work was to identify how services could be improved. Customers and staff who took part in the qualitative follow-up research put forward a number of ideas for improvement, which are explored below.

For a summary table containing suggested ideas for improvement alongside key survey findings see the conclusions section at the end of the report (Section 11.4).

Across all aspects of service, staff stressed the importance of managing customer expectations. This related to a number of service aspects including the speed at which services are delivered, the level of support and advice provided at adviser meetings and the type of jobs available through the self service channels. Managing expectations was especially important for customers from professional, managerial and technical occupational backgrounds as they tended to have higher expectations about the speed of service, the detail of information provided, the quality of the training courses available and the extent to which their adviser would appreciate their background. Staff thought that customer satisfaction could be increased if customers were better informed about what to expect from the service.

Also, staff recognised that customers could be informed about their responsibilities in greater detail. This is because staff suggested that a number of service issues can be caused by customer error. For example, staff mentioned that customers may be late in providing documentation or forget to notify Jobcentre Plus of a change of address. Customer errors contributed to problems with the service and staff stated that explaining processes and customer responsibilities would help prevent this from happening.

Customers and staff both emphasised the importance of providing detailed information and 'signposting' around the Jobcentre Plus claim process. This includes what entitlements customers might be eligible for (e.g. claiming back travel expenses), what benefits they may be suited for, the availability of suitable

courses, and how to complain. This was felt to be especially important for those who were unfamiliar with the services, or those who had not claimed before.

A lack of staff resource and training was felt to be a factor that affected a number of aspects of the service delivered by Jobcentre Plus. It was recognised that this had a number of effects, including staff forgetting to recontact customers, delays in answering calls due to high call volumes, and insufficient or incorrect advice being given to customers. Staff mentioned that Jobcentre Plus had recruited and trained additional staff during the recessionary period to deal with these issues and as a result, progress had already been made.

The importance of treating customers in a polite manner was emphasised by both customers and staff and it was agreed that this could be possibly emphasised in any future training staff might receive.

Also, it was suggested that staff should be attentive to the particular needs of new customer groups and be aware about how they might differ from established customers. For example, new customers from other employment backgrounds, who had either never claimed benefit or had not done so for many years, required general reassurance as their confidence levels were usually low, as well as basic signposting around the benefit system and specific types of training and advice (basic CV writing skills, interview training and job search advice).

Overall, customers were positive about the degree of privacy afforded to them in Jobcentre Plus offices. However, customers in the qualitative research mentioned that privacy could be a concern in a variety of contexts, including face-to-face meetings and when using the Jobpoints and Customer Access Phones. In response, staff suggested that privacy during meetings should be respected as much as possible, and that open-plan meetings should be avoided where appropriate. Also, the idea of private booths for using Customer Access Phones and Jobpoints was put forward.

Staff and customers mentioned a number of functional issues around the job search process when using self service channels. It was felt that the local filtering system on the Jobpoints and the website could be improved so that geographically distant jobs were not displayed. Also, it was felt that information relating to jobs could be displayed in a better fashion. The Jobpoints generally displayed a lack of detail about job roles, and on the website unrelated job sectors were often advertised under the same category. Staff and customers agreed that making improvements in these areas would increase satisfaction.

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background to the research

Jobcentre Plus has undertaken a number of research projects since it was established to assess and understand the views of its customers about the services it provides. These have included repeated Customer Satisfaction Surveys with a representative sample of customers.

The 2009 National Jobcentre Plus Customer Satisfaction Research was commissioned in order to provide an up-to-date assessment of customer satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus services, and it involved a quantitative customer survey and qualitative interviews with staff and customers. Since the last survey in 2007, there have also been a number of policy changes (such as the extension of conditionality to additional groups) which may have an impact on satisfaction.

## 1.2 Overview of research

The 2009 Customer Satisfaction Research consisted of three elements, each of which was undertaken during the recession:

- A representative quantitative survey of Income Support (IS), Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) customers between July and October 2009.
- Qualitative follow-up research with Jobcentre Plus staff and customers to further investigate issues that arose from the quantitative survey (which took place between October 2009 and January 2010). This involved three separate phases which began with staff interviews to provide a social and economic context for the subsequent customer interviews, followed by customer research to explore areas of interest as identified by the quantitative survey, and ended with further staff interviews whereby findings from customers were reflected back to staff and their views were obtained on why the issues had arisen, as well as their thoughts on potential solutions to these issues.

- A qualitative study of customer satisfaction amongst customers claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), involving 30 depth interviews with customers between August and November 2009. At the time the sample was drawn for the survey (which was of customers claiming or receiving benefit up to and including December 2008), there were too few customers claiming ESA for them to be included. Consequently, in order for their views to be investigated, a small-scale qualitative study was conducted.

## 1.3 Research objectives

### 1.3.1 Survey objectives

The overall aim of the survey research was to measure levels of customer satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus services. This aim was underpinned by a number of key research objectives:

- To measure the overall level of satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus.
- To determine which aspects of the service customers are the most and least satisfied with, including satisfaction with the various contact channels.
- To detect possible differences in satisfaction amongst different benefit groups and across diverse demographic groups.
- To determine the key drivers (including demographic variables) of satisfaction and dissatisfaction<sup>5</sup>.
- To determine satisfaction levels across the 11 Jobcentre Plus regions.
- To examine the impact of the economic downturn on Jobcentre Plus customer satisfaction.
- To compare satisfaction levels with the 2007 Customer Satisfaction Survey.

The survey also aimed to provide feedback on aspects of customer service that relate to Departmental Strategic Objective 7 (DSO7): 'Make DWP an Exemplar of Effective Service Delivery'<sup>6</sup>, specifically the four indicators that form the basis of the DWP Customer Charter<sup>7</sup>:

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<sup>5</sup> This built on the work carried out in the 2008 Customer Satisfaction Key Drivers research, which defined and base-lined Indicators 1 – 4 of DSO7. These findings were published alongside the 2009 findings and can be accessed via the following link:  
[http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/dsopsa/DSO7\\_REPORT.pdf](http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/dsopsa/DSO7_REPORT.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/dsopsa/dso7.asp>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/customer-charter-dwp.pdf>

- **Indicator 1, *Ease of access***

The level of customer satisfaction with the ease of access to Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) services.

- **Indicator 2, *Treatment***

The level of customer satisfaction with feeling respected and valued.

- **Indicator 3, *Timely response***

The level of customer satisfaction with the timeliness and responsiveness of service.

- **Indicator 4, *Right outcome***

The level of customer satisfaction with the outcome.

### **1.3.2 Qualitative follow-up research objectives**

The qualitative follow-up research aimed to follow up key issues arising from the quantitative survey in order to understand the reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction with Jobcentre Plus services among customers in receipt of JSA, IS or IB. In light of the survey findings, the following research objectives were developed:

- To further understand the overall drivers of customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction across all customer groups and benefit types (JSA, IS and IB) throughout the customer journey.
- To explore the views of new customer groups who had not claimed benefits before or had not done so for a long time, including those from professional, managerial and technical backgrounds and those from other occupational backgrounds.
- To focus on areas of interest identified by the 2009 Customer Satisfaction Survey including:
  - exploring aspects of service that cause dissatisfaction including: problems after a change in circumstances, unresolved issues and insufficient information and delays;
  - understanding reasons for dissatisfaction with self service channels (Customer Access Phones, Jobpoints and the website);
  - exploring reasons for complaints, as well as reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the complaints process and outcome;
  - identifying areas of service improvement.
- To assess perceptions and awareness of the DWP Customer Charter among staff and customers.



### 1.3.3 Qualitative research objectives – ESA claimants

The overall aim of the ESA claimants' satisfaction research element was to gain an in-depth understanding of the drivers and levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction with Jobcentre Plus services amongst ESA claimants. This was underpinned by the following objectives:

- To explore levels of satisfaction in relation to the four drivers of satisfaction, as identified in the DWP Customer Charter (*Ease of access, Treatment, Timely response and Right outcome*).
- To identify key elements of satisfaction and dissatisfaction in relation to Jobcentre Plus contact, ESA claim processes and the ESA customer journey.
- To gain an understanding of how experiences of making a claim for ESA compare with experiences of other benefits (particularly IS or IB) amongst customers who have claimed other benefits before.

## 1.4 Quantitative survey method

### 1.4.1 Survey population

As in previous surveys, the 2009 National Jobcentre Plus Customer Satisfaction Research was based on working-age benefit claimants, specifically recipients of JSA, IS and IB. The survey excluded those who were currently only receiving the new ESA, which has replaced IB and IS paid on incapacity grounds for new claimants. These claimants were however covered in separate qualitative research.

### 1.4.2 Changes between 2007 and 2009

The 2009 survey was limited to customers **who had both claimed and received benefit and had had contact with Jobcentre Plus within the last 12 months**. This definition of the customer population was slightly different from the 2007 survey, which excluded customers who had not received benefit within the last six months, but included customers who had had no contact with Jobcentre Plus within the last 12 months (although these customers were asked fewer questions).

Another change between the two surveys is that the 2007 survey used a quota sampling method, while in 2009 a random sample was used.

In spite of these differences in the survey population, it is still possible to compare results from the 2009 survey with those for the 2007 survey on the key 'overall satisfaction' measure, by analysing a comparable subset of the data from each survey. This is presented in Appendix C, which shows that there has been no substantive change in overall satisfaction since 2007.

### **1.4.3 Sample source**

The sample was generated by Jobcentre Plus, from the DWP National Benefits Database, which holds data about clients drawn from the different benefits systems. The sample was drawn in May 2009 (in time for the pilot fieldwork which took place in June 2009), from the latest monthly snapshot available on the database, which was of customers claiming or receiving benefit up to and including December 2008.

### **1.4.4 Sample selection**

Before sample selection, the database was stratified by length of claim and benefit type within each of the 11 Jobcentre Plus regions. The regional samples were selected disproportionately to allow the achievement of approximately equal numbers of interviews – about 364 – per region<sup>8</sup>. At the analysis stage the data were weighted to restore the correct proportions for the population.

### **1.4.5 Advance letters and opt-out process**

Advance letters were sent to 18,000 customers selected for the research. The letter was in English but for customers living in Wales a Welsh language version of the letter was also included.

Enclosed with the letter was a separate pro-forma and a reply-paid envelope for its return, to provide customers with a free and easy method of either:

- opting out of the survey altogether;
- requesting a postal questionnaire in either English or Welsh, if a telephone interview would be difficult for them; or
- requesting a telephone interview in a non-English language.

### **1.4.6 Data collection**

The majority of interviews were conducted by telephone, lasting 15 minutes on average. However, respondents were offered the option of completing a self-completion questionnaire (sent out by post) if they were not able to undertake the survey by telephone. In total, 4,125 interviews were completed between 20 July and 2 October 2009: 3,998 interviews by telephone and 127 by post. Twenty-nine of the telephone interviews were conducted using a non-English language interpreter. The overall response rate was 52 per cent. A detailed breakdown of response is included in Appendix A. Strategies taken in order to maximise the response rate are outlined in Section A.6.

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<sup>8</sup> A sample size of 364 per region allows robust analysis of the findings in each region, and also produces a total sample size of around 4,000, which is appropriate for the other analysis needs of the survey.

### 1.4.7 Questionnaire development

The majority of the 2009 questionnaire remained the same as in the 2007 survey. Some revisions and additions were made, in consultation with the Jobcentre Plus research team and with the research steering group. A small pilot study was carried out to test the questionnaire between 16 and 30 June 2009.

The survey focused on measuring satisfaction against the Jobcentre Plus customer service standards<sup>9</sup>, including the separate standards set for telephone calls, visits to offices and written forms of contact. Many of the survey results can also be linked, where applicable, to the key indicators of the DSO7: 'Make DWP an Exemplar of Effective Service Delivery'<sup>10</sup>, specifically the four indicators that form the basis of the DWP Customer Charter.

The final questionnaire (in Appendix D) was structured around the following themes:

- Benefits and recent contact (the initial questions established whether the customer was eligible for the survey – i.e. if they had been in contact with Jobcentre Plus in the previous 12 months).
- Satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus.
- Face-to-face interaction with staff.
- Telephone interaction with staff.
- Office visits.
- Written contact.
- Home visits.
- Alternative contact channels.
- Problems and complaints.
- Demographics.

### 1.4.8 Weighting

The data from the survey was weighted before analysis. The weighting ensured that the achieved sample matched the actual regional profiles of eligible Jobcentre Plus customers in terms of benefit type.

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<sup>9</sup> Jobcentre Plus customer service standards set out a commitment to meeting a single set of customer service standards: 'right treatment', 'right result', 'on time', and 'easy access'. For further details, see [http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/stellent/groups/jcp/documents/websitecontent/dev\\_011795.pdf](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/stellent/groups/jcp/documents/websitecontent/dev_011795.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> <http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/dsopsa/dso7.asp>

### 1.4.9 Interpretation of data

When interpreting the findings for this survey, it should be borne in mind that the survey is based on a *sample* of customers (not the total population). This means that all findings are subject to sampling tolerances. Differences highlighted in the report are statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level.

## 1.5 Qualitative follow-up research methods

### 1.5.1 Design

The qualitative follow-up research included working-age customers receiving either JSA, IS or IB who had taken part in the preceding survey. Staff from a range of grades and job roles across the different parts of Jobcentre Plus (including Jobcentre Plus offices, Benefit Delivery Centres and Contact Centres) were also included.

The qualitative follow-up research comprised three strands:

- Interviews with Jobcentre Plus staff, during late October 2009, to provide a social and economic context for the subsequent customer interviews.
- Customer research, during the period October to early December 2009, to explore areas of interest as identified by the quantitative survey.
- Further interviews with staff, during November and early December 2009, to consider their views on why the customer issues had arisen, as well as their thoughts on potential solutions to these issues.

### 1.5.2 Customer sample source and selection

The JSA, IS and IB customer sample for the qualitative follow-up research was selected from customers who had taken part in the preceding survey and who had provided their consent to be re-contacted to take part in further research. Customers were selected based on the following criteria:

- Customers who were dissatisfied with Jobcentre Plus services overall and had experienced one or more of the following issues:
  - experienced delays in getting through on the telephone;
  - experienced delays in getting a reply from Jobcentre Plus after sending them a letter;
  - received insufficient information or experienced unresolved issues following a meeting or telephone call with Jobcentre Plus;
  - experienced a problem with their benefit payment following a notification of a change in circumstances;
  - felt that some element of the service could be improved.

- Customers who said that they were dissatisfied with the self-service channels including the Customer Access Phones, Jobpoints, and/or the Jobcentre Plus website.
- Customers who intended to make a complaint but had not done so as well as customers who had complained and who were either satisfied or dissatisfied with the process and/or outcome of the complaint.
- New customers, who were either satisfied or dissatisfied with Jobcentre Plus services, including customers from a professional, managerial or technical employment background, and customers from other employment backgrounds who had either never claimed benefit or had not done so for many years.

### **1.5.3 Customer advance letters and opt-out process**

Opt-out letters were sent to JSA, IS and IB customers recruited from the survey. Those taking part in the follow-up qualitative research were invited to take part in a face-to-face interview or a telephone interview depending on their location.

Face-to-face interviews were based in four Jobcentre Plus regions: London, South East, Wales and the North West. This was to reflect the areas where staff fieldwork was taking place. The telephone interviews were spread nationwide.

The opt-out letter provided an explanation of the research and the overall timings involved. In the case of a face-to-face interview, the letter also explained that the interview could take place in the customer's home or another location that was suitable for them. Customers were offered a £20 incentive to take part. Customers were also told that telephone interviews could be arranged at their convenience. If they did not want to participate, customers were given the choice to opt out by freepost, telephone, or email. It was explained that their involvement would be completely voluntary and would not affect their benefits in any way. Letters were sent to those who had consented in the quantitative survey to being re-contacted for the purposes of future research.

### **1.5.4 Screening process**

Participants were recruited from samples provided by Jobcentre Plus and were screened using a series of questions to ensure that they fulfilled the relevant criteria in Section 1.5.2. Customers were contacted by telephone prior to the fieldwork taking place and taken through the screening process by trained recruiters.

### **1.5.5 Data collection**

The qualitative interviews with customers and staff were carried out using a mix of telephone and face-to-face interviews. Face-to-face interviews with customers were approximately an hour in length, with telephone interviews lasting approximately 40 minutes. Face-to-face interviews with staff lasted approximately an hour, and the telephone interviews varied from 30 minutes to an hour depending on staff availability.

### 1.5.6 Achieved customer sample profile

In total, 80 interviews were undertaken, consisting of 40 face-to-face and 40 telephone interviews. The profile of customers interviewed may be found in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1 Qualitative follow-up Phase 2 customer research: sample profile**

<b>Characteristics (based on survey responses)</b>	<b>Number of interviews</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Benefit type</b>	
JSA	41
IB	19
IS	20
<b>Age</b>	
16-24	15
25-49	45
50+	20
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
White	70
Other	10
<b>Disability</b>	
Have a limiting, longstanding illness or disability	34
Do not have a limiting, longstanding illness or disability	46
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	42
Female	38
<b>Area of survey follow up</b>	
1 Those who identified a service area improvement (experienced delays, received insufficient information/experienced unresolved issues/ experienced benefit problems following a change in circumstances)	23
2 New customers who have not claimed benefits before or recently:	
a professional, managerial and technical employment backgrounds	15
b other employment backgrounds	10
3 Those who said they were dissatisfied with self-service channels	17
4 Those who had complained/felt like complaining	15

### 1.5.7 Staff sample source and selection

Staff participated in the first and third strands of the research. Strand one comprised 24 face-to-face interviews with staff across two Jobcentre Plus offices, one Contact Centre and one Benefit Delivery Centre and five telephone interviews with regional and district managers. Strand 3 comprised 26 face-to-face interviews with staff across two Jobcentre Plus offices, one Contact Centre and one Benefit Delivery Centre and six telephone interviews with regional and district managers. Most of the face-to-face interviews were conducted as paired interviews, with staff reflecting different job roles.

Staff contact details were provided by Jobcentre Plus. A range of different types of staff were included in the study and are shown in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2 Staff roles**

<b>Staff</b>	<b>Office type/location</b>	<b>Staff roles interviewed</b>
Customer-facing Jobcentre Plus office staff	Four Jobcentre Plus offices	Fortnightly Jobsearch Reviewers New Deal Advisers Lone Parent Advisers Incapacity Benefit Advisers Disability Employment Advisers Financial Assessors
Customer-facing Contact Centre staff	Two Contact Centres	Contact Centre Manager Front-line telephony staff
Customer-facing Benefit Delivery Centre staff	Two Benefit Delivery Centres	Telephony team members
Senior management	London, South East, North West, Wales	District Managers Regional Managers

### 1.5.8 Topic guide content and development

The interviews were structured using topic guides. A total of eight topic guides were used across the three phases of the research. Copies of the topic guides may be found in Appendix E.

The phase 1 staff topic guides (Appendix E, E1) were designed according to the part of the organisation for which the member of staff worked (Benefit Delivery Centres, Contact Centres and Jobcentre Plus offices), their level of seniority and whether or not they were in customer-facing roles. The topic guides covered the following set of issues:

- the environment in which Jobcentre Plus were currently operating;
- the changing customer base and new/emerging Jobcentre Plus customers and their service needs;

- potential areas for improvement in service delivery;
- two issues beginning to arise from the Jobcentre Plus customer satisfaction survey: customer complaints and the use of Jobcentre Plus self-service channels.

The phase 2 customer topic guide (Appendix E, E2) was largely structured around the customer journey and the issues being followed up from the survey. Staff suggestions from phase 1 of the fieldwork were used to develop questions for 'new' customer groups. The topic guides covered the following issues:

- the drivers of satisfaction and dissatisfaction;
- areas where the survey suggests there is scope for service improvements;
- service expectations and satisfaction levels amongst new customer groups who had not claimed benefits before or had not done so for a long time, including those from professional, managerial and technical backgrounds and those from other occupational backgrounds;
- awareness and perceptions of the DWP Customer Charter.

The phase 3 staff topic guides (Appendix E, E3) were again designed to according staff role and seniority. The focus of these interviews was to explore the findings arising from the customer research and consider potential issues for change.

## 1.6 Qualitative research with ESA claimants

### 1.6.1 Research methodology

The ESA element of the research used a qualitative methodology only and comprised 30 face-to-face depth interviews with people who had made a claim for ESA at some point between October 2008 and the beginning of the fieldwork period (August 2009). The research does not intend to be representative of ESA claimants but should rather be seen as illustrating perceptions of satisfaction during the customer journey.

In order to provide a broad cross-section of claimants and their experiences, a number of quota variables were used to structure the sample. Three regions were selected in order to obtain a spread of claimants across different areas. See the sample profile in Table 1.3 for further details.



**Table 1.3 Sample profile of claimants participating in the ESA research element**

<b>Quota</b>	<b>Number of interviews</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Age</b>	
16-24	10
25-49	9
50+	11
<b>Geographical location</b>	
Scotland	10
London	9
East of England	11
<b>Benefit status – are you currently claiming ESA?</b>	
Yes	15
No	15
<b>Membership of group</b>	
Support Group	6
Work-Related Activity Group	9
<b>Reasons why no longer claiming ESA</b>	
I was not eligible/was refused ESA	9
I withdrew my application	2
I am now in work	1
I am still waiting to hear about my claim	3
<b>Previous benefit history – has the customer previously claimed IS/IB/JSA?</b>	
Yes	20
No	10

Claimants who were interviewed reported a wide range of mental and physical health conditions including bipolar disorder/depression, arthritis, epilepsy, rheumatism, heart conditions and cancer.

### **1.6.2 Key elements of satisfaction**

During the interviews claimants were asked to identify the features of the Jobcentre Plus service they had received that they believed had the most effect on their satisfaction. Through asking them to indicate which were the most important features the research was able to identify a number of key elements of satisfaction.

### **1.6.3 Sample source and selection**

The ESA claimant sample was generated by Jobcentre Plus, from the DWP National Benefits Database. The sample was drawn in May 2009 (in time for the fieldwork which began in August 2009).

#### 1.6.4 Advance letters and opt-out process

Opt-out letters were sent to the ESA claimants. The opt-out letter provided an explanation of the research and the overall timings involved. In the case of a face-to-face interview, the letter also explained that the interview could take place in the claimant's home or another location that was suitable for them. Claimants were offered a £20 incentive to take part. If they did not want to participate, they were given the choice to opt out by freepost, telephone, or email. It was explained that their involvement would be completely voluntary and would not affect their benefits in any way.

#### 1.6.5 Data collection

Face-to-face interviews were approximately an hour in length and conducted either at the person's home or a location convenient for them.

The interviews were structured using a topic guide (Appendix E, E4). This was based around the customer journey involved in claiming ESA. The guide covered the following areas:

- Satisfaction in relation to the four DSO7 Drivers of Satisfaction: *Ease of access, Treatment, Timely response* and *Right outcome*.
- Satisfaction with their Jobcentre Plus contact.
- Satisfaction with ESA processes including the ESA claims process, experiences of the Support Group and Work-related Activity Group, and the appeals process.
- Experiences and satisfaction with the ESA customer journey.
- How experiences of ESA compare with experiences of other benefits (IS or IB).

### 1.7 Ethical considerations and informed consent for the qualitative research

It was important that informed consent was obtained from the benefit claimants and staff participating in the qualitative research.

The benefit claimants were assessed on the basis of whether they could understand relevant information; deliberate upon that information; make conclusions which were logically consistent; communicate their decision; and maintain the decision.

In order to aid communication the researcher explained details of the project verbally prior to the interviews taking place. Furthermore, claimants were able to undertake their interview in the presence of a representative, carer or relevant third party, and where they were present, researchers looked to them to assist in the communication of this information.

Consent was obtained for every interview and recorded either verbally or in writing. Where possible, claimants were encouraged to play an active role in the process and to ask questions.

Claimants were informed of the anticipated risks or potential distress involved in the research as well as being told about the aims of the project. They were also told that they were free to withdraw from the interview at any time and that if they chose to do so any data that had been collected would be destroyed.

As a number of claimants were experiencing health issues of various kinds, researchers were fully briefed so that they conducted the interviews in a sensitive manner.

As Jobcentre Plus approached staff to take part in the research, informed consent was obtained at that point. At the time of the interview, permission to record was obtained and confidentiality was reassured.

## 1.8 Qualitative analysis

Interviews for both the follow-up and ESA qualitative elements of the 2009 research were transcribed and analysed using Matrix Mapping. The key features of Matrix Mapping are that: verbatim transcripts are summarised into a comprehensive thematic matrix and the matrix is used to identify the key themes arising out of the research as well as differences between the different customer groups. A summary of the technique may be found in Appendix F.

## 1.9 Report structure and conventions

**Chapter 2** explores the profile of customers who were included in the survey, and then looks at the contact these customers had with Jobcentre Plus in the previous 12 months.

**Chapter 3** examines the overall level of satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus, and how this varied between different customers. It also explores customers' expectations and their perceptions of whether improvements are needed to services.

**Chapter 4** examines the interactions that customers have with Jobcentre Plus, and covers customers' experience of and attitudes towards different contact channels (face to face, telephone and written). This part of the survey is designed to reflect Jobcentre Plus service standards and indicators that relate to DSO7: 'Make DWP an Exemplar of Effective Service Delivery', specifically the four indicators (noted as appropriate throughout the chapter) that form the basis of the DWP Customer Charter.

**Chapter 5** considers customer views of Jobcentre Plus office conditions.

**Chapter 6** addresses the levels of awareness, and use of, self-service contact channels including Jobpoints, Customer Access Phones, and the Jobcentre Plus website and how helpful customers find these services.

**Chapter 7** explores customer access to Jobcentre Plus (how easy they find it to make contact and visit their local office), as well as any problems customers have encountered recently. It also examines whether customers have felt like complaining, or have actually complained, to Jobcentre Plus.

**Chapter 8** examines the key drivers of service delivery that contribute to overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus services and satisfaction with face-to-face and telephone contact methods.

**Chapter 9** examines perceptions of 'new' customers (those who had not claimed benefits before or had not done so for a long time, including those from professional, managerial and technical occupational backgrounds and those from other occupational backgrounds).

**Chapter 10** explores the experiences of individuals making a claim for ESA. Based on the qualitative material, the chapter considers all aspects of the ESA customer journey.

**Chapter 11** brings together the findings and draws out the implications of the research, and includes a number of ideas for improvement as suggested by customers and staff.

References are shown at the back of this report.

The appendices are included in a separate document. The technical report is included in Appendix A, and additional reference tables and figures from the analysis are included in Appendix B. Comparisons with the 2007 survey are shown in Appendix C. The quantitative survey questionnaire can be found in Appendix D. The qualitative interview topic guides are in Appendix E and a description of qualitative data analysis techniques used within this study is provided in Appendix F.



## 2 Survey customer profile and use of Jobcentre Plus services

This chapter explores the profile of customers who were included in the quantitative survey, and then looks at the contact these customers had with Jobcentre Plus in the previous 12 months.

- The sample as a whole comprised 37 per cent of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) customers, 39 per cent of Income Support (IS) customers and 25 per cent of Incapacity Benefit (IB) customers. The proportion of JSA customers was higher than in previous years (20 per cent in 2007).
- The customer profile varied by benefit type: JSA customers were younger and mostly male, IS customers were predominantly female, while IB customers had an older age profile.
- JSA customers had a more intensive relationship than IS or IB customers with Jobcentre Plus. Although JSA claims tended to be shorter, contact was more frequent and covered more contact channels. By contrast, some IB customers had very little contact with Jobcentre Plus at all.
- Overall, one in four customers had been in contact with an external provider in the previous 12 months.

### 2.1 Survey customer profile

Table 2.1 shows the unweighted (i.e. number of interviews conducted) and weighted profiles (i.e. recalculated to reflect the actual population breakdown) of the sample in terms of region and benefit type.

It is important to bear in mind the customer 'population' covered by the survey. As discussed in Chapter 1, the survey covered those who had received JSA, IS or IB within the previous 12 months, and who had also been in contact with Jobcentre Plus within the past 12 months.

**Table 2.1 Profile of the sample by region and benefit type**

	Unweighted number	Unweighted %	Weighted number	Weighted %
<b>Region</b>				
Scotland	367	9	409	10
North East	372	9	233	6
North West	373	9	567	14
Yorkshire and the Humber	383	9	384	9
Wales	387	9	248	6
West Midlands	372	9	422	10
East Midlands	374	9	285	7
East of England	373	9	304	7
South East	369	9	389	9
London	375	9	606	15
South West	380	9	279	7
<b>Benefit type</b>				
JSA	1,615	39	1,523	37
IS	1,390	34	1,591	39
IB	1,120	27	1,011	25
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	4,125		4,125	

Table 2.1 also reflects the sample design, in that approximately equal numbers of customers were interviewed in each Jobcentre Plus region, in order to allow regional analysis. However, the weighted profile (reflecting the actual regional breakdown) shows that the number of customers was highest in London and the North West, and lowest in the North East and Wales.

The weighted (actual population) profile by benefit type shows that the numbers who had received JSA (37 per cent) and IS (39 per cent) were higher than those who had received IB (25 per cent).<sup>11</sup> The proportion of JSA customers in the 2009 survey was higher than in previous years, reflecting the rise in the JSA claimant count (over 1.5 million at the time of the survey fieldwork compared with less than 1 million before October 2008).<sup>12</sup> However, again it is important to bear in mind that the survey figures denote current or recent claimants who had contact in the past 12 months (rather than all claimants). As reported in Section 2.2, IB customers generally had less frequent contact with Jobcentre Plus than JSA or IS customers, and therefore were less likely to be eligible for the survey.

Table 2.2 shows a demographic breakdown of the sample, overall and for each benefit (JSA, IS and IB). This reveals that:

- at the time of the survey, JSA customers were more likely to have been in work (i.e. were recent claimants who had now found work) than IS or IB customers;

<sup>11</sup> Benefit type was derived based on a set of rules applied to survey population – see Section A.10.

<sup>12</sup> Based on monthly JSA claimant count figures, NOMIS/ONS.

- while there were approximately equal proportions of men and women in the sample as a whole, this varied considerably by benefit type: JSA customers were mostly male, and IS customers mostly female (with IB customers evenly split);
- JSA customers had a younger age profile and IB customers an older profile;
- as expected, almost all IB customers had a long-term illness or disability that they said limited the daily activities or work they could do (90 per cent), compared with 37 per cent of IS customers and 17 per cent of JSA customers;
- the proportion of non-white customers was lower for IB than for JSA or IS.

These patterns provide a useful context for the survey findings that follow in this report. For example, any differences in the results by gender or age may be related to benefit type (e.g. with JSA customers being younger and predominantly male). These interrelationships are identified throughout the report.

**Table 2.2 Demographic profile by benefit type**

	Total %	JSA %	IS %	IB %
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	46	70	18	55
Female	54	30	82	45
<b>Age</b>				
16-24	15	24	15	2
25-34	21	21	30	8
35-49	38	35	42	37
50+	25	20	13	52
<b>Current work status</b>				
Working 16+ hours per week	14	25	8	6
Working less than 16 hours per week	3	4	3	3
Not working	83	71	89	91
<b>Long-term illness/disability</b>				
Yes	42	17	37	90
No	56	83	63	10
<b>Ethnicity</b>				
White	85	85	81	92
Asian	6	6	7	4
Black	5	5	7	2
Mixed	2	2	3	1
Other	1	1	1	1
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	<i>4,125</i>	<i>1,615</i>	<i>1,390</i>	<i>1,120</i>

Q93 Gender/Q94 Age/Q95/96 Working Status/Q102 Long-term illness/disability/Q103 Ethnicity.<sup>1</sup>

Note 1: See Appendix D for question wording.



The sample of JSA customers has also been analysed in relation to the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) of the customer's most recent job. This analysis helps to show the extent to which people from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds are part of the JSA customer population, an issue of particular relevance given the recent economic downturn. This analysis shows that:

- 17 per cent of JSA customers were in professional, managerial or technical occupations in their most recent job;
- nine per cent were in administrative occupations;
- 67 per cent were in other occupations (sales and customer service, personal services, skilled trade, manual or elementary work);
- the remaining seven per cent had not worked or did not give an answer.

We can also examine whether customers were currently claiming a benefit and how long the claim had lasted. Table 2.3 shows:

- the proportion who were currently claiming a benefit, compared with those who were no longer claiming (but had done so in the previous 12 months). This indicates that JSA customers were much less likely to be current claimants;
- the duration of the current/recent claim. This shows that IS customers tended to have the longest claims, and JSA customers the shortest.

These two findings are related, with JSA customers more likely than other customers to have had shorter claims, and therefore to have ended the claim by the time of the survey.

**Table 2.3 Claim duration by benefit type**

	Total %	JSA %	IS %	IB %
<b>Benefit claim</b>				
Current	78	59	88	88
Not current	22	41	12	12
<b>Claim duration</b>				
Less than 6 months	19	43	5	5
6 – up to 12 months	22	35	13	15
1 – up to 2 years	16	12	16	22
2 – up to 5 years	21	6	27	34
5 years or more	19	2	35	21
Don't know	2	2	3	2
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	<i>4,125</i>	<i>1,615</i>	<i>1,390</i>	<i>1,120</i>

Q2. And are you receiving ... (READ OUT ALL BENEFITS CODED AT Q1) at present? IQ2a.  
For how long have you been receiving (IF STILL RECEIVING)/did you receive (IF NO LONGER RECEIVING)... (BENEFIT AT Q1)?

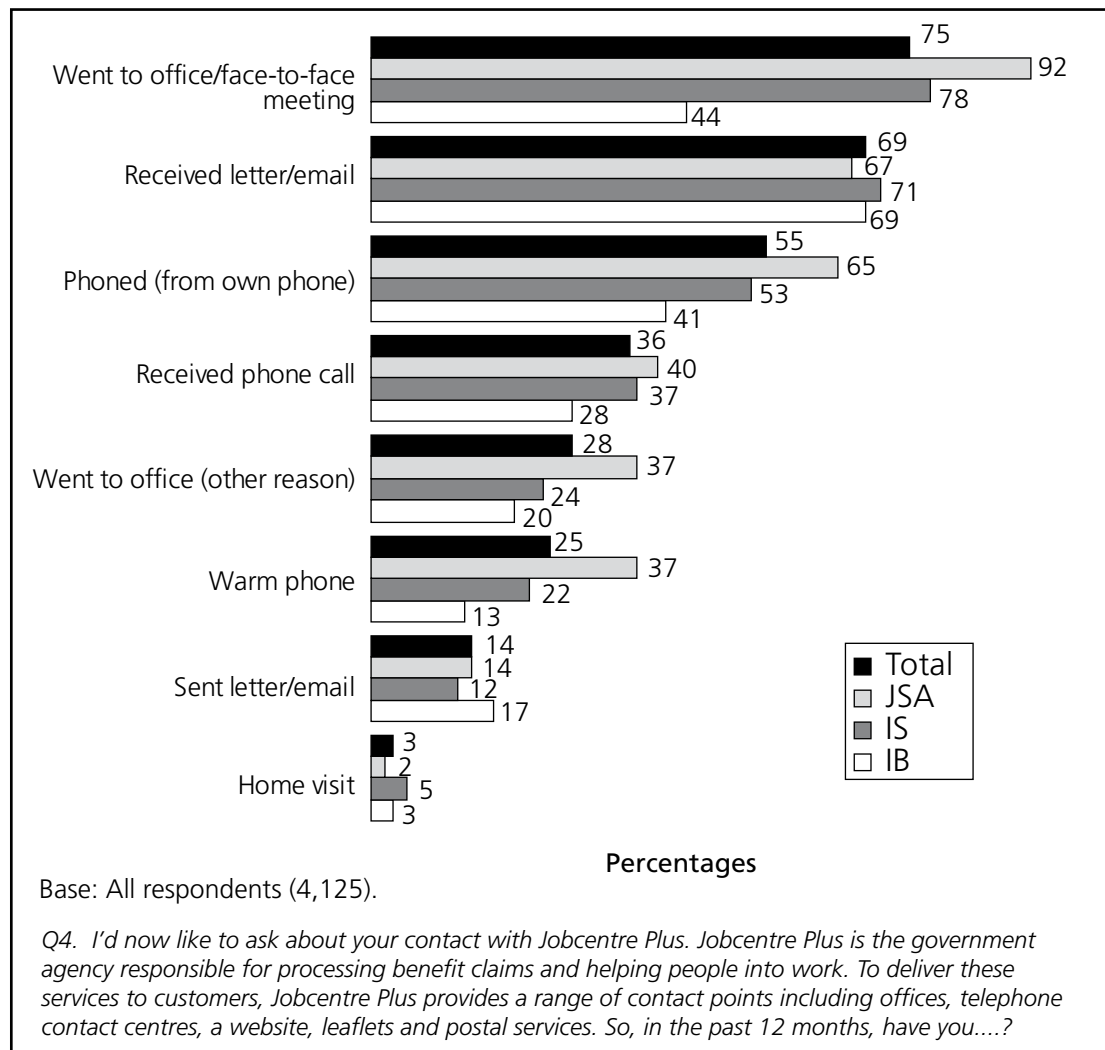
## 2.2 Contact channels

### 2.2.1 Contact channels used in the last 12 months

We asked customers about the various contact channels they had used to communicate with Jobcentre Plus in the previous 12 months. JSA customers were more likely than other customers to have used the various face-to-face and telephone channels, with IB customers least likely to have done so (see Figure 2.1). The difference is most pronounced in relation to face-to-face meetings at Jobcentre Plus offices: 92 per cent of JSA customers had attended meetings in the previous 12 months, compared with 78 per cent of IS customers and 44 per cent of IB customers. The same pattern applied to telephone channels (with JSA most likely to have contacted by telephone and IB customers least likely), while the level of written contact (both in terms of sending and receiving correspondence) was similar for the three benefit types.

It is worth noting that customers can have contact for a wide range of reasons, which are discussed in Chapter 4.

**Figure 2.1 Contact channels used in past 12 months**



We can also look at the *number* of different channels used by customers in the previous 12 months. JSA customers were more likely than other customers to use multiple channels: the average number of channels used (out of the eight channels shown in Figure 2.1) ranged from 3.5 for JSA customers, to 3.0 for IS customers, and 2.3 for IB customers.

Analysis of channel use by demographic sub-groups shows the following:

- The average number of different channels used was lower amongst customers aged 50 or over. Specifically, IS and IB customers aged 50 or over were less likely to have attended meetings based at Jobcentre Plus offices (54 per cent and 37 per cent respectively), while those aged 50 or over in all benefit types were less likely to have contacted Jobcentre Plus from their own telephone (43 per cent compared with 59 per cent of younger customers).
- Black customers tended to have used more contact channels than other customers, and were more likely than other customers to have attended meetings based at Jobcentre Plus offices (83 per cent compared with 75 per cent). Asian customers, as well as those whose first language is not English (the two groups are related) were more likely than other customers to have had a home visit (six per cent of Asian customers and five per cent whose first language is not English), and those whose first language is not English were also more likely than other customers to have used a Customer Access Phone (32 per cent compared with 25 per cent). Customer Access Phones offer language interpretation through the Department for Work and Pensions' Big Word Facility, in which an interpreter can be provided as part of a three-way telephone conversation with the member of staff and the customer.
- Amongst JSA customers, the average number of different channels used was higher amongst those from professional, managerial or technical occupational backgrounds.
- IS and IB customers with more recent claims (less than one year's duration) tended to use more contact channels than customers with longer claims. For IB customers, this applied in particular to face-to-face meetings at offices (61 per cent of IB customers claiming for less than a year had attended a meeting compared with 38 per cent with a longer claim).
- Amongst IS customers, those with a limiting long-term illness or disability used fewer different channels than other IS customers, and specifically were less likely to have attended a meeting at an office (62 per cent compared with 88 per cent of other IS customers). In addition, female IS customers were much more likely than male IS customers to attend a meeting at an office (83 per cent compared with 58 per cent). As many (although not all) female IS customers will be lone parents, these findings together suggest greater attendance at meetings by lone parents on IS, compared with other IS customers (often with a long-term illness or disability), in line with the increased frequency of Work Focused Interviews (WFIs) for lone parents on IS.

## 2.2.2 Frequency of contact

The different contact channels were used with similar levels of frequency by customers (see Table 2.4). The exceptions were visits to Jobcentre Plus offices (other than face-to-face meetings), which a relatively high proportion of customers (50 per cent) had made in the last month, and home visits, which only a small proportion (nine per cent) had received in the last month.

Customers in the three benefit types sent a letter, email or fax to Jobcentre Plus with similar levels of frequency. However, for all of the other contact channels (except home visits, where the numbers are too small for analysis), JSA customers had contact more recently than other customers, with IB customers least likely to have had recent contact. The difference was most pronounced in relation to visits to Jobcentre Plus offices (either face-to-face meetings or visits for other reasons): while many JSA customers had visited offices in the last week (29 per cent for a meeting and 45 per cent for another reason), very few IB customers had done so in the last week (five per cent and 10 per cent respectively).

These findings are predictable given the nature and conditionality of the benefits, but serve to emphasise that the three benefits involve very different customer relationships, and this is important in interpreting the survey findings. In summary, the results show that JSA customers had a more intensive relationship with Jobcentre Plus than IS or IB customers. Although claims tended to be shorter (as shown in Table 2.3), contact was more frequent and covered more contact channels. By contrast, some IB customers had very little contact with Jobcentre Plus at all.

**Table 2.4 How recently customers used contact channels**

	Within last month	One month, up to six months	Six months or more
Went to office for other reason (not a meeting)	50	30	17
Received letter, email or fax from Jobcentre Plus	37	48	15
Face-to-face meeting at Jobcentre Plus office	36	45	18
Telephoned Jobcentre Plus using Customer Access Phone	34	38	27
Telephoned Jobcentre Plus from own telephone	33	43	22
Received phone call from Jobcentre Plus	26	48	23
Sent a letter, email or fax to Jobcentre Plus	26	46	25
Received home visit	9	45	41

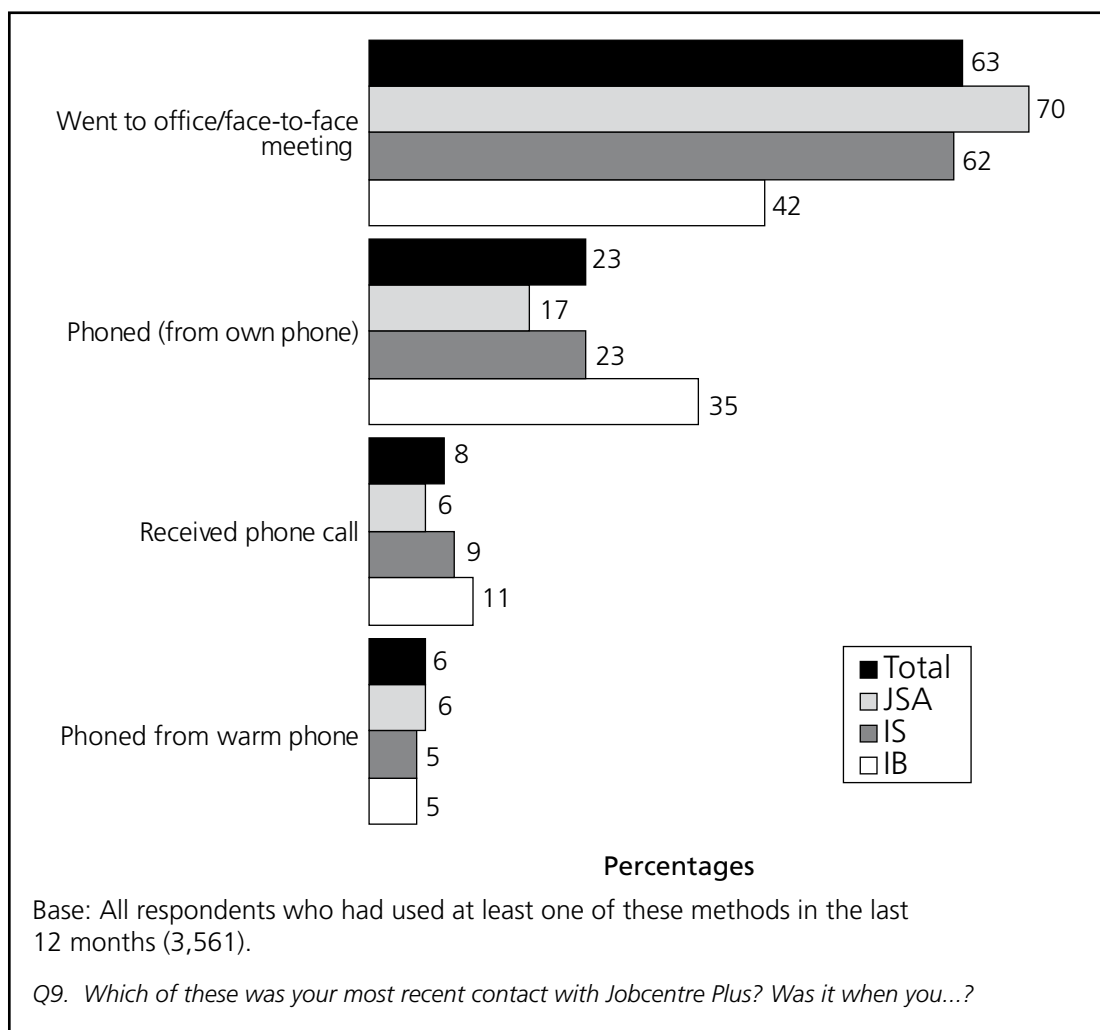
*Base: All respondents who had used each channel in the last 12 months (number varies).*

*Note: Row % shown.*

Q7. Please can you tell me when you last....?

Figure 2.2 focuses on the four main contact channels (face-to-face meetings at a Jobcentre Plus office, telephoning Jobcentre Plus from own telephone, using a Customer Access Phone, and receiving a telephone call from Jobcentre Plus). Amongst customers that had used one of these four channels in the past 12 months, JSA and IS customers were likely to have had a face-to-face meeting at an office more recently than telephone contact, but IB customers were likely to have had telephone contact of some kind more recently than a face-to-face meeting at an office (51 per cent<sup>13</sup> compared with 42 per cent).

**Figure 2.2 Most recent contact channels used**

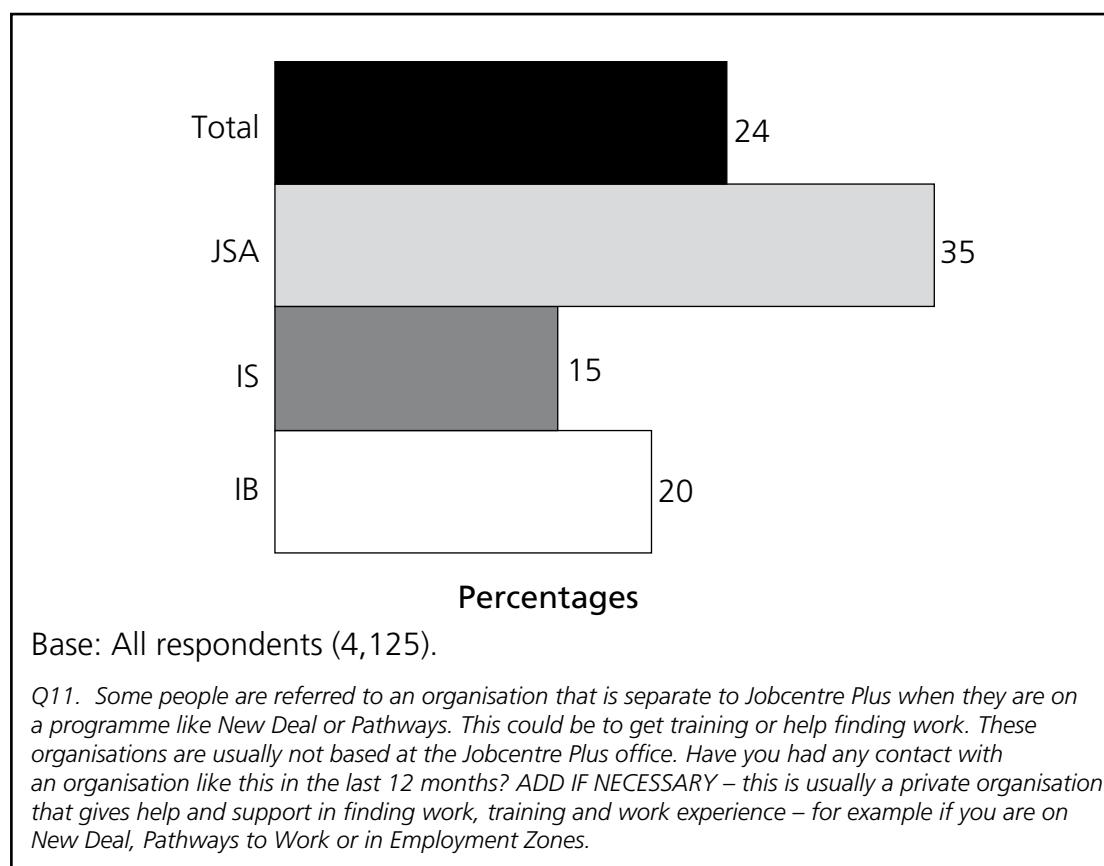


<sup>13</sup> This figure combines the figures for the three types of telephone contact.

## 2.3 Contact with external providers

As well as contact with Jobcentre Plus, the survey also asked about contact with external providers.<sup>14</sup> Overall, around one in four customers (24 per cent) said they had been in contact with an external provider in the previous 12 months (see Figure 2.3). This was highest amongst JSA customers (35 per cent) and lowest amongst IS customers (15 per cent), as shown in Figure 2.3.

**Figure 2.3 Contact with external providers**



Amongst JSA customers, contact with external providers was more common amongst longer-term claimants: the proportion ranged from 22 per cent amongst those claiming for less than six months, to 40 per cent of those claiming between six and 12 months, and 55 per cent of those claiming for a year or more. This reflects the nature of contracted provision under JSA as part of the New Deal programme (being replaced by the new Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND)).

<sup>14</sup> Question worded as follows: 'Some people are referred to an organisation that is separate to Jobcentre Plus when they are on a programme like New Deal or Pathways. This could be to get training or help finding work. These organisations are usually not based at the Jobcentre Plus office. Have you had any contact with an organisation like this in the last 12 months?'

By contrast, IB customers with more recent/shorter claims were more likely to have had contact with an external provider (35 per cent of those whose claim lasted less than one year, compared with 17 per cent whose claim lasted longer than a year). This reflects the early stages of provision in the Pathways to Work scheme.

Contact with an external provider was also higher amongst customers in London (29 per cent, compared with 24 per cent overall).

## 3 Customer satisfaction

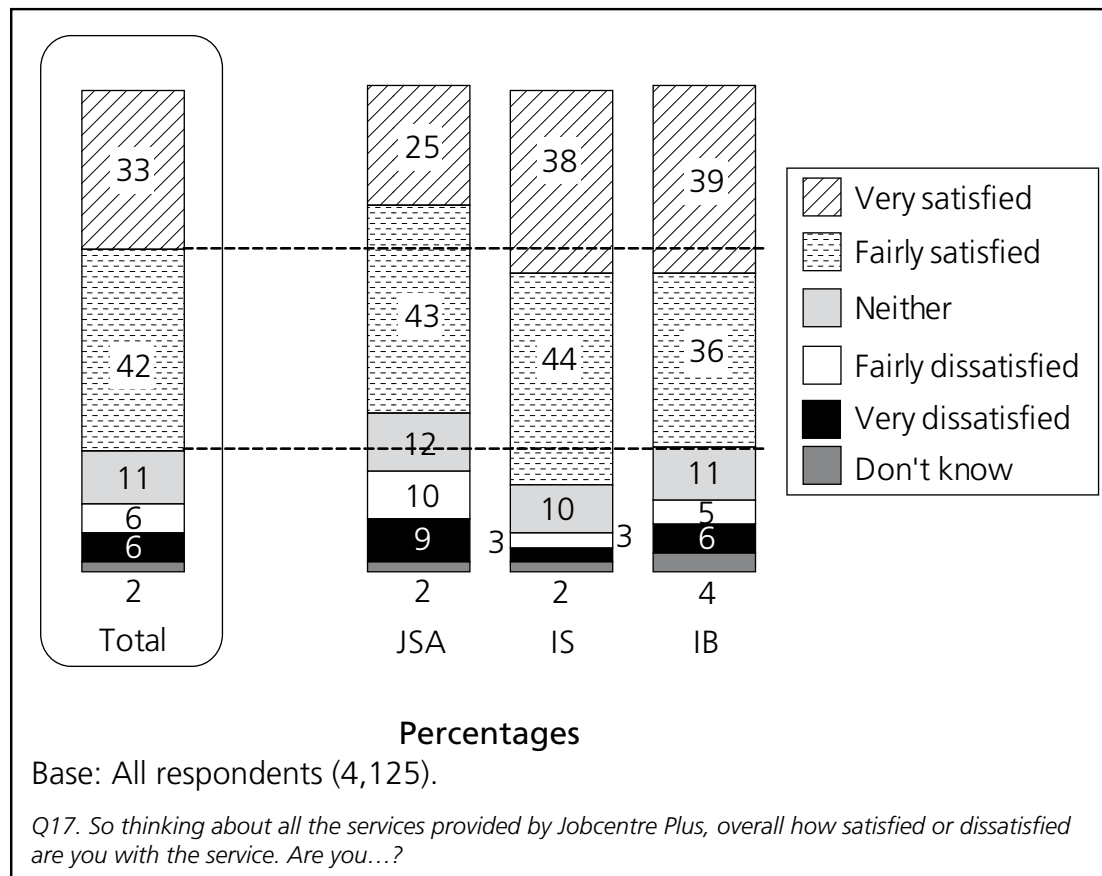
This chapter examines the overall level of satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus, and how this varied between different customers. It also explores customers' expectations and their perceptions of whether improvements are needed to services.

- Three in four customers (75 per cent) said they were satisfied with the services provided by Jobcentre Plus, with 12 per cent dissatisfied.
- Customers were also likely to say that services were at least at the level they expected (84 per cent) although 38 per cent did feel that some improvements were needed.
- Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) customers were generally less satisfied than other customers, with Income Support (IS) customers the most satisfied. Specifically, JSA customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds were the least positive about the services provided, although JSA customers aged 16-24 were more positive than older customers.
- Female IS customers were particularly satisfied (and women were generally more positive than men in all benefit types), while IS customers with a limiting long-term illness or disability were less satisfied.
- Asian customers and those whose first language is not English were more satisfied than other customers, and were more likely to say that services were better than they expected.
- Satisfaction was slightly higher in the North West and lower in London, but was generally consistent by region.

### 3.1 Overall satisfaction

Three in four customers (75 per cent) said they were satisfied with the services provided by Jobcentre Plus, including one in three (33 per cent) who were *very* satisfied. One in eight customers (12 per cent) were dissatisfied. Figure 3.1 breaks these figures down by benefit type. IS customers were the most satisfied (82 per cent satisfied), with JSA customers the least satisfied (68 per cent satisfied and 19 per cent dissatisfied).



**Figure 3.1 Overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus, by benefit type**

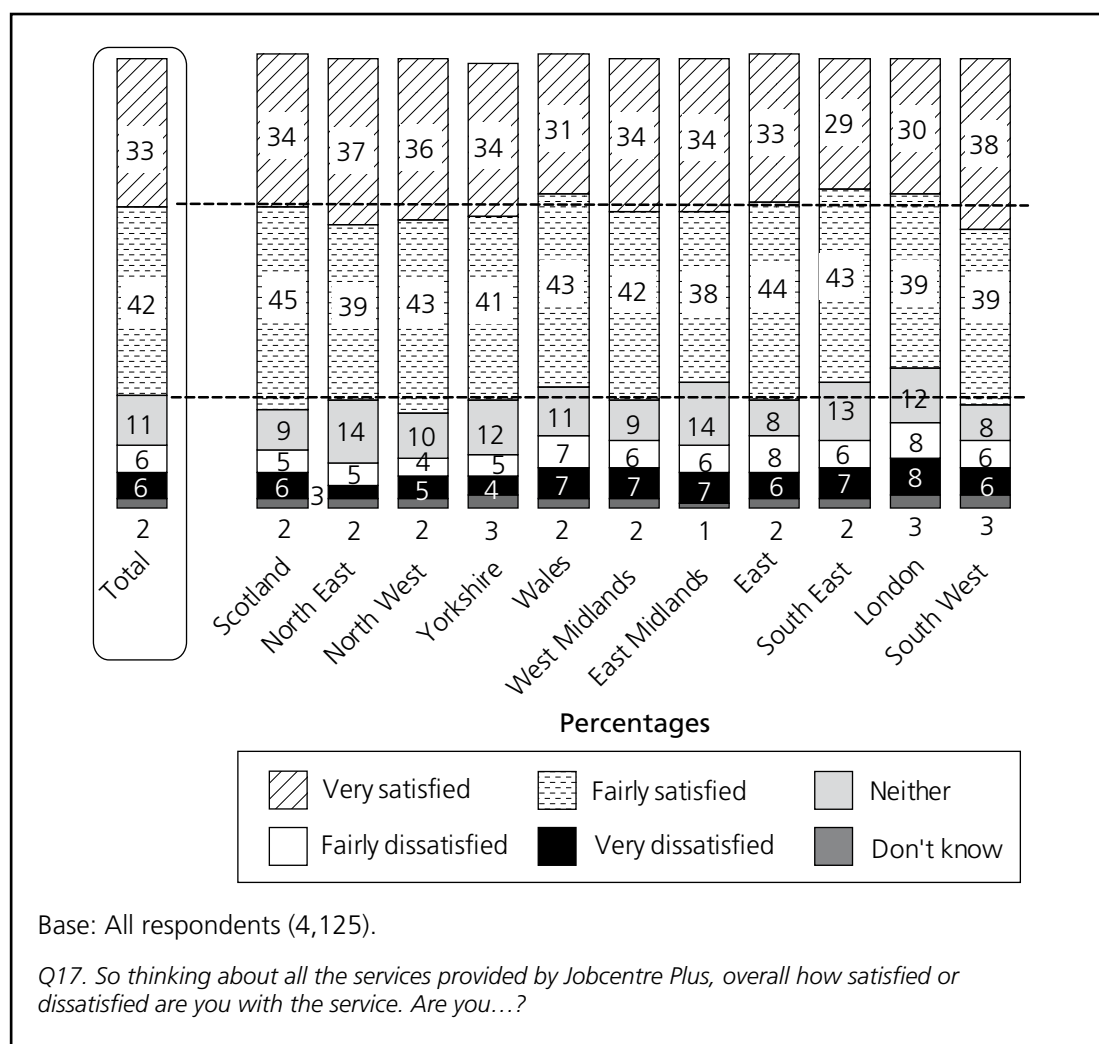
### 3.2 Satisfaction by region

Overall satisfaction was very consistent by region (Figure 3.2). Only in the North West were customers significantly more satisfied than average (80 per cent satisfied), while London was the one region where customers were less satisfied than average (69 per cent).

### 3.3 Satisfaction by gender

Women were more satisfied than men with the services provided by Jobcentre Plus, as shown in Figure 3.3 (80 per cent of women were satisfied, compared with 69 per cent of men).

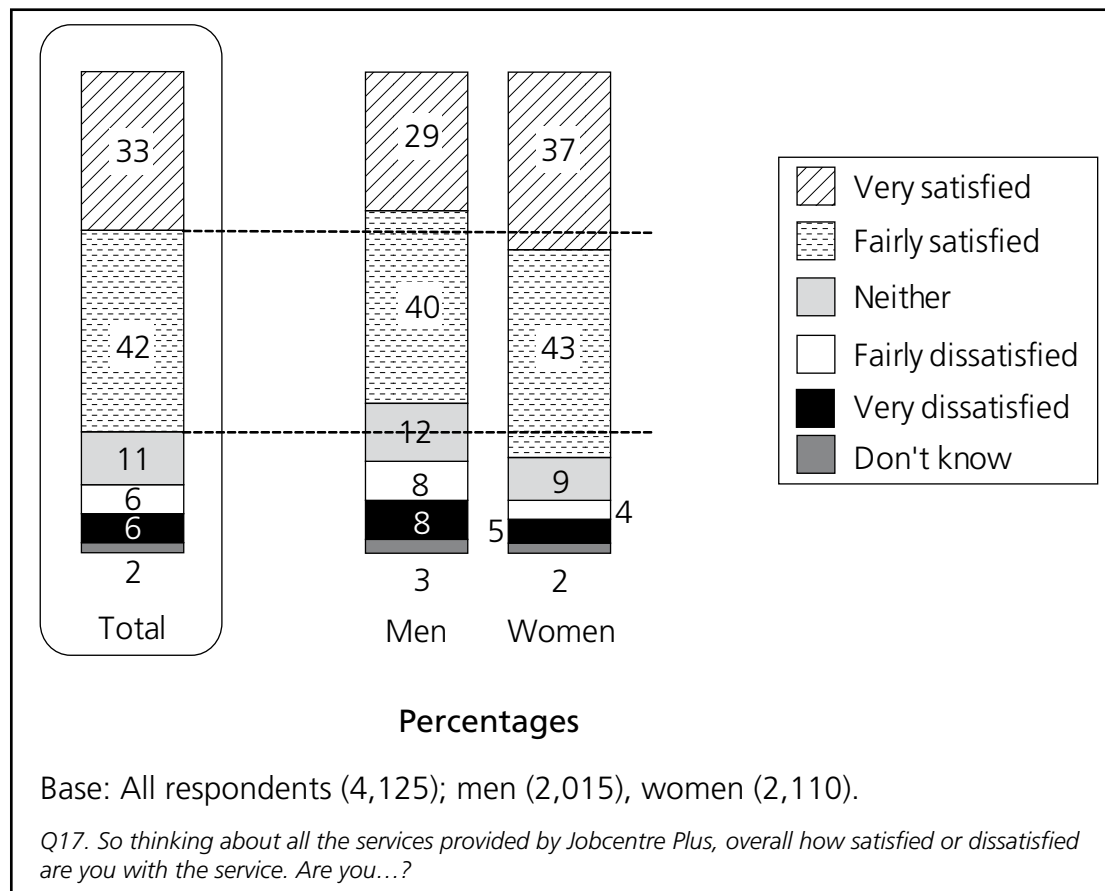
The overall difference by gender is driven by IS customers, where satisfaction is markedly greater amongst women (84 per cent) than men (73 per cent) (Table 3.1). Although the survey does not include separate analysis of lone parents, this difference almost certainly reflects the difference in satisfaction between those claiming IS as lone parents (who are mainly female) and those claiming because of illness or disability. While the same pattern also applies to JSA and Incapacity Benefit (IB) customers, the gender difference for each of these benefits is only at the margin of statistical significance.

**Figure 3.2 Overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus, by region****Table 3.1 Overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus, by benefit type and gender**

	JSA		IS		IB	
	Men %	Women %	Men %	Women %	Men %	Women %
Very/fairly satisfied	66	71	73	84	73	78
Very/fairly dissatisfied	19	18	10	6	13	7
Base: All respondents	1,136	479	271	1,119	608	512

Q17. So thinking about all the services provided by Jobcentre Plus, overall how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service. Are you...?

**Figure 3.3 Overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus, by gender**



### 3.4 Satisfaction by age

Across the total sample of customers, 16–24-year-olds were more satisfied than older customers, as shown in Figure 3.4<sup>15</sup>. This difference is wholly attributable to the findings for JSA customers, amongst whom those aged 16–24 were considerably more satisfied than those aged 25 or over (75 per cent compared with 66 per cent). There was no age difference in satisfaction amongst IS customers, while amongst IB customers, those aged 50 or over were actually more satisfied than younger customers (78 per cent compared with 72 per cent).

### 3.5 Satisfaction by ethnicity

Figure 3.5 shows that Asian customers were more satisfied than other customers (83 per cent satisfied) and Black customers less satisfied (69 per cent satisfied). However, these findings are linked to other sub-group patterns, specifically:

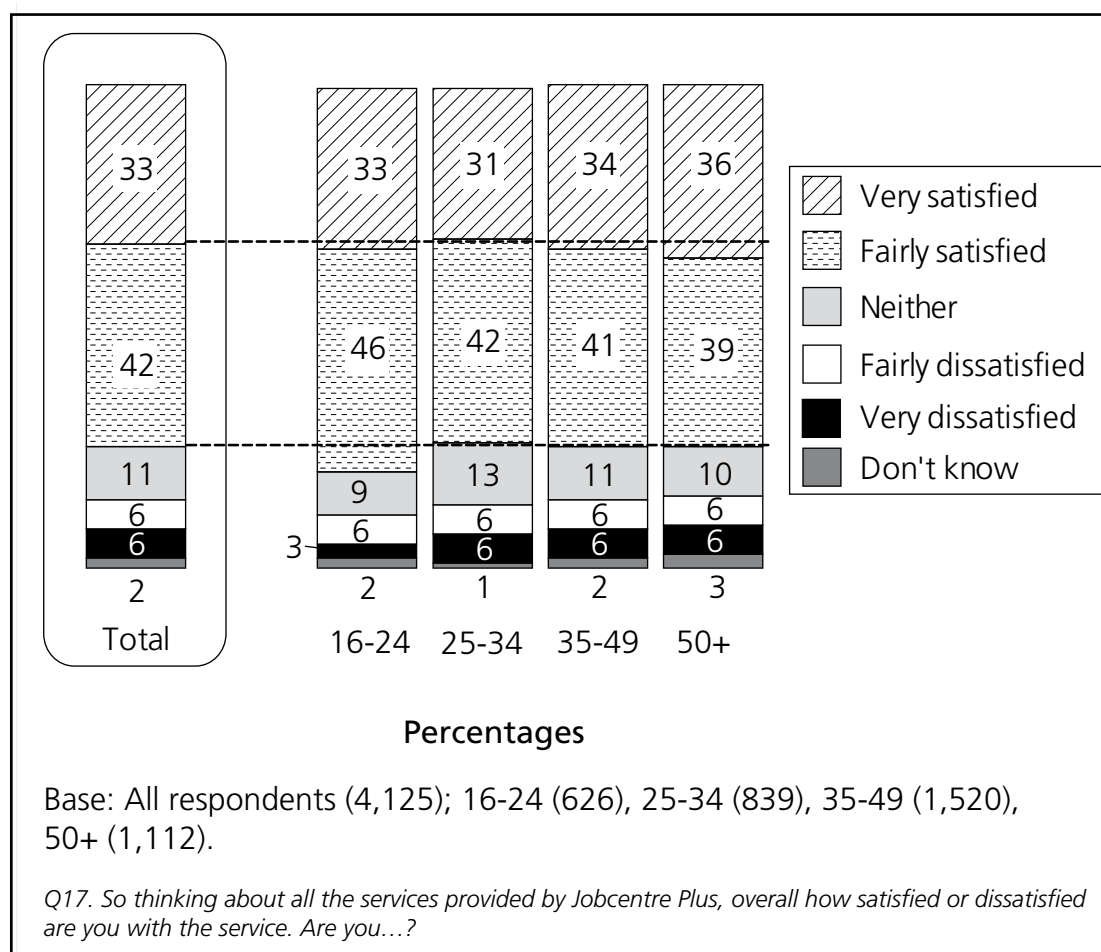
- The lower satisfaction amongst Black customers is the result of the high concentration of Black customers in London, where satisfaction is also lower than average. Regression analysis indicates that it is the difference in London that is driving these findings.

<sup>15</sup> This research was completed prior to the introduction of the Young Person's Guarantee.

- The higher satisfaction amongst Asian customers is linked to language. Customers whose first language is not English were more satisfied than other customers (81 per cent compared with 75 per cent), and a large proportion of these customers were from Asian backgrounds. Specifically, Asian customers who did not speak English as their first language were more satisfied than other Asian customers (87 per cent compared with 74 per cent).

Findings relating to language and ethnicity are difficult to interpret, as they may stem from actual differences in service delivery (e.g. translation services), as well as customers' expectations and previous experience of services. While there may be a link between expectations and satisfaction, it is not possible to tease these issues out in this survey, although previous research has examined the attitudes of ethnic minority customers in more detail. A common theme in previous research is that 'ethnic minority customers appear to place more weight on face-to-face contact and the nature of the inter-personal communication with Jobcentre Plus staff than white customers'.<sup>16</sup>

**Figure 3.4 Overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus, by age**

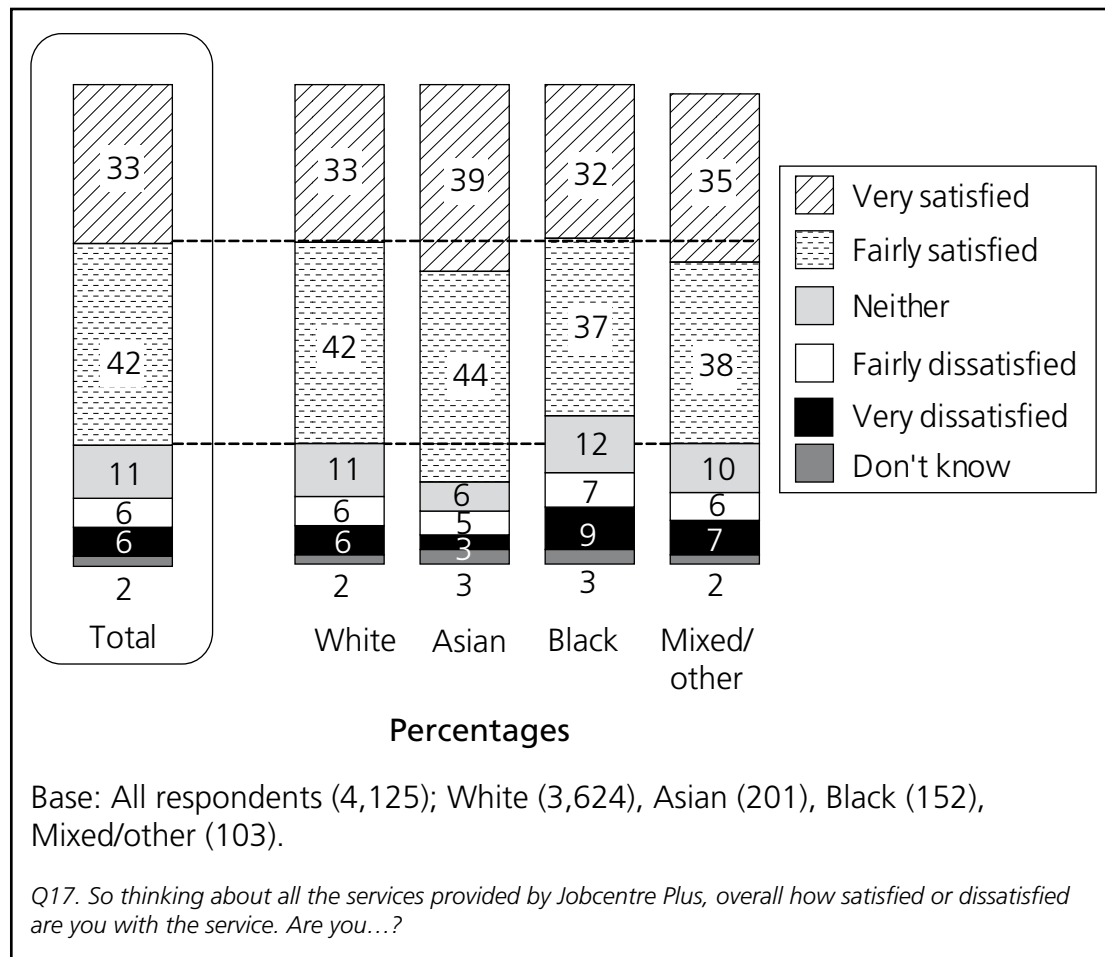


<sup>16</sup> Hasluck, C. and Green, A, (2007). *What works for whom? A review of evidence and meta-analysis for the Department for Work and Pensions*. DWP Research Report No. 407.

### 3.6 Satisfaction by disability

Customers with a long-standing illness or disability that limited their daily activities or the work that they could do were slightly less likely to be satisfied than other customers (73 per cent compared with 77 per cent (Figure 3.6)). This difference stems from a marked difference within the sample of IS customers, where those with a limiting long-standing illness or disability were less satisfied (75 per cent compared with 86 per cent of other IS customers); there is no difference by limiting long-standing illness or disability amongst JSA and IB customers.

**Figure 3.5 Overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus, by ethnicity**



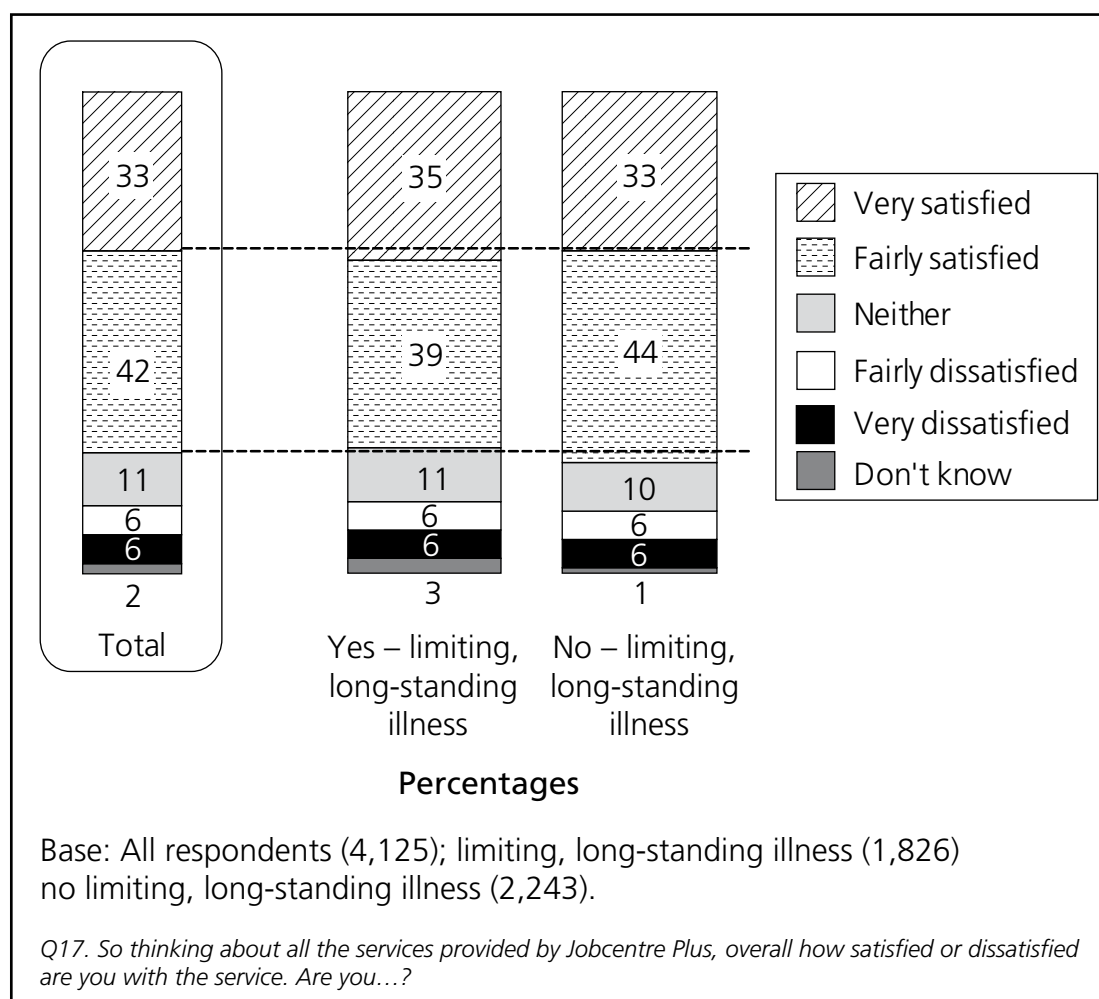
These findings for IS customers can be considered alongside the difference by gender (noted in Section 3.3). Overall, this suggests a general pattern between the two main types of IS customer who claim on the grounds of either incapacity or as a lone parent. The former group is broadly represented by the customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability who were less satisfied, and the latter (less precisely, as not all female IS customers are lone parents) by the female customers who were more satisfied.

### 3.7 Satisfaction by caring responsibilities

During the interview, respondents were asked to identify their current main activity, and overall 26 per cent said they were 'caring for children or other people'. Although this group does not include all those with caring responsibilities (only those for whom it was their 'main' activity), and it combines both childcare and other caring responsibilities, it still provides useful analysis.

Eighty-four per cent of those 'caring for children or other people' were satisfied overall. Amongst both IS and IB customers, satisfaction was higher amongst those whose main activity involved caring responsibilities, compared with other customers: 85 per cent compared with 79 per cent amongst IS customers, and 90 per cent compared with 74 per cent amongst IB customers. There was no significant difference amongst JSA customers.

**Figure 3.6 Overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus, by disability**



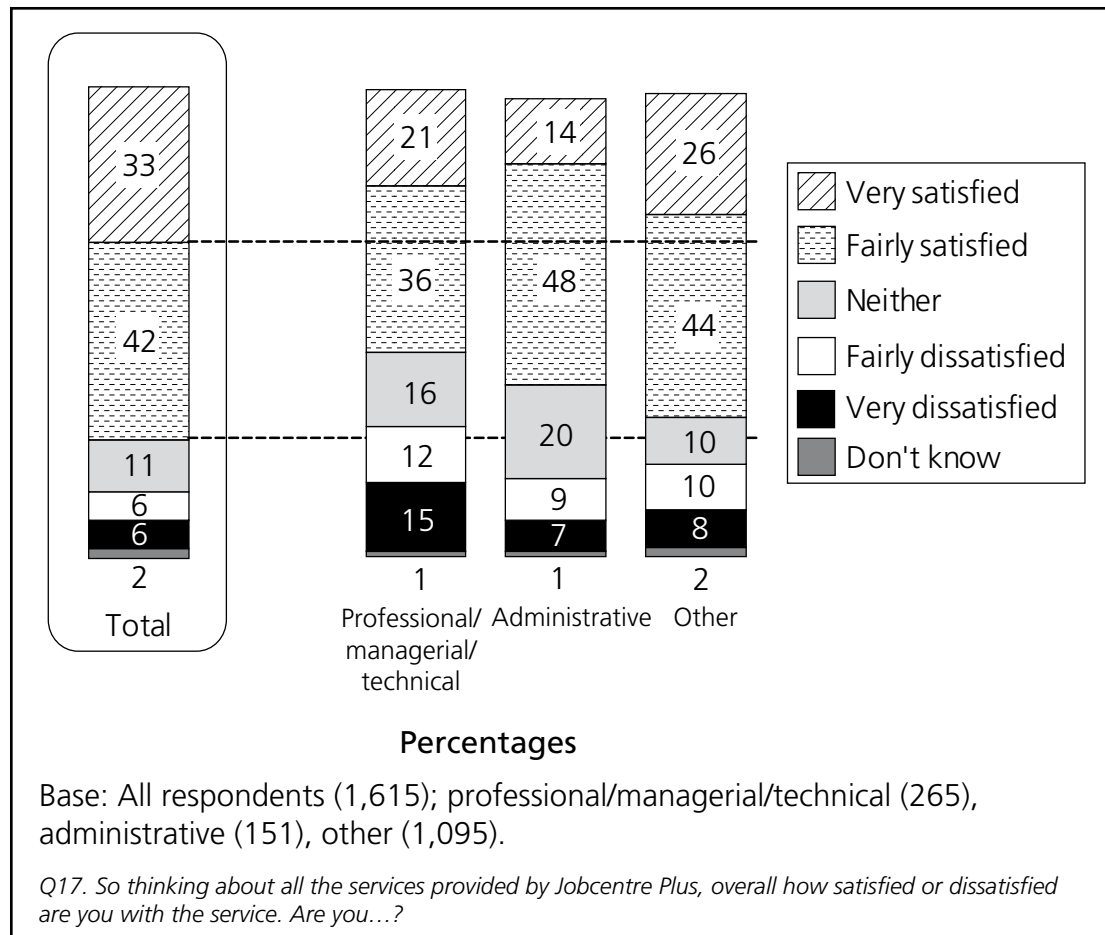
### 3.8 Satisfaction by Standard Occupational Classification

Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) was collected for JSA customers taking part in the survey. This classifies respondents into occupational groups on the basis of their current or most recent job. This analysis is important for the survey, given the increase in the number of people from professional, managerial or technical occupations who have been claiming JSA since the start of the recent economic downturn.

Figure 3.7 shows that respondents in professional, managerial or technical occupations were less satisfied (57 per cent) and were more likely to be dissatisfied (27 per cent) than other customers. An increase in the proportion of these customers in the total JSA population is therefore likely to reduce overall satisfaction, although comparisons cannot be made with previous surveys, as this is the first time that this analysis has been carried out.

The survey also examined the reason why JSA customers left their last job, to identify those who had been made redundant (another important group of customers in the recent economic downturn). These customers were also less positive towards the service provided by Jobcentre Plus, with 64 per cent satisfied and 23 per cent dissatisfied.

**Figure 3.7 Overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus, by SOC for JSA customers**



### 3.9 Satisfaction by claim details

There were no differences in satisfaction in relation to the duration of the current or recent claim, or frequency of contact with Jobcentre Plus. However, customers who were no longer claiming a benefit (across all benefit types) were less satisfied than current claimants (63 per cent compared with 78 per cent) and were more likely to be dissatisfied (24 per cent compared with nine per cent). Analysis of current activity (employment, education or training, etc.) does not highlight any particular destination or activity that can explain this pattern.

### 3.10 Customer expectations

The majority of customers rated Jobcentre Plus services as well as (47 per cent) or better than (37 per cent) they expected, while 13 per cent said they were worse than they had expected. Figure 3.8 also shows that (as with overall satisfaction), JSA customers were least positive (29 per cent better than expected) and IS customers most positive in their answers (43 per cent better than expected).

Sub-group patterns were similar to those observed for overall satisfaction; specifically:

- Women were more likely than men to say that services were better than they expected (42 per cent compared with 31 per cent), and this difference applied to all three benefit types.
- Customers in the North West were more likely to say services exceeded their expectations (43 per cent); this was the only region showing a significant difference (positive or negative).
- Asian customers and those whose first language is not English were again more positive (in each case, 48 per cent said services were better than expected, compared with 36 per cent of other customers). In fact, the difference on this question was greater than for overall satisfaction, indicating that the expectations of these customers could be an important factor in their positive views.
- In the JSA sample, customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds were less likely to say services were better than expected (25 per cent compared with 30 per cent of other JSA customers).
- Current claimants were again more positive than former (recent) claimants.
- However, there were no differences by age or limiting long-term illness or disability on this question.

Analysis of expectations against overall satisfaction shows that most 'very satisfied' customers said services were better than they expected, and most 'very dissatisfied' customers said they were worse than expected. However, most 'fairly satisfied' and 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' customers, as well as a substantial proportion of 'fairly dissatisfied' customers, said they were at about the level they expected. This analysis suggests that many customers have relatively low



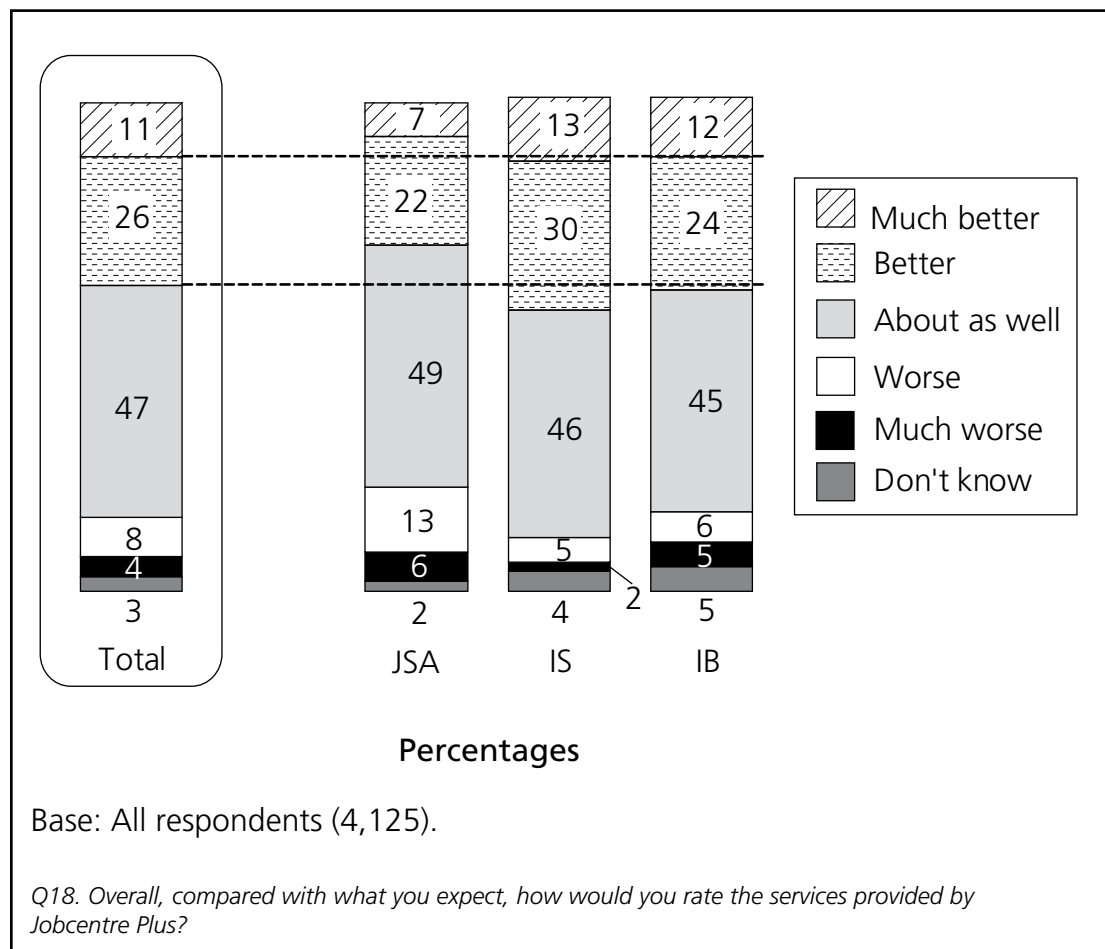
expectations of services (i.e. they are not particularly satisfied but this is in line with what they expected), but that exceeding these expectations is likely to result in a high level of satisfaction (since most customers who felt that services were better than they expected were very satisfied).

### 3.11 Customer perceptions of whether improvements are needed

One in three customers said that Jobcentre Plus does not need to make any improvements to services (32 per cent), while 46 per cent felt that some or a *slight* improvement is needed. However, 15 per cent said that *much* or a *huge* improvement is needed.

Figure 3.9 shows that again, JSA customers were least positive (20 per cent said *much/a huge* improvement was needed), while IS and IB customers were similar in their views. One in seven IB customers (14 per cent) did not give an opinion, which may reflect their limited contact with Jobcentre Plus.

**Figure 3.8 Rating of services relative to expectations, by benefit type**

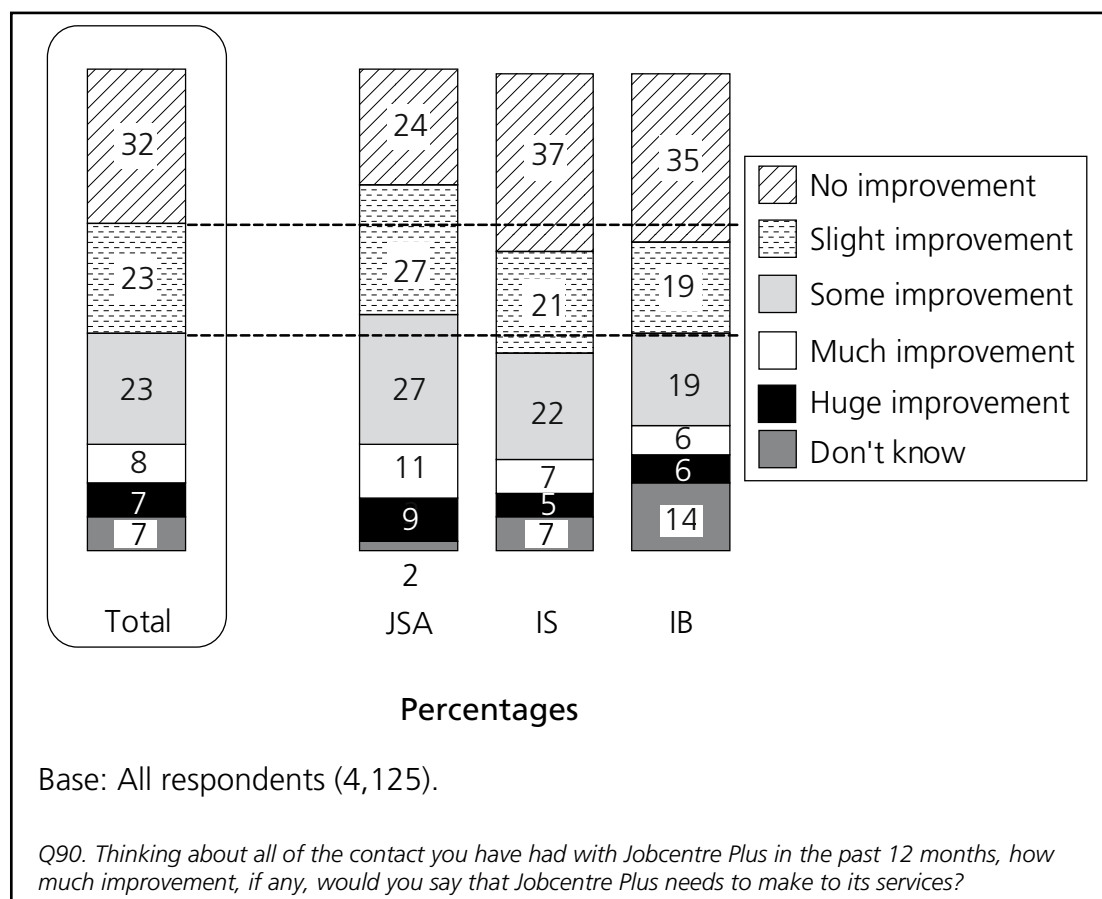


As with overall satisfaction, 16–24-year-olds were more positive than older customers (64 per cent said *no* or only *slight* improvements were needed), while JSA customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds were again more likely to be critical of services (32 per cent said *much* or *huge* improvement was needed, compared with 18 per cent of other JSA customers). Former claimants were again more critical than current claimants.

For other sub-groups, however, this question showed a different pattern. There was no difference by gender, while customers in Yorkshire and the Humber were most likely to say that *no* improvements were needed (40 per cent). By contrast, customers in London were more likely than those elsewhere to say that *much* or a *huge* improvement was needed (23 per cent). Black customers were also more likely than average to say improvements were needed, but (as with overall satisfaction) this difference is driven by the relatively large Black population in London. Asian customers and those whose first language is not English were no different to other customers on this question.

Overall, there was no difference amongst customers with a limiting long-term illness or disability, although within the JSA sample, they were more likely than other customers to say that *much* or a *huge* improvement was needed (25 per cent compared with 19 per cent).

**Figure 3.9 Whether improvements are needed to services, by benefit type**



In addition, there was a difference in terms of the length of claim, again specifically within the JSA sample. Those whose claim had lasted between three and six months were more likely to say improvements were needed (25 per cent said *much* or a *huge* improvement was needed) compared with those with either shorter or longer claims. In interpreting these findings, it is important to note that customers' experiences will mostly pre-date the recent changes to the Jobseeker's Regime and the introduction of the Jobseeker's Regime and Flexible New Deal, including the new 'stage two' phase for customers between three and six months of their claim, which involves directed job search.

## 4 Interaction with Jobcentre Plus

This chapter examines the interactions that customers have with Jobcentre Plus, and covers customers' experience of and attitudes towards different contact channels (face to face, telephone and written). This part of the survey was designed to reflect Jobcentre Plus service standards and indicators that relate to Departmental Strategic Objective 7 (DSO7): 'Make DWP an Exemplar of Effective Service Delivery', specifically the four indicators (noted as appropriate throughout the chapter) that form the basis of the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP's) Customer Charter:<sup>17</sup> *Ease of access, Treatment, Timely response* and *Right outcome* (see Section 1.3.1)

The chapter also considers customer and staff awareness and views about the DWP Customer Charter. It is important to note that this chapter is based on customer recall of their most recent contact experience of face-to-face or telephone contact. For some customers this may have been some time ago (within the last year).

Within this chapter specific questions were asked of different respondents regarding the different contact channels they had used as follows:

- **Face-to-face meetings at Jobcentre Plus offices**, asked of customers who had attended a face-to-face meeting at a Jobcentre Plus office in the previous 12 months, and where this was more recent than telephone contact (2,171 respondents).
- **Telephone interaction**, asked of customers who had been in contact with Jobcentre Plus by telephone in the previous 12 months (either by phoning from their own phone, by using a Customer Access Phone, or being telephoned by Jobcentre Plus), and where this was more recent than a face-to-face meeting (1,315 respondents).
- **Home visits**, asked of all customers who had received a home visit in the previous 12 months (107 respondents).
- **Written contact**, asked of all customers who had sent a letter, fax or email to Jobcentre Plus in the previous 12 months (541 respondents).

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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/customer-charter-dwp.pdf>

- Where appointments had been made for face-to-face meetings or telephone calls, these mostly took place at the appointed time (88 per cent for meetings, 77 per cent for telephone calls).
- Seventy-one per cent felt that the time taken for their last telephone call to be answered was reasonable, while 81 per cent of customers who had written to Jobcentre Plus, and received a reply, said the same.
- Most customers were satisfied with the standard of service they received: between 45 and 62 per cent were *very* satisfied with the service from the various contact channels.
- Customers were also positive towards specific aspects of service, particularly being treated in a friendly and polite way, but slightly less so for receiving information that was relevant to their needs and circumstances.
- Customers generally felt that all of their issues had been addressed. Only 10 per cent said there were issues that had not been addressed at an office-based meeting, 15 per cent during telephone contact and nine per cent in the reply they received to a letter, fax or email. Customers also mentioned some unresolved issues. These included: a lack of explanation for a cessation of benefits and letters remaining unanswered.
- Where response delays had occurred, staff explained that these could occur because of: increased customer call volumes due to the recession and a shortage of adequately trained staff; customers tending to call at peak times of day; the time taken for staff to provide proof of entitlement letters and where more than one benefit is involved referral between staff adds additional delays.
- While customers were generally positive about their experiences with Jobcentre Plus there were some negative views expressed about the lack of help and support given at Fortnightly Job Reviews (FJR), the lack of tailored advice given during Work Focused Interviews (WFIs), specialist disability advisers who lack experience or understanding of some disabilities and the effect on a person's ability to work; and poor-quality training.

#### 4.1 Reason for contact

This section examines the reasons for face-to-face and telephone contact with Jobcentre Plus. This information is important as a context for the remaining findings in this chapter, which look at customers' perceptions of these interactions. In particular, it is important to bear in mind the wide range of reasons for contact with Jobcentre Plus. In addition, it is worth noting that telephone contact covers a range of Jobcentre Plus telephone service lines, some provided by Contact Centres (e.g. First Contact benefit claims, Jobseeker Direct) and others provided by Benefit Delivery Centres (e.g. Social Fund applications, benefit enquiries). Customers may also occasionally contact their local office by telephone.

Table 4.1 indicates the purpose of the most recent face-to-face meeting attended by respondents at a Jobcentre Plus office, and Table 4.2 shows this information for the most recent telephone contact.

Face-to-face meetings at Jobcentre Plus offices were generally scheduled meetings: either a Fortnightly Job Review, 13 or 26 week review meeting or work-focused interview after a new claim. The separate figures for each benefit type are given in Table 4.1, confirming that the types of meeting customers attend are different for each benefit. The glossary (at the start of the report) provides more information on these types of meeting.

**Table 4.1 Purpose of face-to-face meeting, by benefit type**

	Total %	JSA %	IS %	IB %
To sign on/FJR <sup>1</sup>	23	44	3	7
13/26-week review meeting	21	14	31	14
WFI after a new claim	18	11	26	19
To talk about jobs/finding jobs	17	14	19	19
To discuss an existing claim/to report non-payment of benefit	6	4	7	11
To search for job vacancies	6	8	4	2
To discuss training opportunities	5	6	5	2
General enquiry about benefit/to see if I was eligible	5	3	5	11
<i>Base: All respondents whose most recent contact was a face-to-face meeting</i>	<i>2,171</i>	<i>1,109</i>	<i>750</i>	<i>312</i>

Q19. Firstly can you tell me what was the purpose of the meeting?

Note 1: The IS and IB customers who attended a fortnightly review may be referring to previous JSA claims that they had. Table includes answers given by five per cent or more of respondents.

Whereas face-to-face meetings were often work-related, telephone contact was more likely to concern an actual benefit claim (Table 4.2). The most common reasons for telephone contact were to discuss an existing claim (including non-receipt of payment) and to make a general enquiry about eligibility. The reasons for telephone contact were similar across the three benefit types.

It is possible for some customers to receive a home visit from a member of Jobcentre Plus staff. As noted in Chapter 2, three per cent of customers had received a home visit in the previous 12 months. The main reasons for a home visit were to check personal circumstances or to discuss an existing claim (Table 4.3). The reasons for customers making written contact with Jobcentre Plus were not covered by the survey.

**Table 4.2 Purpose of telephone contact, by benefit type**

	Total %	JSA %	IS %	IB %
To discuss an existing benefit claim/report non-receipt of payment	22	18	23	26
General enquiry about benefit/to see if I was eligible	15	13	17	16
General enquiry (other)	12	8	13	15
To book an appointment/arrange a meeting	10	8	13	9
To talk about jobs/finding work	10	13	9	7
Report change in circumstances/sign off	10	9	11	10
To search for job vacancies	6	11	3	4
To make a new claim	6	6	5	6
To enquire about/follow up a job vacancy	5	13	2	2

*Base: All respondents whose most recent contact was by telephone* 1,315 452 477 386

Q28. Firstly, for what reason [did you ring Jobcentre Plus/did Jobcentre Plus ring you]?

Note 1: Table includes answers given by five per cent or more of respondents.

**Table 4.3 Reasons for home visit**

	Percentages
To check circumstances (e.g. personal detail, work status or health) <sup>1</sup>	37
To discuss an existing claim/non-receipt of payment	25
To make a new claim	6
13/26-week review meeting	5
Report change in circumstances/sign off	5

*Base: All respondents who received a home visit in past 12 months* 107

Q57. You said earlier that you have had a home visit from a member of Jobcentre Plus staff in..... [ANSWER FROM Q7]. For what purpose did you require this home visit?

Note 1: Table 4.3 includes answers given by five per cent or more of respondents.

## 4.2 Appointments

### 4.2.1 Face-to-face meetings at Jobcentre Plus offices

Most customers who attended a face-to-meeting at a Jobcentre Plus office said they had an appointment for the meeting (94 per cent); this reflects the nature of the meetings shown above in Table 4.1. Where they had an appointment, most customers said that the meeting happened at the appointed time (88 per cent). This was slightly lower for JSA customers (86 per cent) than IS or IB customers (90 per cent and 92 per cent respectively), and when analysing results by the purpose of the meeting, it can be seen that (according to respondents) FJR meetings were less likely than other types of meeting to happen at the appointed time (81 per cent).

The reasons given by respondents as to why meetings did not happen at the appointed time are indicated in Table 4.4. Customers said this was mostly because of Jobcentre Plus running late. It is not possible to analyse these reasons by the different purposes for having a meeting, as the numbers concerned are too small.

**Table 4.4 Reasons for face-to-face meetings not happening at appointed time**

	Percentages
Jobcentre Plus were running late/behind schedule <sup>1</sup>	63
I was late	9
There was a mix up over the time	8
I cancelled/re-arranged meeting	8
Jobcentre Plus cancelled/re-arranged meeting	3
Jobcentre Plus did not have the meeting booked in	2
Other answer	6
Don't know	2
<i>Base: All respondents who said meeting did not happen at the appointed time</i>	<i>218</i>

Q21. Did the meeting happen at the appointed time...? / Q22. Why not?

Note 1: Table 4.4 includes answers given by five per cent or more of respondents.

#### 4.2.2 Telephone calls made by Jobcentre Plus

Where respondents' last contact was a telephone call that they received from Jobcentre Plus, 27 per cent said that the call was arranged for a specific time or time period (there was no significant difference in this figure across the benefit types). Around three in four (77 per cent) of these customers said that the call happened at the appointed time (17 per cent said it did not, and seven per cent could not remember). Further analysis is not possible because of the small number of respondents concerned.

### 4.3 Speed of response

#### 4.3.1 Telephone calls to Jobcentre Plus

According to the Jobcentre Plus Service Standards<sup>18</sup>, Jobcentre Plus aims to answer telephone calls within 30 seconds. Around half of customers who telephoned Jobcentre Plus recalled that the telephone rang for more than 30 seconds before it was answered (49 per cent), while 32 per cent said it was less than 30 seconds and 17 per cent did not know (see Figure 4.1). IB customers were less likely than other customers to think that the telephone rang for more than 30 seconds (40 per cent). Two in three customers (65 per cent) said that they were able to get through first time when they rang, and this did not vary by benefit type.

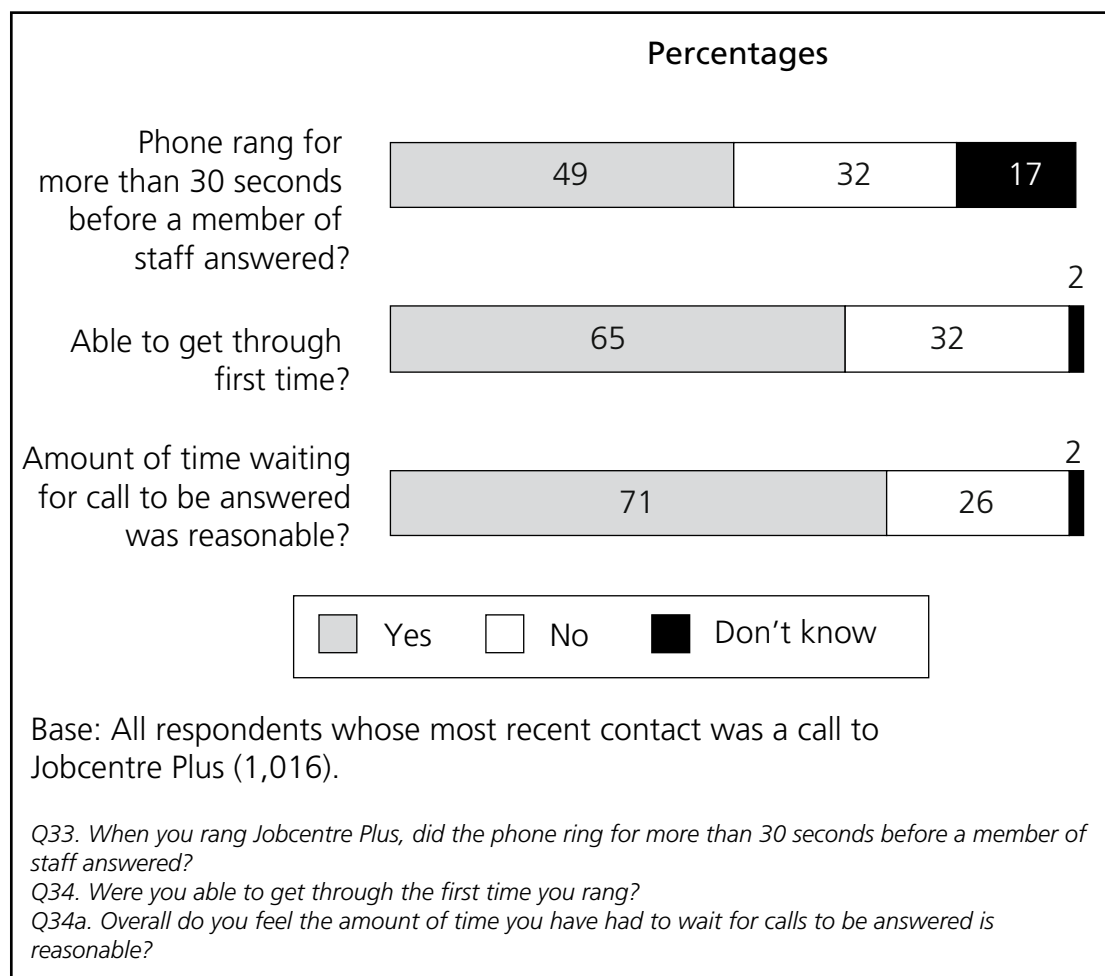
<sup>18</sup> [http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/stellent/groups/jcp/documents/websitecontent/dev\\_011795.pdf](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk/JCP/stellent/groups/jcp/documents/websitecontent/dev_011795.pdf)



Since many respondents had telephoned Jobcentre Plus some time before the survey interview, it is likely that they will have difficulty recalling these details precisely. It is therefore more useful to assess whether they felt that (more generally) the amount of time they had to wait for calls to be answered was reasonable. Figure 4.1 indicates that 71 per cent said they thought the time was reasonable and this again was consistent by benefit type. Twenty-six per cent of customers in the survey said that the time they had to wait was not reasonable.

There was some variation in relation to the purpose of the most recent telephone call. Customers who rang to enquire about or follow-up job vacancies generally felt that the time they had to wait for calls to be answered was reasonable (84 per cent), but the proportion was lower than average amongst customers who last made contact to make a new claim (62 per cent) or discuss an existing claim (including non-receipt of payment) (62 per cent).

**Figure 4.1 Speed of response when telephoning Jobcentre Plus**



The follow-up qualitative research uncovered some specific examples of cases where customers felt that the speed of response to a telephone call was not satisfactory. The examples are based on customer recall and relate to different stages of the customer journey and deal with the experiences of particular

customers. However, they are indicative of broader issues typically encountered by customers in the sample:

- A customer claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) was waiting for the telephone to be answered for a long period of time, estimated by the customer as 40-45 minutes, when they rang the Benefit Delivery Centre to inquire why their benefits had stopped.
- It took one customer (in receipt of Income Support (IS)) an estimated 30 minutes to get through on the telephone when making an initial claim for JSA.
- A JSA customer had to call several times to find out why the interest payments for their mortgage had not started, as the line was constantly engaged.

*'I was waiting in a queue on the phone for about 40 – 45 minutes to find out why my claim was stopped.'*

(JSA, 25-49)

Managers and telephony staff were asked to consider why delays occurred when customers were making telephone contact with Jobcentre Plus. The general view was that there had been a rapid increase in call volumes due to the recession and an insufficient number of staff, resulting in lengthy call delays. Jobcentre Plus had responded to this by recruiting additional staff. Staff said that once new staff had been recruited and trained the delays had decreased considerably.

Staff across Jobcentre Plus (including Jobcentre Plus offices, Benefit Delivery Centres and Contact Centres) recognised that short delays could still occur at peak times of the day, notably late morning, lunch time and early afternoon. Staff thought that in these cases there was a need to manage customer expectations regarding how long it can take to get through on the telephone and that this can be affected by the time at which the call is made.

### 4.3.2 Written contact

Most survey respondents who had written to Jobcentre Plus in the previous 12 months had done so in a letter rather than by fax, email or through a form or document (see Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5 Method of written contact**

	Percentages
Letter	83
Email	7
Form or document	7
Fax	2
Don't know	1
<i>Base: All respondents who have written to Jobcentre Plus in last 12 months</i>	<i>541</i>

Q44. You said that you last sent a letter/fax/email to Jobcentre Plus...[ANSWER AT Q7]. Was this a...?

In line with its Service Standards, Jobcentre Plus aims to reply to a letter, fax or email within 10 working days of receipt. When asked about the timing of the response, some respondents said they had written less than 10 days ago, with others saying that a reply wasn't necessary or expected. If these respondents are excluded (as well as those who could not remember how long it took to get a reply), 61 per cent received a reply within working 10 days, while 22 per cent waited more than 10 working days and 17 per cent never received a reply (see Table 4.6). These findings were consistent by benefit type.

**Table 4.6 Number of working days taken for reply**

	Percentages
1-2 days	8
3-5 days	26
6-10 days	27
More than 10 days	22
Never received a reply	17
<i>Base: All respondents who have written to Jobcentre Plus in last 12 months and can remember if received a reply/believe a reply is necessary</i>	335

*Q46. How many working days was it before they replied?*

Amongst those that had received a reply, 81 per cent felt that the time they waited was reasonable. As might be expected, this varied according to the time taken for the reply: 96 per cent amongst those who waited no more than five days, 90 per cent amongst those waiting between five and 10 days, and 46 per cent amongst those waiting more than 10 days.

The qualitative follow-up research identified examples whereby customers felt that the response time to a letter was unreasonable. For example:

- A JSA customer wrote to Jobcentre Plus because their mortgage interest payments had not been received. A week later Jobcentre Plus rang the customer and left a message to say that they would ring back later, but the customer did not receive a response.

*'I sent them a letter asking when my mortgage payments would come through – I didn't get a response for weeks and weeks.'*

(JSA, 50+)

As in the case of telephone delays, staff regarded the increase in the number of customers and the resulting shortage of staff due to the recession as a factor that contributed to delays in receiving written replies and for mistakes occurring. Additional reasons for delays mentioned by staff included the time it can take to produce proof of entitlement letters, as well as the fact that letters involving more than one benefit often have to be referred between areas of the business.

In terms of improvements, staff had two suggestions: increasing staff resources and managing customer expectations. First, staff recognised that Jobcentre Plus had already increased resources and that this had had a considerable effect on response times to letters from customers. Second, staff felt there was a need to manage customer expectations as to how long it may take to receive a reply to a letter. For example, in the case of written replies, staff mentioned that different queries take different amounts of time to deal with and those customers should be made aware of this. Typically, where a query relates to more than benefit, then the reply would take longer to produce. This aspect of service could be explained to customers as a way of better managing their expectations about the speed of service (see Section 11.4).

#### 4.4 Satisfaction with standard of service

Survey respondents who had used different contact channels were asked how satisfied they were with the standard of service they received. Table 4.7 shows the results for each channel, and this indicates that the majority of customers were at least *fairly* satisfied with each contact channel, and around half were *very* satisfied. The proportion who were *very* satisfied was higher for the most recent face-to-face meeting at a Jobcentre Plus office (56 per cent) than for the most recent telephone or any written contact (50 per cent and 45 per cent respectively), while 62 per cent of customers receiving a home visit were *very* satisfied. As already noted, the reasons for contact, and the type of interaction involved, vary considerably, so comparisons between different contact channels should be made with caution.

**Table 4.7 Satisfaction with standard of service, for each contact channel**

	Face to face at office %	Home visit %	Telephone %	Written %
Very satisfied	56	62	50	45
Fairly satisfied	30	32	33	34
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	5	3	6	8
Fairly dissatisfied	4	*	5	7
Very dissatisfied	3	1	5	5
Don't know	1	2	1	1
<i>Base: All respondents asked about each contact channel</i>	2,171	107	1,315	287

Q26. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the standard of service you received at the meeting. Were you....?

Q38. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the standard of service you received during the phone call. Were you....?

Q53. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the standard of response you received to your [letter / fax / email]?

Q61. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the standard of service you received during the visit. Were you....?

Table 4.8 shows the proportion of respondents who were very satisfied with each contact channel, analysed by benefit type (findings for home visits are not shown because of the small number of respondents). JSA customers were less likely to be very satisfied with either face-to-face or telephone contact, compared with IS or Incapacity Benefit (IB) customers. There was no significant difference for written contact.

**Table 4.8 Satisfaction with standard of service, for each contact channel, by benefit type**

	Face to face at office %	Telephone %	Written %
<i>Proportion very satisfied</i>			
Total	56	50	45
JSA	47	43	40
IS	64	55	51
IB	61	51	44
<i>Base: All respondents asked about each contact channel</i>	2,171	1,315	287

Q26. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the standard of service you received at the meeting. Were you....?

Q38. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the standard of service you received during the phone call. Were you....?

Q53. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the standard of response you received to your [letter / fax / email]?

Sub-group patterns for office-based meetings and telephone contact reflect those seen for overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus at Chapter 3. JSA customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds were less satisfied than other JSA customers (34 per cent were very satisfied with their meeting at an office and 29 per cent with their last telephone contact). In the IS sample, those with a limiting long-standing illness or disability were less positive than other customers (55 per cent very satisfied with an office-based meeting and 50 per cent with telephone contacts), while female IS customers were more positive than male customers (the difference being greater for office-based meetings: 67 per cent of female IS customers were very satisfied, compared with 47 per cent of male IS customers). IS customers with shorter or more recent claims (claims lasting less than one year) were also less satisfied with office-based meetings (54 per cent very satisfied).

For face-to-face meetings at a Jobcentre Plus office, findings were generally consistent by region, although those in the North West were more likely to be *fairly* or *very* satisfied (92 per cent), with the figure lowest in London (78 per cent). Current claimants were more positive than former/recent claimants towards both office-based meetings and telephone contact.

We can also analyse the reason for the meeting or telephone contact. Satisfaction with office-based meetings was greater where the meeting was to talk about jobs or finding work, for a WFI and for a 13/26-week review (each with 61 per cent *very* satisfied) and lower for FJR (41 per cent). Satisfaction with telephone contact was lower when the reason for contact was to discuss jobs/finding work, an existing claim or to report non-receipt of payment (each with 45 per cent *very* satisfied). The findings below on aspects of service help to understand why these types of meeting/contact result in higher or lower satisfaction.

## 4.5 Rating of aspects of service

Survey respondents were asked about five key aspects of service for face-to-face meetings (both office-based and home visits), as well as telephone contact. These factors reflect indicators that relate to DSO7: 'Make DWP an Exemplar of Effective Service Delivery' (such as: time taken to meet customers' needs, providing customers with the help they need, and making customers feel respected and valued). They are also consistent with Jobcentre Plus service standards in which staff aim to: be friendly, fair and helpful; behave professionally; give the service needed, taking account of any health condition, disability or language problem; and respect privacy.

In general, ratings were very positive, with at least half of respondents rating each aspect *very* good (Table 4.9). Across the contact channels, the highest ratings were given for being treated in a friendly and polite way. Ratings were least positive in relation to providing information that was relevant to needs and circumstances, although ratings were still high, with more than 80 per cent rating this *very* or *fairly* good for the various contact channels.

As was the case with the overall standard of the service (Section 4.4), ratings for telephone contact were slightly lower than for face-to-face contact (either at an office or a home visit). The difference was most pronounced in relation to completing your business in a reasonable amount of time (54 per cent *very* good for telephone contact, compared with 64 per cent with office-based meetings and 71 per cent with home visits).

Analysis by benefit type (Table 4.10) shows that (as with the overall standard of service), JSA customers were less positive than IS or IB customers, and this applied to both face-to-face and telephone contact. In particular, JSA customers were markedly less positive in relation to providing information relevant to your needs and circumstances at face-to-face meetings (47 per cent *very* good).

**Table 4.9 Rating of aspects of service, for each contact channel**

	Face to face at office %	Home visit %	Telephone %
<b>Treating you in a friendly and polite way</b>			
Very good	74	76	66
Fairly good	20	21	24
Neither good nor poor	3	0	3
Fairly poor	1	0	2
Very poor	1	1	2
Don't know/not applicable	1	2	2
<b>Treating you with respect as an individual</b>			
Very good	70	72	64
Fairly good	22	24	25
Neither good nor poor	3	1	4
Fairly poor	2	0	2
Very poor	2	1	3
Don't know/not applicable	1	2	2
<b>Respecting your privacy</b>			
Very good	66	71	61
Fairly good	24	24	25
Neither good nor poor	4	2	3
Fairly poor	2	0	2
Very poor	2	1	2
Don't know/not applicable	2	3	7
<b>Providing information relevant to your needs and circumstances</b>			
Very good	57	66	52
Fairly good	26	25	29
Neither good nor poor	5	3	6
Fairly poor	4	0	5
Very poor	4	3	5
Don't know/not applicable	2	3	3
<b>Completing your business in a reasonable length of time</b>			
Very good	64	71	54
Fairly good	28	26	30
Neither good nor poor	3	1	4
Fairly poor	2	0	4
Very poor	1	1	5
Don't know/not applicable	2	2	2
<i>Base: All respondents asked about each contact channel</i>	<i>2,171</i>	<i>107</i>	<i>1,315</i>

Q23. / Q35. / Q58. I'd now like you to rate some aspects of the service you received during (this meeting/this phone call /this home visit) with the [adviser/member of staff]. After each one I read out, I'd like you to say if you thought it was Very Good, Fairly Good, neither Good nor Poor, Fairly Poor or Very Poor. First of all can you tell me how good or poor the [adviser/member of staff] was at .....

**Table 4.10 Rating of aspects of service, for each contact channel by benefit type**

	Face to face at office		Telephone	
	Very good %	Fairly good %	Very good %	Fairly good %
<b>Treating you in a friendly and polite way</b>				
JSA	69	23	58	32
IS	78	18	70	21
IB	82	13	70	20
<b>Treating you with respect as an individual</b>				
JSA	63	27	55	32
IS	75	19	68	23
IB	78	17	67	20
<b>Respecting your privacy</b>				
JSA	60	27	54	29
IS	71	22	67	24
IB	72	18	61	24
<b>Providing information relevant to your needs and circumstances</b>				
JSA	47	31	44	32
IS	66	23	57	27
IB	67	19	54	26
<b>Completing your business in a reasonable length of time</b>				
JSA	58	31	47	33
IS	69	25	57	30
IB	69	24	59	26
<i>Base: All respondents asked about each contact channel</i>		2,171	1,315	

Q23. / Q35. / Q58. I'd now like you to rate some aspects of the service you received during (this meeting/this phone call /this home visit) with the [adviser/member of staff]. After each one I read out, I'd like you to say if you thought it was Very Good, Fairly Good, neither Good nor Poor, Fairly Poor or Very Poor. First of all can you tell me how good or poor the [adviser/member of staff] was at .....



Section 4.4 identified sub-groups where ratings for the overall service standard were higher or lower than average. Analysis of the specific aspects of service can help to understand these findings, as outlined below.

- JSA customers attending FJR meetings gave lower ratings than those attending other types of meeting. In particular, these respondents gave less positive ratings for providing information relevant to needs and circumstances; this may reflect the short duration and relatively limited scope of these meetings.
- Respondents who attended a meeting to talk about jobs or finding work were more positive about the meeting overall, and again this can be linked to the rating for providing information relevant to needs and circumstances, which was more positive for these customers.
- JSA customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds gave much lower ratings than other JSA customers for providing information relevant to needs and circumstances, at both office-based meetings (31 per cent *very good*, compared with 52 per cent) and in telephone contact (31 per cent<sup>19</sup> *very good* compared with 46 per cent).
- IS customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability were less positive than other IS customers on all aspects of office-based meetings, including providing information relevant to needs and circumstances, even though this aspect of service was rated more highly by JSA customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability than other JSA customers. Providing information relevant to needs and circumstances at office-based meetings was also the aspect with the greatest difference between female and male IS customers (69 per cent of female respondents rating it as *very good*, compared with 47 per cent of male respondents).
- In telephone contact, the greatest difference between male and female IS customers was for completing business in a reasonable length of time (61 per cent of female customers and 43 per cent of male customers rated this as *very good*). This aspect also showed the greatest difference for IS customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability (50 per cent rating it *very good*, compared with 62 per cent of other IS customers).
- Ratings for office-based meetings were consistently lower in London than elsewhere. Those in the North West gave higher ratings for respecting privacy (74 per cent *very good*) and completing business in a reasonable length of time (71 per cent).
- Asian customers were more positive than Black customers in relation to receiving information that was relevant to their needs and circumstances at office-based meetings (65 per cent compared with 46 per cent), although Asian customers were less positive than other customers in relation to friendly and polite service at office-based meetings.

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<sup>19</sup> For telephone contact, professional and managerial occupations have been combined with administrative occupations to allow sufficient numbers for analysis.

- JSA customers aged 16-24 gave higher ratings than older JSA customers for respecting privacy (67 per cent very good).

Questions about aspects of service were not asked about written contact, although some additional details were obtained. Of those that received a reply (53 per cent of those that had made contact in writing), the vast majority (95 per cent) said that they received a reply in plain language that was easy to understand. Just one per cent said they requested a response in a specific format or language.

## 4.6 Evidence from qualitative research on experiences of Jobcentre Plus interactions

The qualitative follow-up research explored experiences of the services delivered to customers. Overwhelmingly, the qualitative research showed that customers expressed satisfaction with much of the service they received. This included helpful and friendly Jobcentre Plus staff, speedy responses to telephone calls and enquiries, advice and guidance that was tailored to their needs and circumstances and examples of specific members of staff going out of their way to provide a valuable service to customers. However, a substantial proportion of the qualitative research involved specifically recruiting JSA, IS and IB customers from the survey on the basis of aspects of the service that they found dissatisfying. Customers were asked about different elements of service delivery within the customer journey, including their initial claim, adviser contact and other support received such as training. In the following section examples of dissatisfaction with specific aspects of service delivery are provided. Examples of service that resulted in satisfaction are also considered. These occurred at a number of different points in the customer journey, including:

- initial contact – the application stage;
- FJRs and WFIs;
- contact with specialist advisers (Lone Parent Advisers (LPAs), Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs));
- training and support (a mixture of contracted-out and Jobcentre Plus-provided support).

It is important to note that although the examples below emphasise dissatisfaction, these customers were usually dissatisfied with only one particular aspect of the service and were generally otherwise very satisfied with the service they had received from Jobcentre Plus. For example, a lone parent had experienced a difficulty in contacting their LPA, but they were generally satisfied with all the other aspects of the service in terms of the information they received, staff manner and timeliness of appointments, as well as the overall benefit claim process.

Overall, it is useful to see the following examples in context. In many cases, dissatisfaction occurred because of a number of factors including customer error, unrealistic customer expectations, misunderstanding Jobcentre Plus processes, and staff issues (such as errors, lack of training, and staff shortage due to the recession). These underlying reasons for dissatisfaction will be explored further in Section 11.4, along with potential ways of reducing dissatisfaction overall.

Satisfaction with the initial contact was high. Key elements of satisfaction were:

- getting through on the phone quickly (JSA - after five minutes);
- polite staff who are happy to help (JSA); and
- information given about when a customer might expect to receive their benefit (IS).

However, there were also reasons for dissatisfaction with their initial contact. These were:

- some customers reported delays in getting through to the Contact Centre by telephone, with waiting times of upwards of 30 minutes reported;
- an IB customer with hearing difficulties found the Contact Centre to be unsympathetic to their hearing problem;
- one customer reported an abrupt manner by Contact Centre staff during the initial telephone application for JSA;
- a customer was advised by Jobcentre Plus staff to make a claim for JSA, yet IS ultimately proved to be a more suitable benefit for them to apply for. They found the experience stressful as it meant they had to complete a number of unnecessary forms and visit and call the Jobcentre on a number of occasions in order to progress their claim. They also felt it reflected badly on the professionalism of Jobcentre Plus;
- some customers were not told how long an IS application would take to process.

The qualitative research identified both satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the FJR amongst JSA customers. The primary purpose of the FJR is to discuss what the customer has been doing to find work. This serves two purposes: to make sure they have been actively seeking work and are therefore entitled to payment of any JSA due; and identify what help, if any, is needed. Job search reviews are all relatively short contacts, but in reality they may vary in length depending upon individual need. Where additional help is required, this is provided within the review if practical, but where this cannot be accommodated because more time is needed, the customer should be referred to an adviser for further help.

Features of the FJR that engendered satisfaction were: FJR advisers that were very polite and friendly; provided reassurance when customers were upset; and actively helped customers, such as an FJR adviser that gave a customer a list of internet job search sites for them to undertake their own job search at home.

Dissatisfaction with FJR was also apparent and fairly broad based. It was due to: adviser manner, limited time spent during the review, negative perceptions of the support and advice on offer, delays to the appointment occurring, lack of adviser continuity, and issues relating to privacy. By way of example:

- **Perceived lack of support:** A JSA customer was frustrated that no support or advice about their job search was given during the FJR appointment. Instead they were asked what jobs they had applied for. The customer did not fully understand the purpose of the FJR and as a result there was a feeling that the adviser in question was not being supportive enough.
- **Feeling pressured to apply for unsuitable jobs:** A job was suggested to one JSA customer that would involve them travelling from Birmingham to London for work. In another case a redundant office worker felt pressured to accept a cleaning job. In both cases the roles suggested by the adviser were felt to be inappropriate. However, it should be noted that during the early stages of a claim to JSA, customers with a usual occupation are allowed to restrict their job search to that occupation and to the associated terms and conditions for a limited period agreed with their adviser at the outset. After this, they must be willing to consider and apply for a broader range of jobs, so as to give themselves the best prospects of finding work.
- **Treated unsympathetically:** A JSA customer missed an FJR appointment due to a medical emergency but felt that they were not treated sympathetically by Jobcentre Plus staff as a result. The customer felt that their personal circumstances could have been appreciated more.
- **Lack of privacy:** A JSA customer was concerned about discussing confidential information about their finances and job history in an open-plan environment.
- **Lack of time:** A JSA customer felt rushed during the FJR appointment, and as a result felt that the adviser did not care about their situation and that there was no time to ask questions or receive the required amount of support.
- **Adviser manner:** When a customer claiming JSA could not apply for certain jobs because of their caring responsibilities they felt that their adviser became annoyed. The customer was frustrated because they felt that the manner of the adviser was not appropriate, and that their circumstances should have been taken into consideration.
- **Lack of adviser continuity:** Providing continuity of contact at job search reviews is important, but operationally it is not always easy to ensure customers see the same member of staff each time. Even if it is not possible to see the same person every time, customers should see someone from the same team. However, a JSA customer did not appreciate having a different adviser for every FJR because they felt they had to repeatedly explain their situation, and also because they felt that this prevented building up a relationship with a single adviser over time.
- **Waiting times:** Being made to wait in the reception of Jobcentre Plus was mentioned as a cause for dissatisfaction, with one JSA customer claiming that they had to wait for an hour before their FJR took place.

*'The [FJR] adviser will just say a few words to you about your job search and you'll sign on...they won't ask if you need help or if you want to look on the computer.'*

(JSA, 25-49)

*'All they did was ask me the same questions they ask me every fortnight [during the FJR]. Who have you applied to? What papers are you reading? And that's it. And I thought, well this is an absolute waste of time.'*

(JSA, 50+)

WFIs are carried out put by a personal adviser at a Jobcentre Plus office. The adviser may be a specialist lone parent or incapacity benefits adviser. The aim of WFIs is to explore in more depth the job search activities of the customer and to consider the type of support that is needed in order for them to move into work.

Views about the WFI were mixed. Most customers found the time with the adviser useful as their specialist knowledge and jobs search advice were seen as very helpful. In addition, a WFI adviser that informed a customer about a £50 a week new business grant, as well as referring them to a course on taxation, was very highly regarded.

However, dissatisfaction with the WFI was also expressed. The reasons for this were: waiting times, a lack of perceived support and advice, insufficient time to discuss the issues that the customer wanted to raise; a pressure to apply for inappropriate jobs; and advisers who were thought to be unsympathetic to an individuals' situation.

Customers were asked about their contact with specialist advisers, such as LPAs and DEAs. IS customers were generally satisfied with their dealings with LPAs because they were seen as accessible, knowledgeable, helpful and supportive. Where an LPA had looked to tailor training courses with lone parents' working hours, this was especially highly regarded. However, an example of dissatisfaction also arose when a customer claiming IS had been offered a job and tried to obtain an appointment to see an LPA in order to obtain advice about how many hours they could work. However, they could not get an appointment for six weeks with the consequence that the customer was unable to take the job.

IB customers may see either an IB Personal Adviser (IBPA) or a DEA. IBPAs have considerable training in dealing with customers with a range of health conditions which is kept under regular review. DEAs, who focus on customers needing more extensive support, receive further levels of skills training appropriate to their customers. In addition, advisers more generally are provided with guide notes which include background information on a number of health conditions, the implications for interviews and how to use questioning techniques to support customers. When discussing issues related to specialist advisers it was clear that IB customers were not aware of the distinction between the two different types of adviser, although they recognised that they had been in contact with an adviser with specialist knowledge.

Customers had mixed experiences of dealing with these specialist advisers. Some IB customers were pleased with the specialist advice provided. For example, one specialist adviser looked for jobs that were specifically linked to the customer's background (which was catering). This was appreciated as it showed that the adviser was taking the customer's personal circumstances into consideration.

However, other IB customers were dissatisfied with their contact with the specialist advisers, for the following reasons:

- **Lack of understanding about health conditions:** A customer claiming IB felt that they were not being recommended jobs that were suited to their particular disability. The customer was in a wheelchair and felt they were being pressured to take jobs that would better suit customers with better mobility.
- **Lack of knowledge about health conditions:** A DEA was described as not being aware of the condition narcolepsy. In another case a DEA had thought that bipolar disorder was the same as mild depression and as a result the customer thought that their health condition was being trivialised.
- **Lack of privacy:** Jobcentre Plus will offer the use of a private interview room for discussions of a personal nature when this is appropriate or when requested by a customer. However, one customer claiming IB had not been offered this facility and felt uncomfortable discussing their personal issues in an open-plan office. They were not aware they could request a private interview room.

Customers (who were usually claiming IB, but also IS and JSA) who had a long-standing illness or disability also reported other negative experiences in dealing with Jobcentre Plus, specifically around telephone and face-to-face contact. For example:

- During the initial application on the telephone, a customer claiming IB with a hearing condition found it difficult to communicate with the member of staff that was processing their application. Jobcentre Plus can offer a customer with hearing difficulties a range of help; textphone if they have access to one, Tynetalk, a face-to-face interview with the use of a British Sign Language interpreter or a hearing loop as appropriate, or the facility to use a representative/intermediary. In this instance the customer did not request any of these facilities and they did not indicate that they had been offered any.
- A customer felt nervous while waiting for a face-to-face appointment because their health condition tended to make them anxious in public places.

In the qualitative follow-up study only a small number of customers had taken part in training courses. They were generally dissatisfied, either because they had not been able to get on to training courses, or they found the training did not meet their needs. For example:

- There were JSA customers who had been referred by Jobcentre Plus to a training provider. Even though customers telephoned the provider and left messages, their calls were never returned.

- Customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds found that the courses offered to them were too basic for their needs.

There were also examples of customers who found the quality of support offered to be poor, or did not sufficiently recognise their needs and abilities when looking for work. For example, a customer claiming JSA who was attending 'Job Club' was disappointed as there was said to be no help with finding work and no jobs available, but just information about how travel expenses incurred as a result of travelling to interviews can be claimed back. This was frustrating as the customer was expecting more support in terms of job search help and advice.

#### 4.7 Perceptions of the DWP Customer Charter

This section discusses awareness of, and views about, the DWP Customer Charter among customers and staff and was covered only in the qualitative research. The DWP Customer Charter is based on the four DSO7 indicators and emphasises the importance of '*Right treatment*', '*Right outcome*', '*On time*' and '*Easy access*' as aspects of service delivery that customers can expect to receive from DWP.

The Charter was launched internally in July 2009 and with customers in August. Customers are being made aware of the Charter through the *Our service to you* leaflet and other Jobcentre Plus leaflets; staff are being informed of the Charter through a series of local and national initiatives including an internal leaflet.

All customers and staff involved in the research were asked whether they had heard of the Charter in order to assess their levels of awareness. They were then prompted with the four aspects of the Charter and asked if they thought it included all of the relevant service aspects to ensure customer satisfaction. The views of customers and staff are considered below – key similarities and differences are pointed out where appropriate.

Although the DWP Customer Charter is currently being promoted to customers and staff in order to raise awareness, customers generally had a very low awareness of the Charter. By contrast, staff had differing levels of awareness of the Charter, depending on the type of staff, with more senior and longer serving members of staff more likely to be aware of the Charter than other members of staff.

Once the four aspects of the Charter were fully explained to them, customers and staff both agreed that the Charter covered the necessary areas relevant to customer satisfaction. Following this, customers and staff were asked to consider which elements were most important in creating customer satisfaction. Customers thought that '*Right treatment*' was of the highest importance because they placed a large value on the behaviour and manner of staff. Examples of typical staff behaviour that was seen as positive included: polite and friendly staff and staff who were sympathetic where a customer might be distressed or upset, for example where a customer might be stressed or anxious due to a health condition or disability, redundancy, or a financial issue such as loss of benefit.

Being treated well was felt to have a large positive impact on the overall experience of customers. In addition to this, customers said that being treated in the right way can have a positive impact on an experience that would otherwise be negative (for example, in cases where customers might be dissatisfied because they are not eligible for a benefit – see Chapter 10 on ESA customer satisfaction). Overall, it is important to note that customers did not consider other aspects of the Charter unimportant (such as *'Easy access'* and *'On time'*), but considered that *'Right treatment'* was the most important aspect.

By contrast, staff believed that the *'Right outcome'* and *'On time'* were the most important aspects of the Charter. They believed that getting these aspects of service correct would have a large positive impact on the experience for customers. Examples of this kind of service considered by staff were the processing of benefits on time, answering telephone calls in a timely fashion, ensuring that decisions led to the *'Right outcome'* (so that customers eligible for certain benefits received them, and that customers eligible for funding received it). Staff did recognise the importance of the other aspects of the charter but felt *'Right outcome'* and *'On time'* to be the most important features overall.

The reason that staff prioritised *'Right outcome'* and *'On time'* may be because the majority of complaints received by staff relate to these areas (see Section 6.2). By contrast, the complaints received by staff relating to manner were relatively few so there may be a lower awareness among staff of these issues. In contrast, although customers tended to complain about a spread of issues relating to *'Right treatment'*, *'Right outcome'* and *'On time'*, it appears that being treated in the right way had a particular importance for them and had a strong bearing on their levels of satisfaction.

## 4.8 Whether issues were resolved

Survey respondents who had attended a meeting at a Jobcentre Plus office or who had last been in contact by telephone were asked whether there were any issues that had not been addressed (for example, any information they still needed or any questions that had not been answered). This is important in relation to one of the key DSO7 indicators (*'Right outcome'*).

One in ten customers who had attended a meeting at an office said that there were issues that had not been addressed (10 per cent). This was higher in London (16 per cent) and amongst Asian customers (17 per cent), and was also higher amongst customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability (12 per cent compared with nine per cent amongst other customers).

A slightly higher proportion of respondents who had made contact by telephone said there were issues that had not been addressed (15 per cent), and again this was higher amongst IS customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability (17 per cent compared with nine per cent amongst other IS customers). This was also higher amongst customers who had made telephone contact in the previous



week (19 per cent), rather than longer ago; this may reflect a closer recall of the issues involved, as well as the fact that there may not yet have been time for the issues to be resolved.

Respondents who had written to Jobcentre Plus in the previous 12 months, and had received a reply, were asked whether the reply had dealt fully with their query. Just nine per cent said that the reply had not dealt fully with their query, while the vast majority (89 per cent) said that it had dealt fully with their enquiry.

The qualitative follow-up research with customers who reported unresolved issues in the survey (either after a telephone call, face-to-face meeting or letter) provided some detailed, but wide ranging, examples of these issues.

Unresolved issues tended to arise because of being given incorrect information, a lack of information, or expectations that were unrealistic and could not be met:

- **Incorrect information:** A customer (claiming JSA at the time) was told by Jobcentre Plus staff to telephone the IS claim line once they started receiving Carer's Allowance, as this had to happen before they were eligible to claim IS. However, upon telephoning the claim line the customer was then told that their claim for IS would not be processed as they were ineligible.
- **Lack of information:** A customer (claiming JSA) was told during a WFI that they had been paid too much in benefit, and would need to pay this back. However the reasons for this were never explained to them.
- **Unrealistic expectations:** One customer expected their JSA claim to be processed during their initial WFI. Another asked for a Better Off Calculation (BOC) to be processed during an FJR meeting at Jobcentre Plus but they were told that the member of staff could not process this. Neither FJRs nor WFIs are intended to process benefit claims or provide the opportunity for a BOC calculation to be undertaken. However, in these examples, it is clear that customers do not understand the system and have unrealistic expectations.

As with the other areas of service delivery explored by the qualitative follow-up research (speed of response, insufficient information, and problems following a change in circumstances) staff with the relevant experience of Jobcentre Plus services (including regional managers) were asked for their views on why these unresolved issues may have occurred. They gave a number of different reasons for this, based on the type of unresolved issue that was being discussed. These reasons can be summarised as follows: staff error, lack of staff training, potentially unrealistic customer expectations, and the impact of the recession.

- In cases where customers expected benefit claims to be processed face to face, Jobcentre Plus staff made it clear that it was not in their remit to do so; such issues would need to be referred to the Benefit Delivery Centre. Therefore, in this case staff suggested that the expectations of customers needed to be better managed.

- In cases where telephone enquiries are passed around across different parts of the business and not resolved after several telephone calls, staff suggested that this can occur due to the staff member not understanding how to deal with the issue (possibly the result of a lack of training).
- In cases where call-backs were meant to take place but did not occur, staff suggested that queries can be forgotten by staff as they do not have a system for diarising call-backs (this was felt to be an issue across all parts of the business).
- Where documentation was repeatedly requested, staff thought that this was due to documents being lost or misplaced as a result of staff error (this was the case across all areas of the business). In cases where errors occurred, staff mentioned that high customer volumes and limited staffing resources as a result of the recession could possibly have exacerbated such issues.

Staff were also asked about what improvements could be made in order to reduce unresolved issues and improve service delivery. Suggested improvements were:

- improving staff training and resources. It is important to note that staff recognised that steps had already been made to increase staff resource, following the recession; and
- managing customer expectations regarding Jobcentre Plus processes, and explicitly explaining when benefit processing would occur, what would happen first and how long the overall process would take.



## 5 Perceptions of office conditions

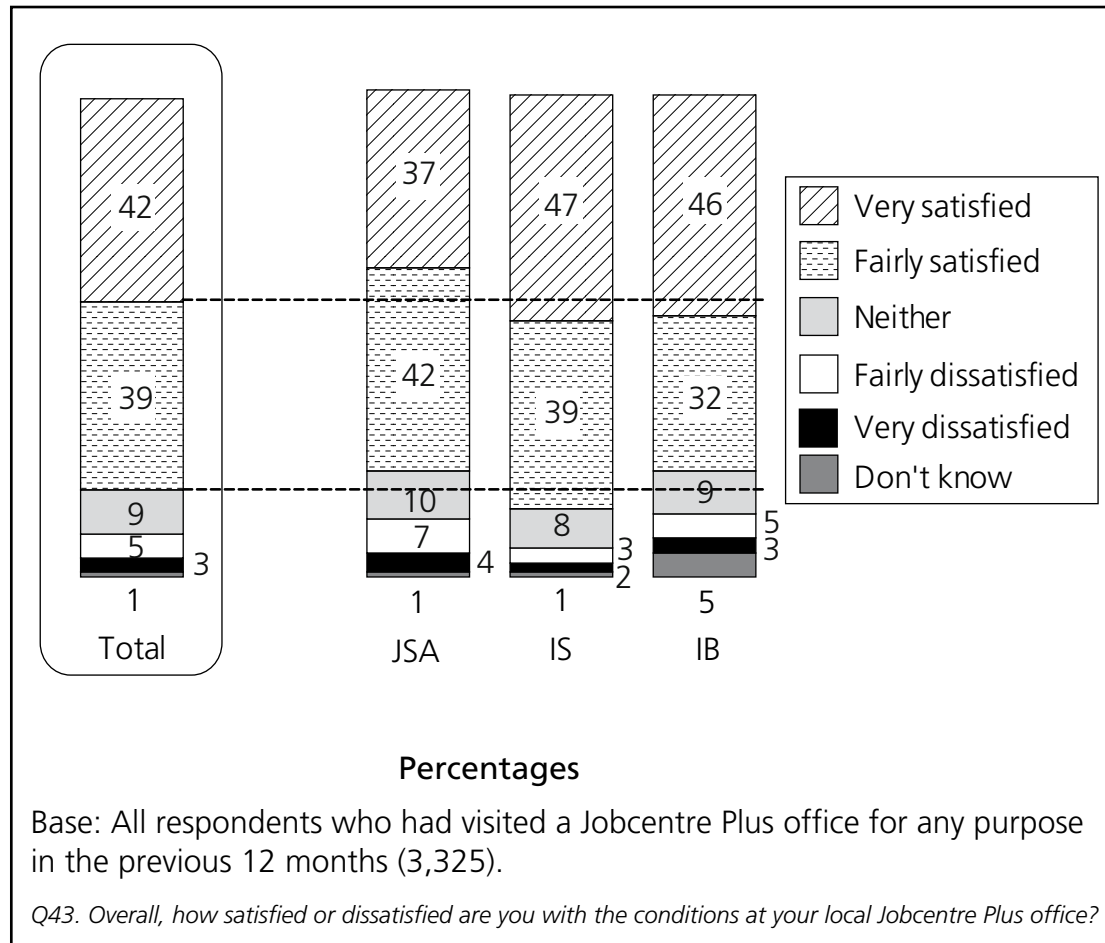
This chapter explores customer views of Jobcentre Plus offices from the point of view of the physical environment and privacy. Questions relating to office conditions were asked of all respondents who had visited a Jobcentre Plus office for any reason in the previous 12 months (3,325 respondents).

- Overall, 42 per cent of customers were *very* satisfied with conditions at their local Jobcentre Plus office.
- In relation to office conditions, customers were most positive towards the safety of the environment and slightly less positive about privacy.
- The qualitative research provided examples of customers who were dissatisfied with the office environment in terms of displaying relevant information and privacy, as well as having negative perceptions of the environment.

### 5.1 Overall satisfaction

Respondents who had visited a Jobcentre Plus office for any purpose in the previous 12 months were asked about the office conditions at their local office. Overall, most customers said they were satisfied (82 per cent), including 42 per cent who were *very* satisfied. Just eight per cent were dissatisfied. Income Support (IS) customers were most likely to be satisfied (86 per cent), while the proportion of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) customers that were *very* satisfied (37 per cent) was lower than for IS or Incapacity Benefit (IB) customers (see Figure 5.1).

Customers in the North West were most likely to be *very* satisfied with conditions at their local office (51 per cent), as were customers whose first language was not English (48 per cent). Within the sample of IS customers, the same pattern applied as on previous issues: female IS customers were more positive than male customers (48 per cent *very* satisfied compared with 38 per cent), while those with a limiting long-standing illness or disability were less positive (41 per cent). Amongst JSA customers, those from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds were less positive than other customers (28 per cent *very* satisfied).

**Figure 5.1 Satisfaction with conditions at local office**

## 5.2 Rating of aspects of office conditions

Respondents were asked about five specific aspects of office conditions, relevant to Jobcentre Plus service standards (such as respecting privacy and making sure offices are as safe as possible for customers and staff).

At least two in five customers rated the various aspects of office conditions as *very good* (Table 5.1). More than half rated the office as *very good* at providing a safe environment (58 per cent), while views were slightly less positive in relation to privacy (41 per cent *very good*, but 14 per cent *very* or *fairly poor*).

Table 5.2 shows the ratings for different aspects of office conditions broken down by benefit type, with figures for the proportion rating each aspect as *very good*. As with other issues, JSA customers were less positive than IS or IB customers, the difference being most pronounced for providing help if needed (42 per cent of JSA customers rated this as *very good*, compared with 58 per cent of IS customers and 54 per cent of IB customers). IS customers were also more positive than IB customers on a number of issues, most notably displaying relevant information in the office (49 per cent compared with 40 per cent).

**Table 5.1 Rating of aspects of office conditions**

	<b>Displaying relevant information in the office</b>	<b>Providing a pleasant and welcoming environment</b>	<b>Providing appropriate privacy for your needs</b>	<b>Providing a safe environment</b>	<b>Providing help if you need it</b>
	%	%	%	%	%
Very good	43	47	41	58	50
Fairly good	34	34	34	31	30
Neither good nor poor	7	8	7	4	6
Fairly poor	6	5	9	2	5
Very poor	3	4	5	2	5
Don't know/not applicable	5	2	3	3	4

*Base: All respondents who had visited a Jobcentre Plus office for any purpose in the previous 12 months (3,325).*

*Q42. Thinking about your most recent visit to your usual Jobcentre Plus office, I'd now like you to rate some of the conditions at that office. After each one I read out I'd like you to say if you thought it was Very Good, Fairly Good, neither Good nor Poor, Fairly Poor or Very Poor. First of all can you tell me how good or poor Jobcentre Plus was at.....?*

**Table 5.2 Rating of aspects of office conditions, by benefit type**

<i>Proportion rating each aspect very good</i>	<b>Displaying relevant information in the office</b>	<b>Providing a pleasant and welcoming environment</b>	<b>Providing appropriate privacy for your needs</b>	<b>Providing a safe environment</b>	<b>Providing help if you need it</b>
	%	%	%	%	%
JSA	39	41	36	55	42
IS	49	52	47	60	58
IB	40	48	42	59	54

*Base: All respondents who had visited a Jobcentre Plus office for any purpose in the previous 12 months (3,325); JSA (1,561), IS (1,159), IB (605).*

*Q42. Thinking about your most recent visit to your usual Jobcentre Plus office, I'd now like you to rate some of the conditions at that office. After each one I read out I'd like you to say if you thought it was Very Good, Fairly Good, neither Good nor Poor, Fairly Poor or Very Poor. First of all can you tell me how good or poor Jobcentre Plus was at.....?*

Other sub-group patterns reflect those for overall satisfaction with local office conditions. Amongst IS customers, women were more positive than men (the difference being greatest for providing help if needed: 61 per cent of female IS customers rated this as very good, compared with 41 per cent of male IS customers), and those with a limiting long-standing illness or disability were less positive than other IS customers. In the JSA sample, those from professional, managerial or technical occupational backgrounds were less positive than other customers. Customers whose first language is not English were more positive on the various aspects than other respondents.

In addition, those with more recent/shorter IS and IB claims were less positive on some aspects: those whose IS claim had lasted less than a year were less positive than other IS customers towards the safety of the environment and the provision of help if required, while IB customers with a claim lasting less than a year were also less positive towards the provision of help, as well as privacy.

Younger customers (aged 16-24) were more positive than older customers towards privacy (both JSA and IS customers), as well as towards displaying relevant information and providing a pleasant and welcoming environment (IS customers only in each case).

The qualitative follow-up research provided examples of customers who were dissatisfied with the office environment. Examples were given for two of the areas covered by the quantitative survey: displaying relevant information and privacy, as well as negative perceptions of the environment (a separate point raised by the qualitative research).

- A customer claiming IB with a long-term illness/health concern was dissatisfied during a WFI as the surrounding office was too busy and made them feel anxious.
- A new professional customer who was claiming JSA and had not claimed benefits for a long time was confused by the layout of the office and was not sure where the reception was. They felt that the Jobcentre Plus office could be more clearly signposted.
- A customer mentioned that the environment at their local Jobcentre Plus office had been threatening and unpleasant (although they recognised that this had changed for the better recently):

*'There was no security. There were fights, there were drunks. That side of it has improved, but that was disgusting in the first place and never should have been allowed to go on like that anyway.'*

(IB, 25-49)

- A number of customers were concerned about privacy when attending face-to-face meetings and using the self-service channels. There was a general concern about personal information being seen or overheard. This included financial information, personal details such as addresses and National Insurance numbers and details of any health conditions a customer might have.

Staff recognised that Jobcentre Plus offices can be very busy at times but suggested that this was a particular issue at the height of the recession. With the recession fading and the increase in Jobcentre Plus staff, staff considered that the overcrowding of offices had reduced considerably.

Customers and staff also made a number of suggestions that would help alleviate the problems that customers had encountered:

- Give Jobcentre Plus security staff better training to help direct visitors around Jobcentre Plus offices.
- Improve signage.
- Increase awareness amongst customers of the private facilities that are available and train Jobcentre Plus staff to better recognise when such facilities should be offered.
- Provide privacy booths for Jobpoints and Customer Access Phones.





## 6 Experience of self-service contact channels

Jobcentre Plus customers have access to a range of self-service options available at Jobcentre Plus offices and remotely via the Internet. There are over 8,000 Jobpoint touch-screen machines in Jobcentre Plus offices nationwide, which advertise job vacancies, and dedicated Customer Access Phones (also known as ‘warm phones’) in the offices which customers can use to speak to advisers about their benefits, or to find out more about job vacancies. The Jobcentre Plus website<sup>20</sup> also contains a wealth of information. Customers can search for jobs, get help with job applications and apply for some benefits online. This chapter addresses the levels of awareness, and use of these services and how helpful customers find these services.

- There was a high level of awareness of Jobpoints (87 per cent), the Jobcentre Plus website (82 per cent) and the Customer Access Phones (78 per cent) among customers.
- Jobpoints (46 per cent) and the website (45 per cent) had been used by slightly less than half of all customers in the last 12 months, whereas only a quarter of customers had used the Customer Access Phones (25 per cent) during this period.
- Among customers who had used the Jobcentre Plus website in the last 12 months the primary reason given for doing this was to search for jobs (87 per cent).
- The majority of customers who had used these service channels found them at least *fairly* helpful on the last occasion they were used. Customer Access Phones were more likely to be rated as helpful (87 per cent) than the website (80 per cent), and both of these were more likely to be considered helpful than the Jobpoints (76 per cent).

<sup>20</sup> Participants in the research were providing feedback on the Jobcentre Plus website. From April 2010 the Jobcentre Plus website has been switched to the Direct.gov website.

- The qualitative research provided detailed examples of why some customers found self-service channels unhelpful. It found Jobpoints had poor job filtering functions, an insufficient variety of job available and unclear job categories, lacked privacy, and were overcrowded.
- Some customers felt the Jobcentre Plus website search facility required a level of information that was too detailed and unrelated job sectors were displayed together following a search.
- The Customer Access Phones were sometimes said to be poorly maintained, their usage was restricted so that certain telephone calls could not be made, and the environment was thought to be noisy.
- Staff suggested improvements in a number of areas including: improvements to the website search facility and navigation; improvements to geographical filtering on Jobpoints and the website; the suggestion that private booths could be introduced to allay concerns about privacy; the introduction of a booking system could reduce queuing times; and better management of customer expectations for all aspects of self service.

## 6.1 Awareness and use of services

The survey found that there was a high level of awareness of all three services, with at least three-quarters of all customers aware of each (Figure 6.1). Customers were significantly more likely to be aware of the Jobpoints, the touch-screen job search machines in Jobcentre Plus offices (87 per cent) than the other channels. Customers were also significantly more likely to be aware of the Jobcentre Plus website (82 per cent) than the Customer Access Phones (78 per cent).

Jobpoints (46 per cent) and the website (45 per cent) had been used by slightly less than half of all customers in the last 12 months, whereas only a quarter of customers had used the Customer Access Phones (25 per cent) in the last year.

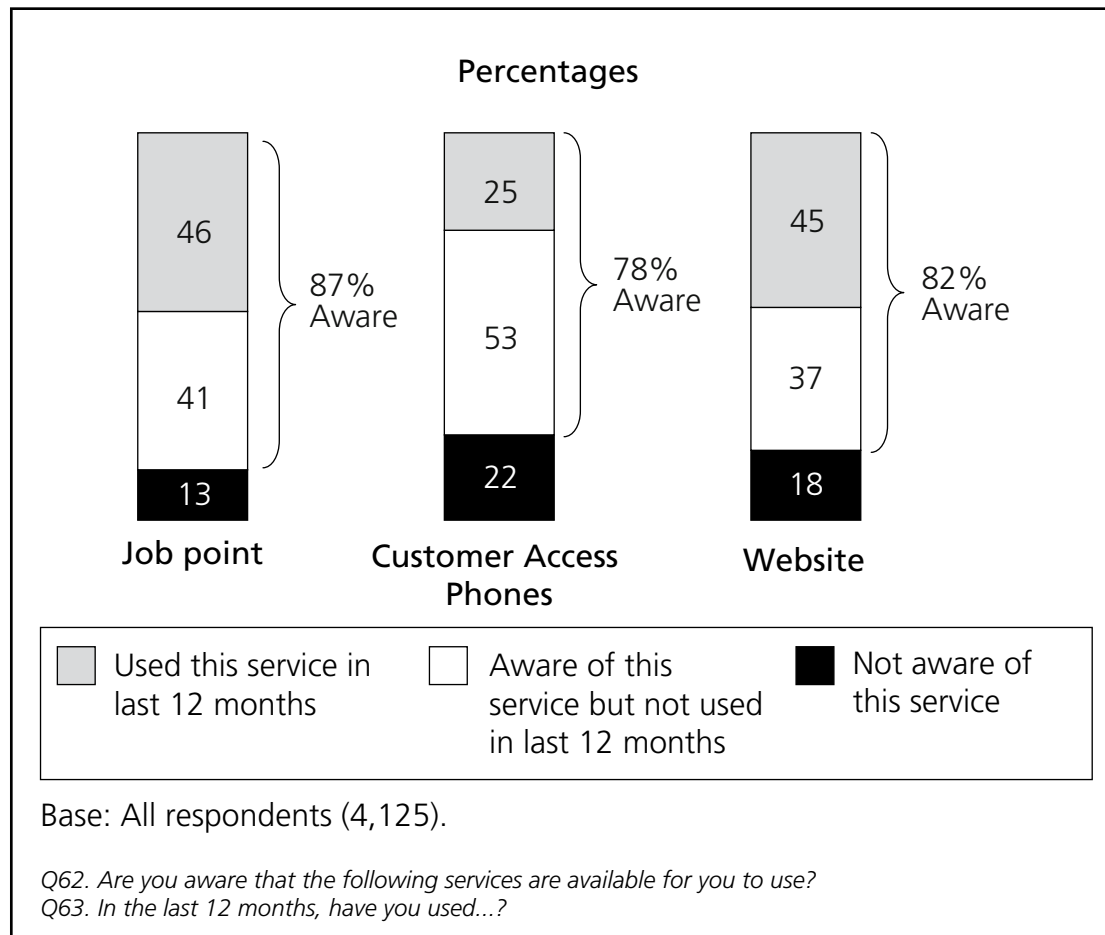
Men were significantly more likely than women to be aware of and made use of all three service channels, and younger customers were also more likely to be aware of and have used these services than older customers. Customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability were less likely to be aware of, or have used these services.

Customers whose most recent contact was a visit to the Jobcentre Plus office for a face-to-face meeting were significantly more likely to have used Jobpoints (located in Jobcentre Plus offices) in the last 12 months, than customers whose most recent contact was by telephone.

There were some regional differences in use of the 'in-office' services (Jobpoints and Customer Access Phones), perhaps linked to the availability of these services in local Jobcentre Plus offices. Customers in the West Midlands were significantly more likely than average to have used both the Jobpoints and the Customer Access Phones in the last 12 months, whilst those in the North East were also more likely

to have used the Jobpoints. Customers in London, the South West and the South East were least likely to have used a Jobpoint in the last 12 months.

**Figure 6.1 Overall awareness and use of Jobpoints, Customer Access Phones and the Jobcentre Plus website**

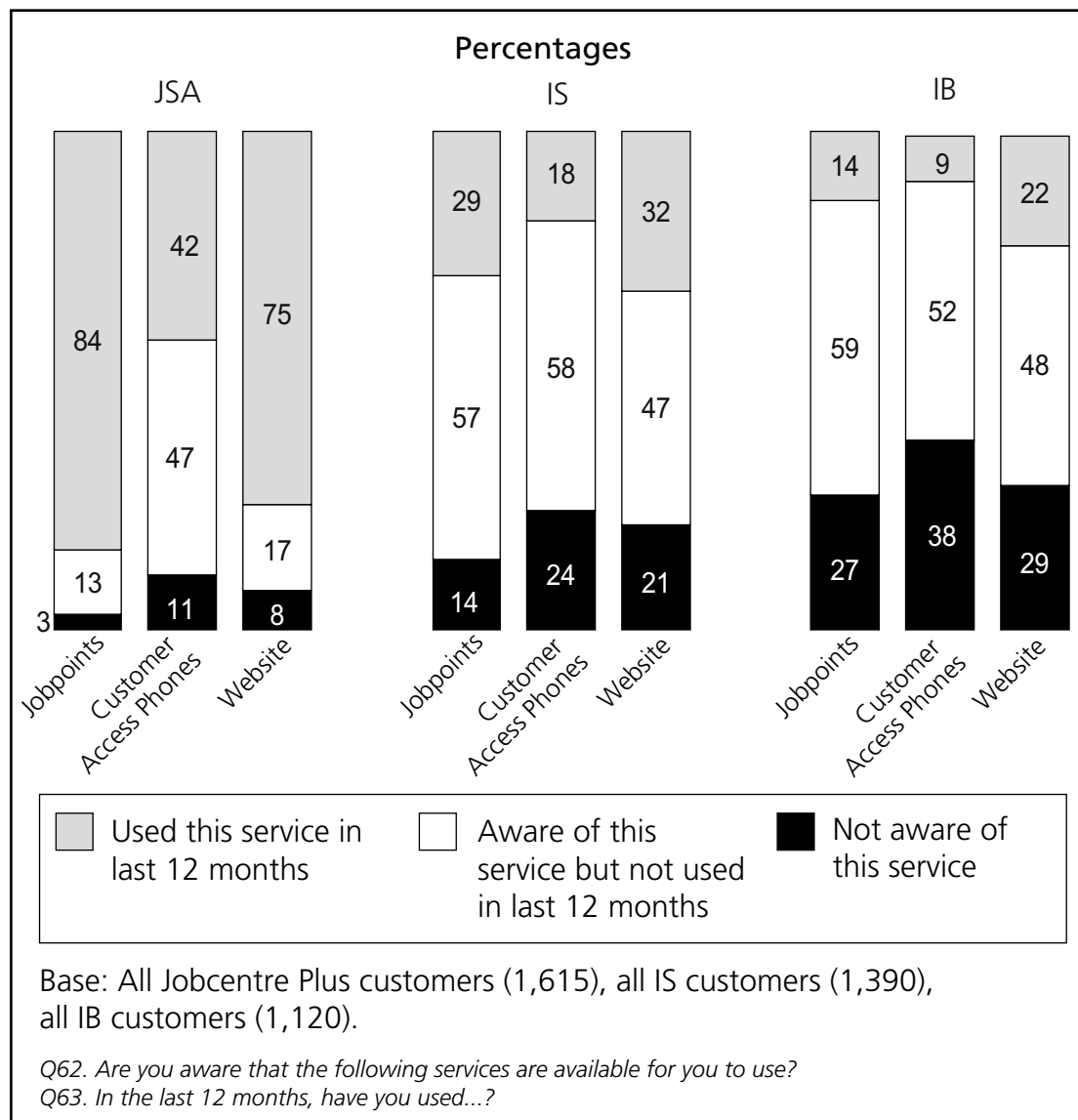


As would be expected there was higher use of the website by customers who have internet access at home (55 per cent), although a quarter (25 per cent) of customers who do not have internet access at home had still used this service in the last 12 months.

There were significant differences in awareness and use of these services by benefit type (Figure 6.2). Awareness of the Jobpoints was high across all customer groups with nearly all Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) customers aware that the job search machines were available for customers to use (97 per cent). Significantly fewer Income Support (IS) and Incapacity Benefit (IB) customers were aware of the Jobpoints (86 per cent and 74 per cent respectively). The majority of JSA customers had also used a Jobpoint (84 per cent) in the last year compared with less than a third of IS customers (29 per cent) and around one in seven IB customers (14 per cent). This is to be expected as JSA customers need to be actively seeking and available for work to be eligible for their benefit.

Customers previously or currently employed in skilled trade, service and labour occupations (79 per cent) and administrative occupations (74 per cent) were more likely to have used the Jobpoints in the last 12 months than those from professional, managerial or technical occupational backgrounds (65 per cent). This may be related to the types of jobs advertised on Jobpoints perhaps being more relevant to the former customer groups.

**Figure 6.2 Awareness and use of Jobpoints, Customer Access Phones and the Jobcentre Plus website by benefit type**



For Customer Access Phones, again, JSA customers were most likely to be aware of this service (89 per cent), compared with IS (76 per cent) and IB customers (62 per cent).

Use of the Customer Access Phones was much higher amongst JSA customers (42 per cent) than IB customers (nine per cent) and IS customers (18 per cent). This is related to the earlier finding that JSA customers are more likely to have visited an office in the last 12 months than the other customer groups (see Section 4.1).

Similarly, three quarters of JSA customers had used the website in the last 12 months (75 per cent) compared with a third of IS customers (32 per cent) and two in ten IB customers (22 per cent). Customers (previously, or currently) employed in administrative roles were more likely to have used the website in the last 12 months (83 per cent) compared with those from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds (72 per cent) and skilled trade, service and labour customers (67 per cent).

## 6.2 Reason for using website

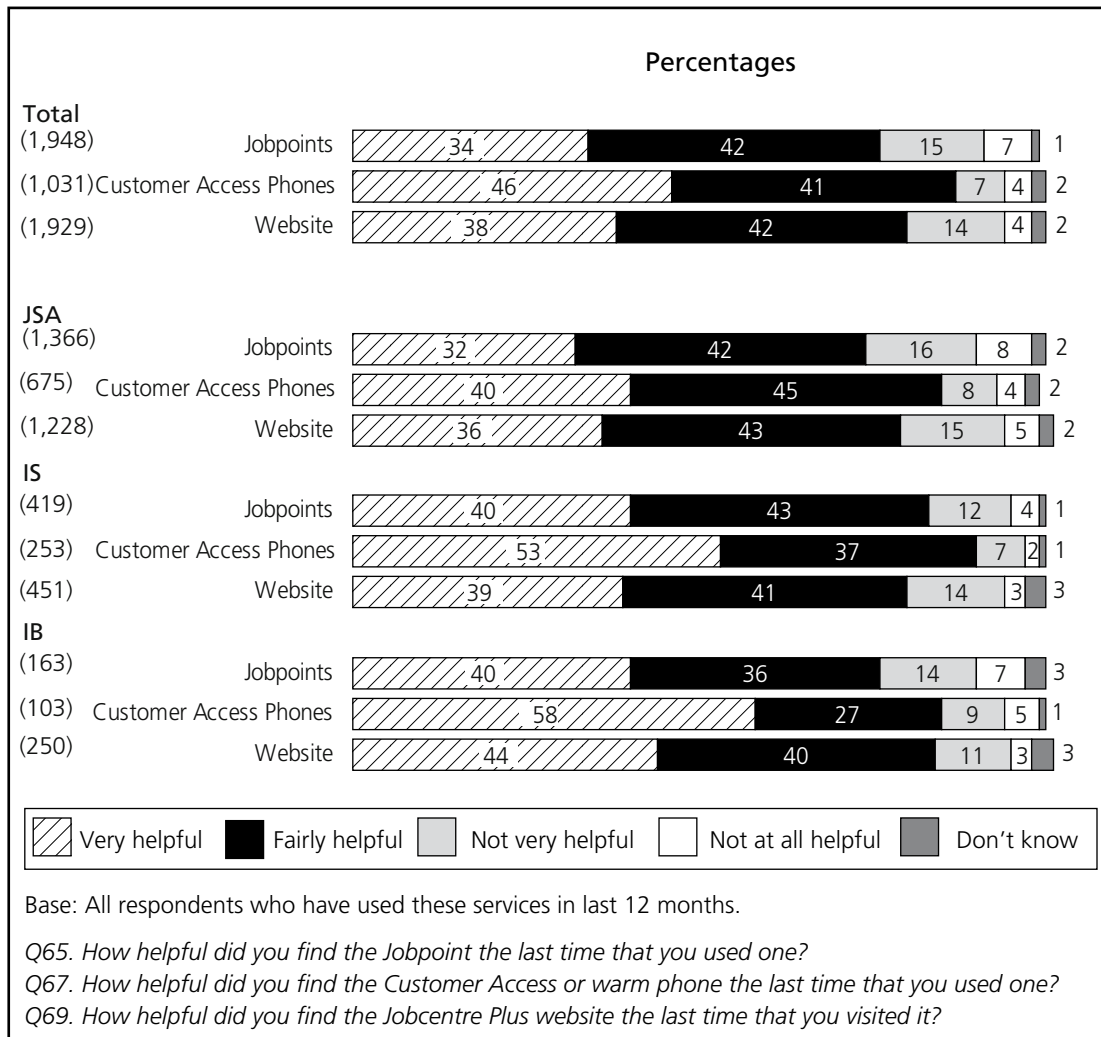
Among customers who had used the Jobcentre Plus website in the last 12 months the primary reason given for doing this was to search for jobs (87 per cent). All other reasons were mentioned by less than five per cent of customers: these included browsing for information or advice, trying to find out about eligibility for benefits or how to claim, and to look for contact details of services or the local office. All three customer groups mentioned using the website to look for jobs as the main reason for visiting it, although as would be expected this was higher among JSA customers (96 per cent JSA compared with 75 per cent IS and 74 per cent IB). IS (eight per cent) and IB (11 per cent) customers were more likely to mention using the website to browse and look for information and advice than JSA customers (one per cent).

## 6.3 Helpfulness of channels

Customers who had used these channels in the last 12 months were asked how helpful they found them on the last occasion they were used (Figure 6.3). The majority of customers found each of the channels at least *fairly* helpful. Customer Access Phones were more likely to be rated as helpful (87 per cent) than the website (80 per cent), and both of these were more likely to be considered *very* helpful or *fairly* helpful than the Jobpoints (76 per cent).

As described previously, JSA customers are the group most likely to have visited a Jobcentre Plus office, so therefore have a greater opportunity to use the Jobpoints and Customer Access Phones. JSA customers were less likely however, to rate the Jobpoints as helpful. Although IS customers were less likely to have used Jobpoints in the last 12 months, those that had were significantly more likely to say that they found it helpful last time they used this service (83 per cent, compared with 74 per cent of JSA customers). This follows the pattern seen elsewhere with IS customers generally being the most positive group about all aspects of the service received from Jobcentre Plus. There were no significant differences between customers receiving different benefit types for ratings of helpfulness for the Customer Access Phones and the website.

**Figure 6.3 Helpfulness of channels**



Customers who were currently in paid work at the time of the interview (71 per cent) were less likely to have found the Jobpoints helpful on the last occasion they were used, compared with those not currently working (78 per cent). However those who had got their last job through Jobcentre Plus, 15 per cent of those interviewed, were more positive about the Jobpoints. Eighty-three per cent of these customers rated the Jobpoints as helpful compared with 68 per cent of those now in paid work who had not got their job through Jobcentre Plus.

The same pattern was found for customer evaluation of the website, with those currently in work less likely to say the website was helpful last time they used it (76 per cent) compared with those not currently working (81 per cent), while those now working who had got their job through Jobcentre Plus were again more positive, with 85 per cent saying that the website was helpful compared with 73 per cent of those who did not.

Customers who left their last job through redundancy or because their work stopped or dried up, and those previously employed in professional, managerial or technical roles, were less likely than average to find the Jobpoints or website services helpful.

For all three channels, those who felt their access to Jobcentre Plus services was limited in some way were more likely to find that these services were *not very* or *not at all* helpful. As referenced in Chapter 7, there is a link between customer views on access to the Jobcentre Plus services, and the use of these channels, with problems with these services one of the top five ways in which customers feel their access is limited.

The qualitative research provides further detail as to why some customers did not find particular self-service channels helpful. Taking each self-service channel in turn, customer views included the following:

### 6.3.1 Jobpoints

- **Lack of privacy** when using the Jobpoint, due to the fact that other customers could see what jobs they were searching for. This was said to be particularly so for Jobcentres that tended to be crowded, or those Jobcentres where the Jobpoints were placed in close proximity to each other.
- **Poor job filtering**: A customer claiming JSA who was based in the South West reported that jobs in Scotland were being provided as a result of their job search.
- **Jobpoints could be overcrowded** at peak times and that heavy queuing was often a problem. This view tended to come from customers who used the busier Jobcentres, or those with a small number of Jobpoints.
- **Insufficient variety of jobs available**: for example, customers wanting office work could only find jobs available that were in catering, hospitality and construction.
- **Job categories used were unclear**: The terms 'office professional' and 'management jobs' used on Jobpoints were felt to lack clarity.

### 6.3.2 Jobcentre Plus website

Two of the issues that were raised in relation to the Jobpoints were also mentioned by customers when discussing the website: the insufficient range of jobs available and comments about the geographical filtering not functioning properly. Specific issues with the website that were raised by customers are described below:

- Some customers found the website **difficult to navigate**:

*'At first it's a bit difficult to navigate around the website. It's because the home page has got so much information on and it's not just specifically to look for jobs is it?'*

(JSA, 25-49)



- The **search facility** required too much detail in terms of the information that needed to be input in order to obtain a list of potential jobs. This was thought to be overly complicated and time consuming.
- After a job search, **unrelated job sectors were displayed** in the same place on the site. For example, jobs in the leisure and media industries were displayed together, rather than separately. This made it more difficult for the customer to search for a specific type of job.

### 6.3.3 Customer Access Phones

Similar issues about Jobpoints were also raised in relation to the Customer Access Phones. These were Customer Access Phones being oversubscribed at peak times and concerns about a lack of privacy. Lack of privacy was a greater concern when using Customer Access Phones due to the possibility of being overheard, and because of the range of confidential information that customers may be discussing, which included health issues and personal details such as addresses and National Insurance numbers. In addition to this, customers reported the following issues with Customer Access Phones:

- Customer Access Phones may be **poorly maintained**. Specifically, the instructions on the telephone itself had partially peeled off in one instance, making them harder to use.
- The **restricted usage** of Customer Access Phones was frustrating for customers. Customers wanted to use a Customer Access Phone to call potential employers but they were told by staff in one Jobcentre that this was not possible. It is worth noting that customer feedback in this area varied as the permitted calls that could be made from Customer Access Phones differed across different Jobcentre Plus offices.
- **Noisy environment**: Some customers claimed that the environment in the Jobcentre Plus office was very noisy, which made it difficult to hear the conversation that was being had on the phone. This feedback tended to come from the busier Jobcentre Plus offices.
- **Customer Access Phones** can be very busy and there may be long waiting times for their use.

*'It can be difficult to get on to use the [Customer Access] phones as there's usually that many people down there.'*

(IS, 25-49)

## 6.4 Potential improvements to self-service channels

Customers and staff were asked about suggested improvements to the self-service channels.

Both customers and staff agreed that improvements could be made around the job search process; this was relevant to both Jobpoints and the website. For the website, both groups recognised that the search facility and navigation could be improved so that it would be easier to find jobs and progress through the different pages on the website. Also, for Jobpoints and Customer Access Phones it was thought that the geographical filtering should be improved so that jobs in distant areas were not displayed. It was felt that all of these improvements would enable customers to carry out their job search faster and more effectively.

Both customers and staff also wanted to see improvements in the environment of the Jobcentres, specifically relating to privacy (although this issue often varied as Jobcentre Plus offices differed in terms of layout and levels of footfall). A suggestion by staff was to introduce private booths for Customer Access Phones and Jobpoint use.

Tackling queuing times was another issue identified by customers and staff (although this varied as queues differed across Jobcentres). A range of improvements were suggested by staff and customers, including increasing the number of service points and introducing a booking system so that customers could be assigned a specific amount of time for their usage of the service point.

As well as recognising specific improvements, staff recommended managing customer expectations as a way of changing perceptions of the self-service channels. This applies to expectations around the nature of the jobs available through the website and the Jobpoints, and the limited purposes for which Customer Access Phones can be used. Staff believe this to be an important step as this may have the effect of preventing customers with certain expectations from being dissatisfied with the self-service channels and viewing them as unhelpful.



## 7 Access to Jobcentre Plus and problems experienced by customers

This chapter looks at customer access to Jobcentre Plus (how easy they find it to make contact and visit their local office), as well as any problems customers have encountered recently. It also examines whether customers have felt like complaining, or have actually complained, to Jobcentre Plus.

- Three in four customers (76 per cent) said it was *very* or *fairly* easy to get in contact with Jobcentre Plus, while 16 per cent found it difficult. Similar proportions found their local office convenient to get to (80 per cent) rather than inconvenient (13 per cent).
- Customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability were more likely to have found it difficult to contact Jobcentre Plus and to say that their local office was inconvenient to get to.
- Fifteen per cent of customers said their access to Jobcentre Plus was limited in some way, for a range of reasons including distance, services not accommodating their physical requirements, and problems with staff.
- In the previous 12 months, seven per cent had encountered problems with their benefit payment, immediately after notifying a change in personal details or circumstances. Ten per cent said they had received incorrect or contradictory information from Jobcentre Plus.
- One in six customers (17 per cent) said they had felt like complaining in the previous 12 months. Reasons for making a complaint were: negative staff attitudes, incorrect or unclear advice and information, and conflicting advice and delays. Twenty per cent of those who felt like complaining (three per cent overall) had actually made a complaint. Reasons for deciding not to complain were: lack of knowledge about how to complain; a belief that complaints would not be responded to; fears of receiving unfavourable treatment as a result of making a complaint and a perception that the complaints process would take a long time.

- Those who had complained were likely to be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled (59 per cent), while equal numbers were satisfied and dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint. Reasons for dissatisfaction were: not receiving a reply, long delays in receiving a response to a complaint, the indifferent attitude of staff spoken to and the lack of a formal apology.
- Customers and staff suggested that the complaints process could be improved by: providing more information about the process, speeding up the process, providing the opportunity to complain via telephone, encouraging staff dealing with complaints to be more friendly and engaged, managing customer expectations and involving managerial staff earlier in the process.

## 7.1 Access to Jobcentre Plus

### 7.1.1 Ease of contact

All respondents were asked how easy they had found it to get in contact with Jobcentre Plus over the previous 12 months.<sup>21</sup> Three in four customers said they found it *very* or *fairly* easy (76 per cent), with 37 per cent saying it was *very* easy. One in six (16 per cent) said they found it difficult.

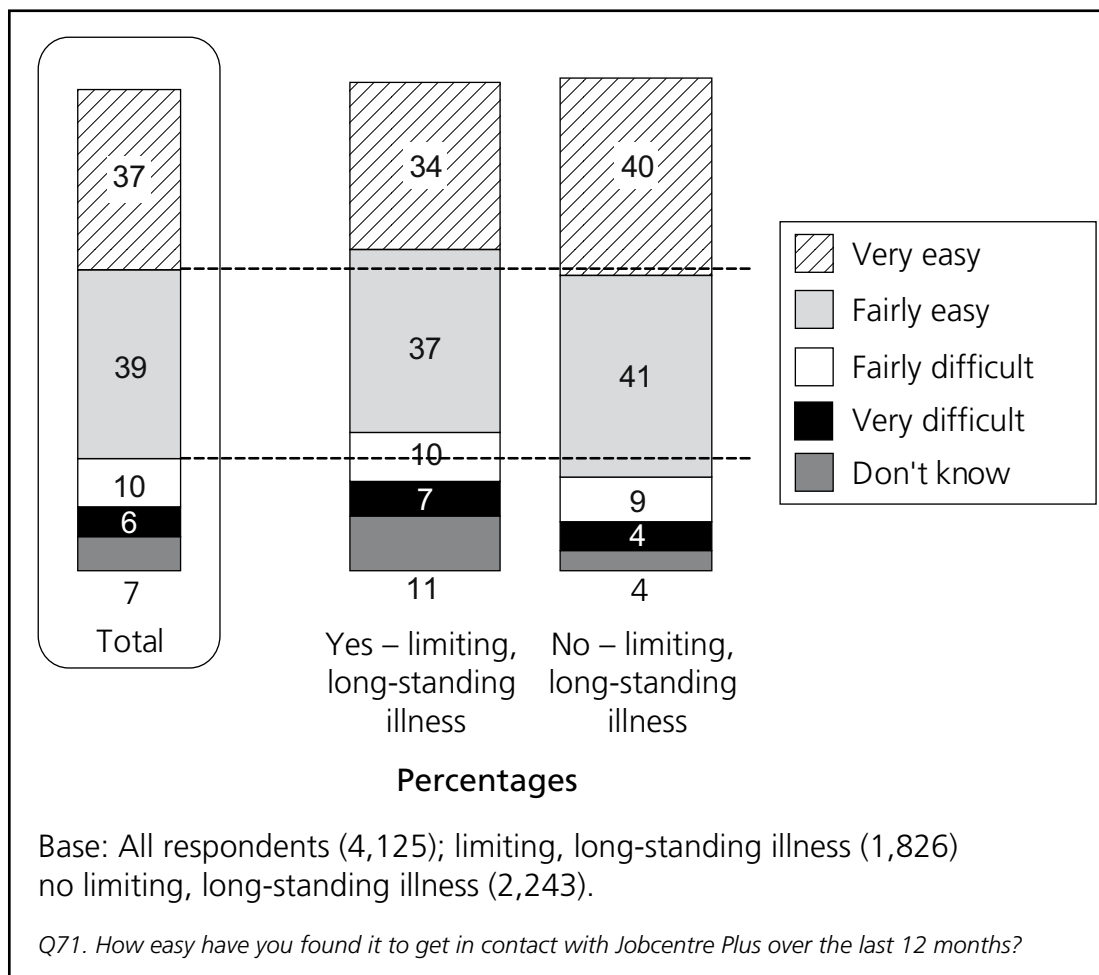
The main sub-group difference (see Figure 7.1) was for customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability, who found it less easy than other customers (71 per cent said it was easy, compared with 81 per cent of other customers). This overall pattern also applied within benefit type: customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability were less likely to find it easy than other customers, within both the Income Support (IS) (71 per cent compared with 83 per cent) and Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) (73 per cent compared with 80 per cent) samples. This comparison is not possible for the Incapacity Benefit (IB) sample, as the vast majority of IB customers said they had a limiting long-term illness or disability.

There were differences by region, with those in the North East (82 per cent), the North West and Scotland (81 per cent each), more likely to say it was easy to get in contact with Jobcentre Plus, while customers in the East of England and South East (both 71 per cent) were less likely to find it easy.

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<sup>21</sup> At initial contact, such as when booking the Work Focused Interview, or at any other stage, Jobcentre Plus procedure ensures staff check whether any special arrangements are required to enable the customer to proceed with their claim, or to attend or participate in an interview. Customers are asked to advise Jobcentre Plus staff of any special arrangements they may require at the outset of their claim. Jobcentre Plus may be able to provide help with: travel expenses, the cost of registered child care, obtaining an interpreter, or any other special arrangements to enable the customer to attend the interview. When appropriate, a visit by the personal adviser may be made to the customer's home or, mutually agreed, to a more convenient location.

**Figure 7.1 How easy customers have found it to contact Jobcentre Plus**



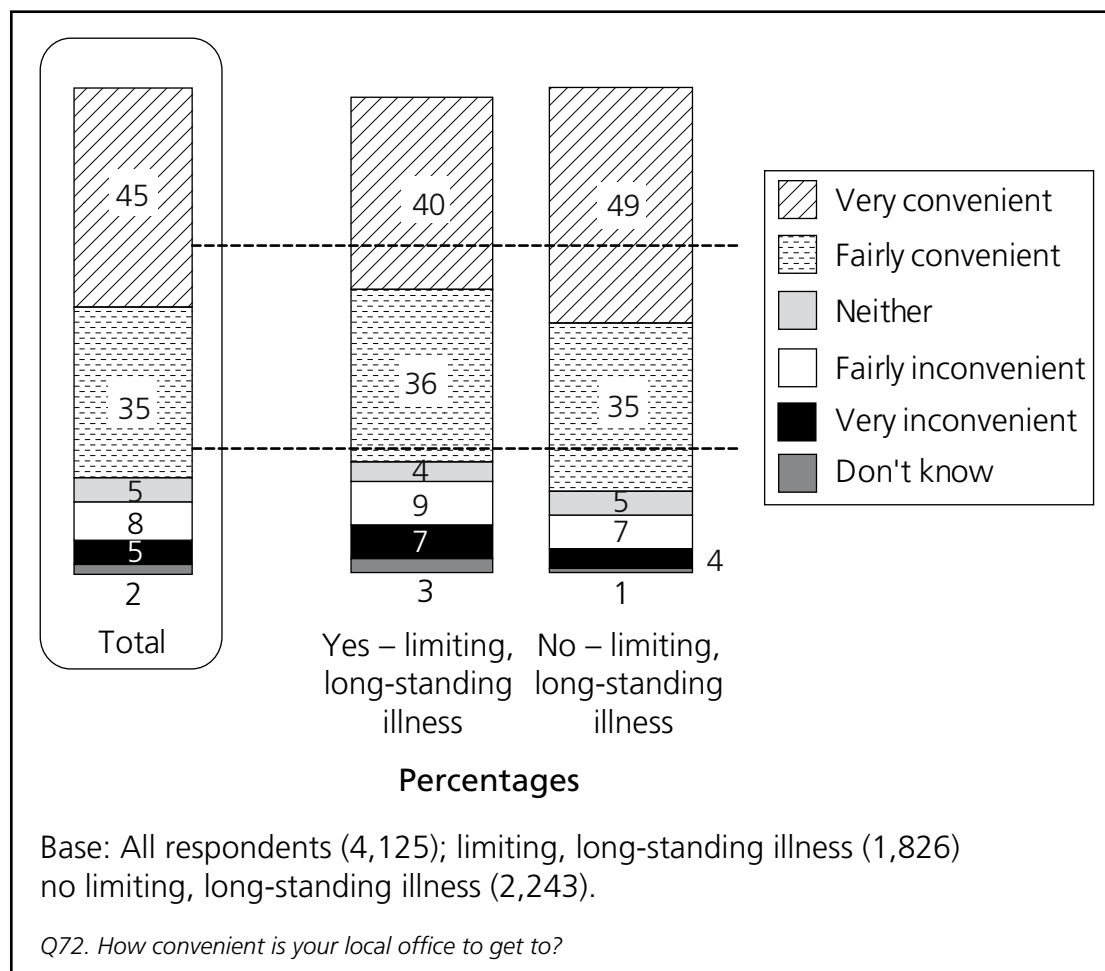
Customers whose first language is not English were more likely to say that they found it easy (83 per cent compared with 76 per cent of other customers). There were no differences by benefit type overall, or in relation to the contact channels used by customers. However, as might be expected, those who said they had to wait an unreasonable length of time, either to get through by telephone or to receive a reply to a letter, email or fax, were more likely to say it was difficult for them to contact Jobcentre Plus (47 per cent said it was easy and 51 per cent difficult).

### 7.1.2 Convenience of local office

Figure 7.2 shows how convenient customers said their local office was to get to. Overall, four in five (80 per cent) said it was *very* or *fairly* convenient, and 13 per cent said it was inconvenient. Customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability found their local office less convenient (76 per cent said it was convenient, compared with 84 per cent of other customers). Again, this difference applied within the samples of IS customers (77 per cent convenient compared with 83 per cent of other customers) and JSA customers (78 per cent compared with 85 per cent).

Overall, IB customers were less likely than JSA or IS customers to say their local office was convenient to get to, although this is linked to the findings for people with a limiting long-standing illness or disability (as most IB customers had a limiting long-standing illness or disability). When this is taken into account, there were no significant differences by benefit type.

**Figure 7.2 Convenience of local office**



Customers in the North East were most likely to say their local office was convenient to get to (85 per cent), while the figure was lower than average in the South West (74 per cent); this may reflect the rural nature of much of the South West region.

### 7.1.3 Whether access is limited

Overall, 15 per cent of customers said that their access to Jobcentre Plus was limited in some way. This was higher amongst customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability (18 per cent), and lower amongst 16–24-year-olds (10 per cent), but was otherwise consistent across the sample of customers.

'Access' could be interpreted in the respondent's own way, and Table 7.1 illustrates that there were various ways in which customers felt that their access was limited. Respondents were most likely to mention distance (27 per cent), followed by services

not accommodating their physical requirements (17 per cent). Some respondents felt that their access was limited in terms of service provision (problems with staff or services). Respondents were not probed as to what constituted an inaccessible 'distance' – this would depend on their own perception and circumstances.

**Table 7.1 Ways in which access to Jobcentre Plus is limited**

	Percentages
Distance	27
Services do not accommodate my physical requirements	17
Problems with staff (attitudes/knowledge/too busy)	10
Transport problems/parking	8
Problems with services (queues, contact channels)	6
Cost	5
Issues with telephone service (cost, no answer)	4
Not enough information about help/entitlement available	4
Services do not accommodate my mental health needs (e.g. anxiety, stress)	4
<i>Base: All respondents who felt access was limited in some way</i>	639

*Q73. Do you feel your access to Jobcentre Plus services is limited in any way? / Q75. In what way do you feel your access is limited?*

Note: Table 7.1 includes answers given by four per cent or more of respondents.

Customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability were most likely to say that services did not accommodate their physical requirements (31 per cent of those with access problems or six per cent of *all* customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability). IB customers were also more likely than other customers to mention this (reflecting the high proportion of customers with an illness or disability in this benefit group), and were also more likely than IS or JSA customers to mention transport or parking problems (14 per cent of IB customers with access problems). JSA customers were more likely than IS or IB customers to mention problems with staff or services.

Jobcentre Plus can make reasonable adjustments where there are potential access issues. For example, if there is no lift available a ground floor appointment can be arranged. Similarly, if travel distances are problematic, the nearest accessible office, or a partner's premises, or a home visit could be offered if appropriate. However, in the qualitative follow-up research there were examples where customers experienced access problems and no solution was offered. These included: a disabled customer who had problems using stairs who was asked to attend an interview on the first floor; another customer who could not access a Jobcentre Plus office in a wheelchair because there was no access ramp in place; and another customer who, after a change of address, had to travel to a new Jobcentre Plus office which was three times further away from their home and harder to access as a result.

Without checking individual cases staff were unable to offer definitive reasons for these issues arising but suggested that it is not always possible to know in advance whether a customer may have access difficulties unless the customer brings them



to their attention. It is possible, in these cases, that customers did not make their access needs known to Jobcentre Plus staff. Staff suggested that customers should be asked, as a matter of course, whether they required any special access arrangements or facilities in order for them to participate in an interview.

## 7.2 Problems with payments or incorrect information

This section examines problems that customers had experienced with benefit payments or incorrect/contradictory information. Findings are based on survey respondents' perceptions of a 'problem', the type and severity of which are likely to vary according to the individual case.

Around one in four customers said that they had informed Jobcentre Plus of changes in their personal details or circumstances in the last 12 months (27 per cent). Of these, 24 per cent said that they had problems with their benefit payment immediately afterwards (Table 7.2). This gives a total of seven per cent of *all* customers who said they had experienced this type of problem. This figure was lower amongst IB customers (three per cent) than amongst JSA or IS customers (eight per cent and seven per cent respectively). In the JSA sample, respondents were more likely to say they had this type of problem if they had a limiting long-standing illness or disability (13 per cent) or if they were from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds (14 per cent). Otherwise, findings were consistent by sub-group.

**Table 7.2 Problems with payments or incorrect information**

	Total %	JSA %	IS %	IB %
Problem with benefit payment immediately after notifying a change in personal details or circumstances	7	8	7	3
Incorrect or contradictory information	10	13	8	7
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	<i>4,125</i>	<i>1,615</i>	<i>1,390</i>	<i>1,120</i>

*Q76. In the last 12 months, has it been necessary for you to inform Jobcentre Plus of any changes in your personal details or circumstances, for example a change of address or change in family circumstances? / Q77. Immediately following this did you have any problems with your benefit payment? / Q78. In the past 12 months, have you been given any information by Jobcentre Plus that you found to be incorrect or contradictory?*

The qualitative follow-up research explored customer experiences of problems arising after notifying Jobcentre Plus of a change in circumstances. Typically, delays in payment tended to arise when there was a change in benefit (for example moving from IS to JSA) or where there was a change of address.

Staff were asked if they could explain why such delays occur. Their view was that this was due to staff mistakes and customer errors. But, in some cases, it was recognised that with the volume of documents received by Jobcentre Plus and staff absences due to holidays or sickness, documents can be lost due to staff error.

Staff also mentioned that customers can make a number of mistakes: customers can forget to tell staff that they have changed address and customers may remember to tell staff but do not do so using the appropriate channel (in the event of a customer making a telephone call it would usually have to be followed up in writing).

Staff were also asked about what improvements might be made in order to improve service delivery in this area. Their suggestions were to improve staff training and resource. Staff recognised that steps had already been made in this area, following the recession; and they also suggested greater management of customer expectations, informing them as to how Jobcentre Plus processes work.

The survey found that one in ten customers (10 per cent) said that they had been given information by Jobcentre Plus in the past 12 months that they found to be incorrect or contradictory. This was higher amongst JSA customers (13 per cent) than IS (eight per cent) or IB customers (seven per cent), as shown in Table 7.2. In both the JSA and IS samples, customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability were more likely than other customers to say they had experienced this type of problem (21 per cent in the JSA sample and 11 per cent in the IS sample).

JSA customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds were also more likely to report this (24 per cent), while JSA customers aged 16-24 were less likely to do so (eight per cent). Amongst IB customers, those with shorter/more recent claims were more likely to say they had been given incorrect or contradictory information (15 per cent of those with a claim lasting less than a year, compared with five per cent with a longer claim).

Table 7.3 indicates the type of incorrect information that customers said they received. Most frequently it concerned the amount of benefit customers were receiving or would receive, or their personal details or circumstances.

**Table 7.3 Type of incorrect information**

	Percentages
How much benefit I was receiving/would receive	24
My personal details/circumstances	20
Other benefits available	11
Benefit payments (general)	9
When I would receive my benefit	8
Which benefit to apply for	8
Job vacancies	7
Appointments	7
Training	5
<i>Base: All respondents who said they had received incorrect or contradictory information</i>	<i>405</i>

Q79. What was the incorrect information concerning?

Note: Table 7.3 includes answers given by five per cent or more of respondents.

The qualitative follow-up research provided further examples of customers who experienced problems relating to receiving incorrect, contradictory or insufficient information. These issues were often the subject of complaints. These examples included:

- a customer (claiming IS) was given the wrong information from Jobcentre Plus staff about permitted earnings after increasing their working hours. As a result the customer lost their benefit;
- a customer (claiming IS) was given conflicting advice from different Jobcentre Plus staff about the number of hours they can work and still retain their benefits;
- an adviser did not provide the relevant information to the customer (who was claiming JSA) about reclaiming travel expenses. As a result the customer was not aware of this and missed out on valuable support;
- a JSA customer was not told about a free computer training course that was being run in the local community centre. They found out about this through a friend, whereas they expected their Jobcentre Plus adviser to inform them about this.

Staff interviewed gave potential explanations for these examples. These explanations included staff error, and a shortage of appropriately trained staff due to the recession. For example, in cases where incorrect, contradictory or insufficient information was given out, this was thought to be because the member of staff did not have the required knowledge or training to deal with the customer's request.

Staff were also asked about what improvements might be made in order to improve service delivery in this area. As identified previously, Jobcentre Plus had improved staff training and resources. In addition, staff thought that customer expectations should be managed regarding the type and range of information that Jobcentre Plus can provide. For example, staff may not be able to provide certain types of information, such as details of local training courses that are not linked to Jobcentre Plus. In this respect it was suggested that customers may have to be more proactive in asking about the benefits and entitlements available, rather than relying on the adviser to always provide this information. By managing expectations in this way, staff believe that dissatisfaction in this area may be eased.

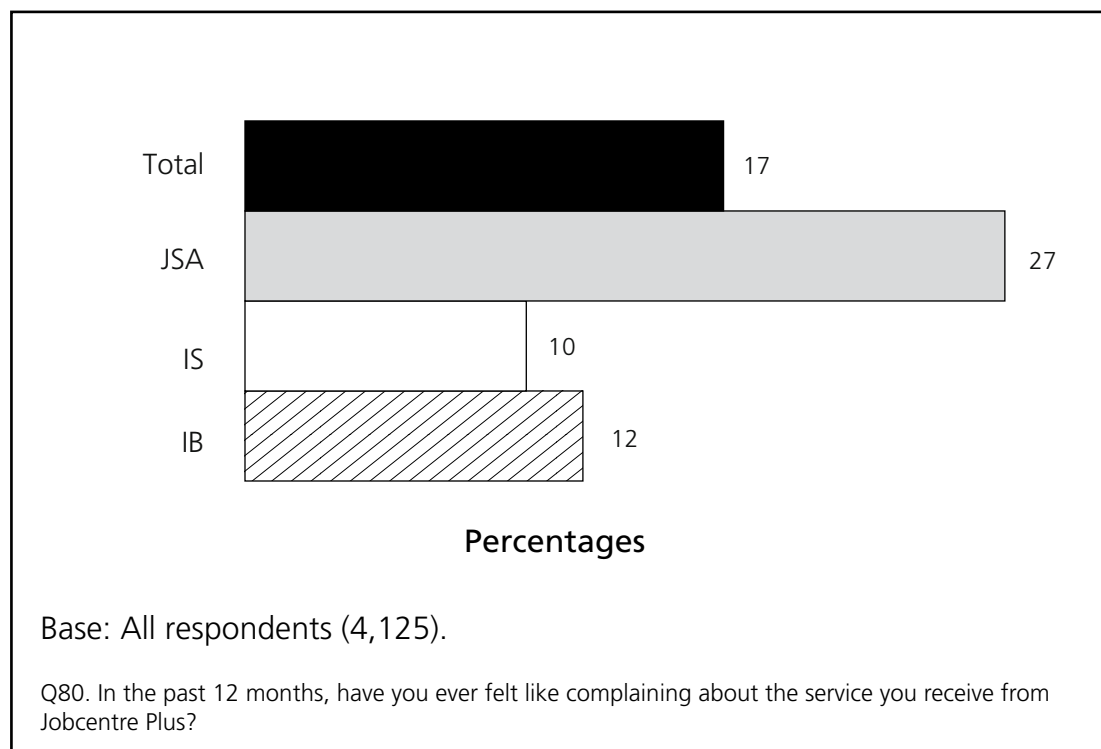
### 7.3 Customer complaints

The survey found that one in six customers (17 per cent) said that they had felt like complaining about the service they received from Jobcentre Plus in the previous 12 months. This was considerably higher amongst JSA customers (27 per cent) than IS or IB customers (10 per cent and 12 per cent respectively), as shown in Figure 7.3.

In the JSA and IS samples, customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability were more likely to say they had felt like complaining (35 per cent of JSA customers and 14 per cent of IS customers), while JSA customers from

professional, managerial or technical occupational backgrounds were also more likely to say this (35 per cent). IB customers with shorter/more recent claims were also more likely to say they had felt like complaining (19 per cent whose claim had lasted less than one year).

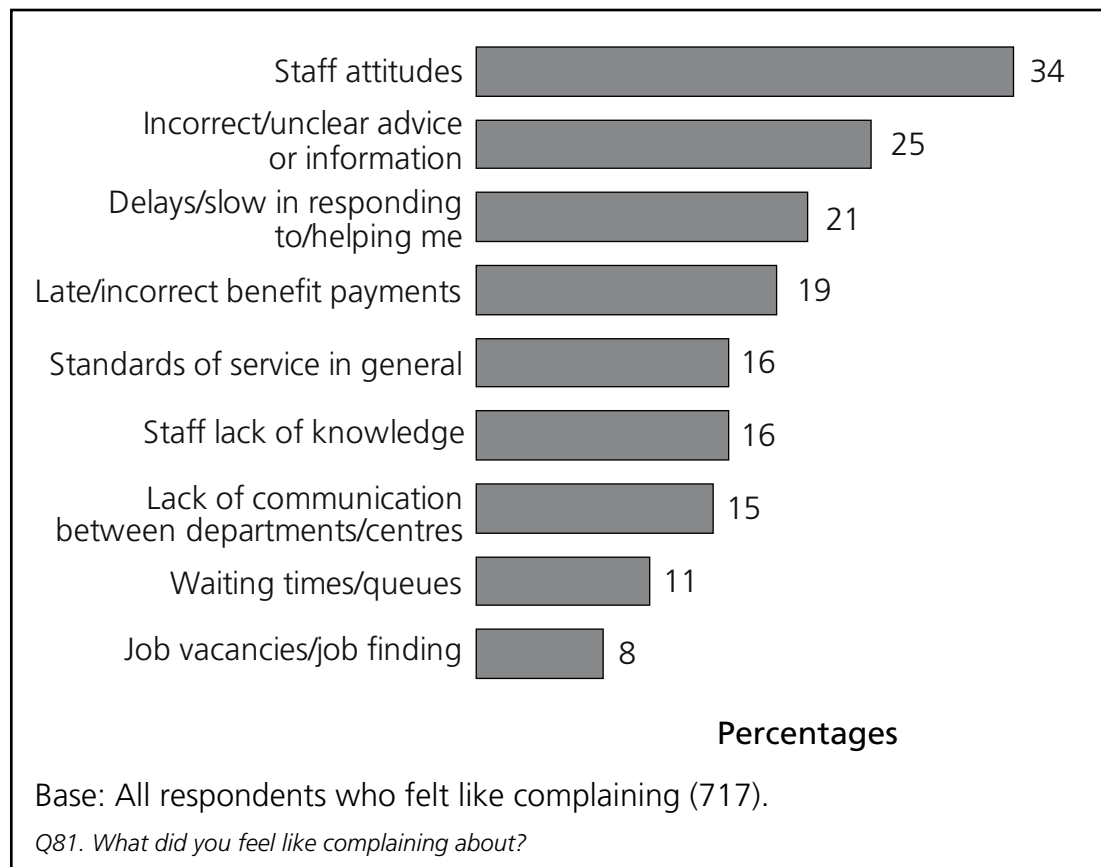
**Figure 7.3 Customers that felt like complaining**



Across the sample as a whole, customers in the North West and in Yorkshire and the Humber were least likely to say they had felt like complaining (12 per cent in each case), and former/recent claimants were more likely than current claimants to say they had felt like complaining (29 per cent compared with 14 per cent).

Findings to this question are linked to overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus. Of those who were dissatisfied overall, the majority (67 per cent) said they had felt like complaining. The same also applied to customers who reported problems with benefit payments (52 per cent had felt like complaining) or who said they had received incorrect information (57 per cent).

Respondents were most likely to have felt like complaining about staff attitudes (34 per cent); other respondents (16 per cent) also mentioned lack of knowledge amongst staff (Figure 7.4). The other main issues raised by respondents relate to either mistakes (incorrect/unclear advice or information, and late/incorrect benefit payments) or the speed of service (delays/slow response and queues/waiting times). Responses were similar between the three benefit types, although IB customers were more likely to mention incorrect or unclear advice and information (36 per cent).

**Figure 7.4 What customers felt like complaining about**

Note: Figure 7.4 includes answers given by five per cent or more of respondents.

Of those that had felt like complaining, 20 per cent had actually complained and 11 per cent said they intended to do so. This means that overall, three per cent of customers had actually made a complaint in the previous 12 months, with a further two per cent intending to do so. JSA customers were more likely to have made a complaint (six per cent) than IS or IB customers (see Table 7.4).

**Table 7.4 Customer complaints**

	Total %	JSA %	IS %	IB %
Have made a complaint	3	6	2	3
Intend to make a complaint	2	3	1	1
<i>Base: All respondents</i>	4,125	1,615	1,390	1,120

Q82. Did you make, or do you intend to make, a complaint?

Amongst JSA customers, the proportion that had made a complaint was higher amongst those from professional, managerial or technical occupational backgrounds (nine per cent) and lower amongst 16–24-year-olds (three per cent). Amongst IB customers, the proportion was higher amongst men (four per cent

compared with one per cent of women) and lower amongst those aged 50 or over (one per cent). Of the respondents who said they were dissatisfied with Jobcentre Plus overall, 15 per cent had made a complaint.

The qualitative follow-up research provided detailed examples of the most frequently mentioned reasons in the survey for complaints: staff attitudes, unclear or incorrect advice and information, and delays.

Complaints about delays related to different aspects of customer service provided by Jobcentre Plus, including waiting for appointments and waiting for benefits to be processed. The following examples were given by customers:

- Long waiting times experienced before getting through by telephone to the Benefit Delivery Centre, with JSA customers mentioning delays of 30 to 40 minutes.
- Being told by Jobcentre Plus staff that a benefit (JSA) would be processed and received within two weeks, although in reality it took eight weeks before benefit was received.

Examples of staff attitudes that led to complaints covered face-to-face as well as telephone contact:

- A member of staff appearing disinterested and rushing the customer during an initial application for JSA.
- An IS customer reported that staff became frustrated with them for not being able to take part in a training course because of caring for a young child.

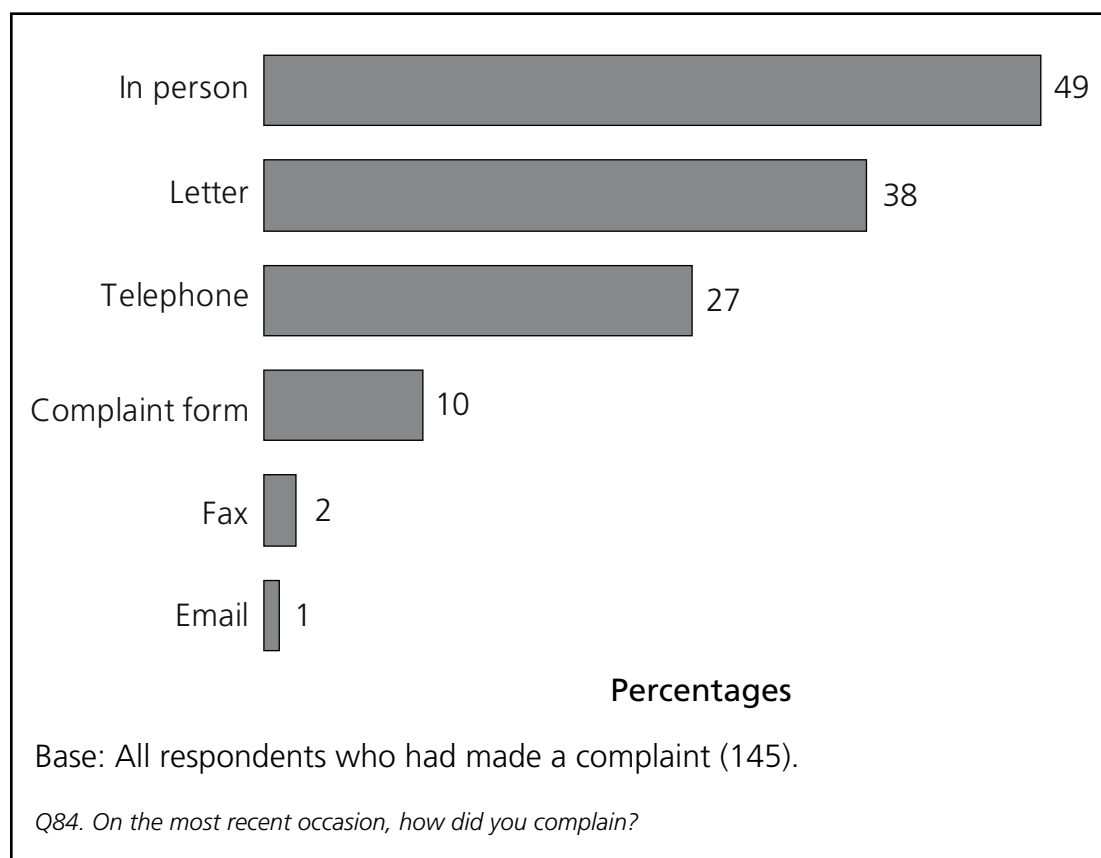
Customers complained about the following instances where they received incorrect or unclear advice and information. These examples included problems related to permitted working hours, training courses and benefit information.

- Conflicting information being given by different Jobcentre Plus advisers to an IS customer about the hours that could be worked while retaining benefits; and
- A JSA customer being given incomplete information from an adviser about why benefits were stopped.

*'The money for my benefit stopped coming into my account. The staff who I spoke to couldn't explain it and told me they were waiting for some paperwork from [a contracted out agency].'*

(JSA, 25-49)

Figure 7.5 shows the contact channels used by customers for making complaints. Survey respondents said that they were most likely to complain in person (49 per cent).

**Figure 7.5 Contact channels used for complaints**

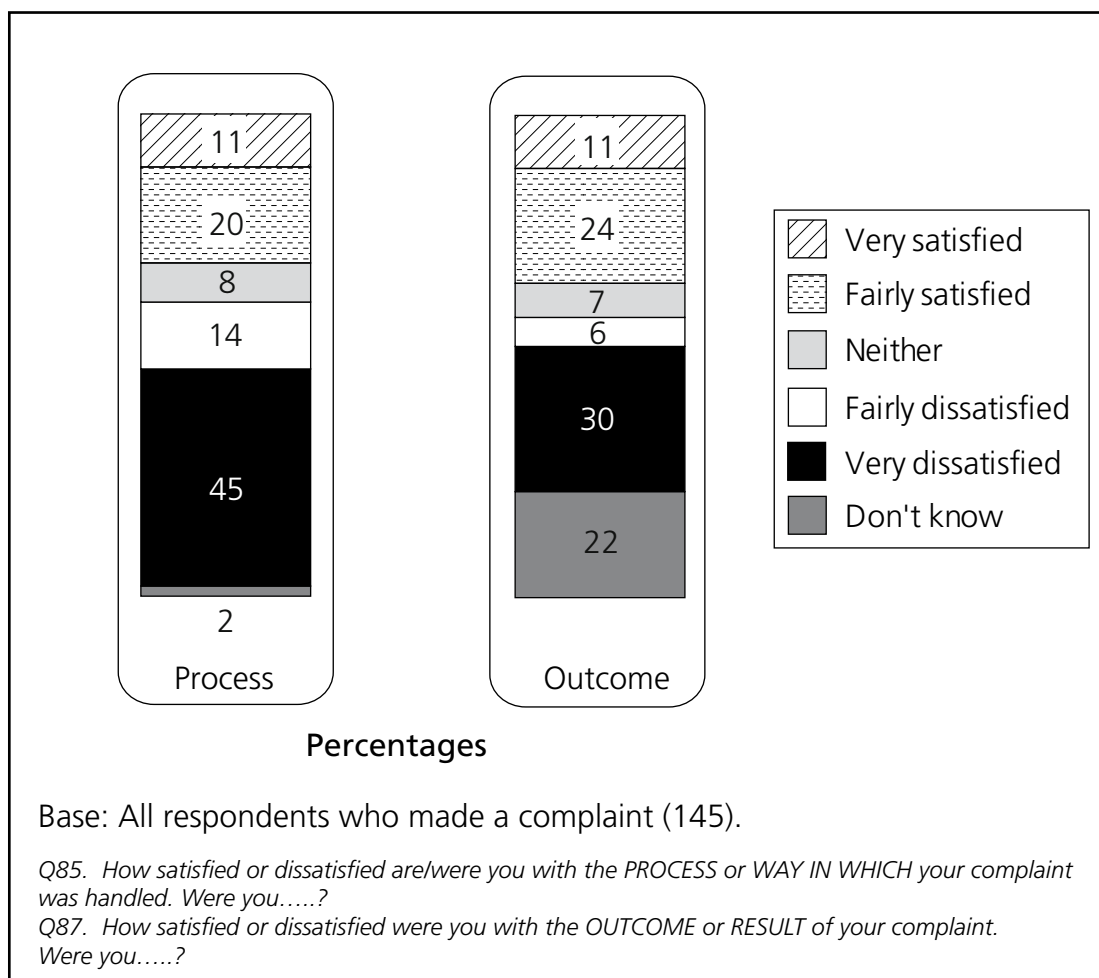
Customers who had made a complaint were asked how satisfied they were with both the process or way in which the complaint was handled, and the outcome or result of the complaint (see Figure 7.6). Most respondents were dissatisfied with the way in which the complaint was handled (59 per cent, with 31 per cent satisfied), while equal numbers were satisfied and dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint (35 per cent and 36 per cent); one in five did not give an opinion because there had not yet been an outcome. Sub-group analysis is not possible because of the small number of respondents who had made a complaint.

Those who said they were dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint (53 respondents) were asked in the survey why they were dissatisfied. The main reasons were as follows:

- They did not get a response (11 respondents).
- The issue was not resolved (eight respondents).
- Staff attitudes (seven respondents).
- Staff did not listen or were not interested (seven respondents).
- Errors made by Jobcentre Plus (six respondents).
- Respondent did not get the money they thought they were entitled to (six respondents).

- Lack of help or support (five respondents).
- Nothing had changed as a result of the complaint (five respondents).

**Figure 7.6 Satisfaction with process and outcome of complaint**



Most customers who had complained had not taken the matter any further, although a minority had contacted either the office manager (four per cent), their MP (two per cent), or the Ombudsman via their MP (two per cent), or taken the matter further in some other way (four per cent).

From the qualitative follow-up research it was apparent that reasons for dissatisfaction relating to the complaints process included:

- A customer (claiming JSA) who complained about their benefits being cancelled found it difficult to speak to the relevant person. When they called Jobcentre Plus they were given a separate number to call to lodge the complaint. They were dissatisfied as they felt they were being 'passed around'.
- A customer (from a professional, managerial or technical occupational background) was told to expect a call back from a manager about a complaint but this did not happen.



- An IS customer was dissatisfied when told that they could not make a formal complaint by telephone and had to do so by letter; in their view this would take up too much time.
- Jobcentre Plus staff lost copies of bank statements that had been sent in order to support a claim – the customer had to resend them and was concerned at the loss of sensitive information.

Customers were dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaints process for the following reasons:

- An IS customer did not receive a reply having made a formal complaint by letter:

*'I put in a complaint against a member of staff, but I didn't hear anything back about it. For all I know they could have just torn it up.'*

(IS, 50+)

- It took several weeks to get a response to a complaint made by a customer from a professional, managerial or technical background about an issue they had expected to have taken much less time;
- A customer (claiming JSA) would have liked an apology (not enough Housing Benefit was paid) rather than just having the outstanding money refunded.

According to the survey, of those who had felt like complaining, only 20 per cent had actually complained and 11 per cent said they intended to do so. The qualitative research looked at why customers who felt like complaining had not done so:

- Some JSA customers thought that the complaints process would take a lot of time. Those holding this view usually did so because they had experienced long waiting times for other aspects of Jobcentre Plus services, such as benefit delivery and face-to-face meetings.
- One JSA customer who felt like complaining but had not done so said that they had not been told about the formal complaints procedure and had not seen any information about it. This very much reflected an overall low customer awareness of how the complaints process worked and was felt to be due to a lack of staff explanation of the process and low customer engagement with the information that explained the complaints process. (This information is available on-line as well as in leaflets.)
- Some JSA customers believed that making a complaint would result in negative or inferior treatment. This view tended to arise from customers who had experienced altercations or personality clashes with members of Jobcentre Plus staff.

- Other JSA customers thought that complaints would not be responded to. This view tended to arise from customers who had experienced previous unresolved issues when dealing with Jobcentre Plus. Examples of this include a case where staff did not get back to a customer to explain why their benefits had been stopped.

*'I felt like complaining at the time, but to be honest, you just get passed round the office and then your complaint probably goes in the bin.'*

(JSA, 25-49)

Customers and staff were also asked how they thought the complaints process could be improved. There was widespread agreement from customers and staff that customer knowledge of the complaints process was very low, with both groups agreeing that explaining the complaints process in greater detail to customers would be beneficial. Further suggestions included:

- Managing customer expectations and outlining the timescales over which complaints are usually dealt with.
- Speeding up the complaints process:

*'I want to be able to speak to someone about the complaint in quicker time ...I do remember it feeling a long time before I actually got to speak to the manager and I did leave messages.'*

(JSA, 25-49)

- Providing the facility to lodge complaints by telephone:

*'There should be a complaints hotline so you can just ring up and complain directly, so you don't have to make a complaint in writing... this way you could just do it over the phone.'*

(IS, 50+)

- Encouraging staff dealing with a complaint to be more engaged with the process, helpful and approachable.
- Involving managerial staff at an earlier stage in the complaints process. This would serve to reassure customers that the complaint would be dealt with in the proper manner.



## 8 Key drivers of customer satisfaction

Key driver analysis was conducted to identify and measure the impact of underlying factors influencing customers' propensity to be *very satisfied* with Jobcentre Plus services. This chapter examines the varying aspects of service delivery that contribute to overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus services and satisfaction with face-to-face and telephone contact methods.

### **Overall satisfaction**

- Thirty-three per cent of customers were *very satisfied* with services provided by Jobcentre Plus. For these customers 'ease of getting in contact with Jobcentre Plus' is the service measure with the strongest impact on overall satisfaction for all customers.
- The key drivers with the next strongest impact were 'providing information relevant to needs and circumstances' and 'convenience of local Jobcentre Plus office' for those customers who were *very satisfied*.
- While the demographic variables Sex and Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) do have a significant impact on overall satisfaction, the variation in customer satisfaction is predominantly explained by other, independent measures not based on customer characteristics.

### **Satisfaction with face-to-face and telephone contact methods**

- Of the four core performance indicators including *Ease of access*, *Treatment*, *Timely response* and *Right outcome*, it is those aspects of service delivery which fall within the scope of *Treatment* and *Timely response* that have the strongest relative impact on satisfaction with most recent face-to-face or telephone contact type across all three customer groups.
- The service measure '*providing information relevant to needs and circumstances*' had the strongest impact on a customer's propensity to indicate they are very satisfied particularly for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) and Incapacity Benefit (IB) customers (face-to-face and telephone contact).
- Dissatisfaction with office conditions is a hindrance to JSA customer satisfaction with face-to-face contact.
- For the three customer groups, a consistent key driver of satisfaction with both face-to-face and telephone contact was '*being treated with respect as an individual*' and '*completing business in a reasonable length of time*'.
- For face-to-face contact, respecting privacy was a key driver of satisfaction across all three customer groups.
- The outcome of '*Any issues outstanding at the end of the meeting*' was an important driver for satisfaction with the most recent face-to-face meeting for JSA and Income Support (IS) customers.
- Ensuring there are no problems with benefit payments following notification to Jobcentre Plus of a change in personal details or circumstances is important to maintain current levels of satisfaction among JSA and IS customers whose most recent contact was by telephone.

## 8.1 Key driver analysis

As demonstrated throughout this report, there are many factors that are associated with the extent to which an individual customer is likely to be satisfied with the service they receive from Jobcentre Plus. By using multivariate key driver analysis to measure the impact of the underlying factors on the overall level of satisfaction, we are able to identify those factors which are driving service satisfaction.

This chapter reports the results of the multivariate analysis and explores the varying key drivers of service satisfaction by contact type (telephone or face-to-face) and individual customer groups. Specifically, the analysis identified the following:

- Drivers of overall satisfaction with service provided by Jobcentre Plus.
- Drivers of satisfaction with most recent contact method (face-to-face meeting or telephone contact).
- Drivers of satisfaction with most recent contact method (face-to-face meeting or telephone contact) by customer group.

## 8.2 Drivers of overall satisfaction

With 75 per cent of Jobcentre Plus customers surveyed indicating they were either *very* or *fairly* satisfied with the services provided by Jobcentre Plus, it is the group of customers who indicated they were *very* satisfied (33 per cent) who were selected for additional analysis. Given that the optimum outcome is that customers are *very* satisfied with the service they receive, and not just *fairly* satisfied, it is more valuable to determine what leads to this high level of satisfaction. In order to determine which demographic attributes and/or customer experiences combine to influence an individual's propensity to express an overall sense of satisfaction with the service they have received, multivariate analysis was conducted using a series of variables<sup>22</sup>.

Based on this analysis, the variables that were shown to be significant are shown in Table 8.1.

**Table 8.1 Significant drivers of overall satisfaction**

Survey variable	DSO7 <sup>1</sup> Indicator
Ease of getting in contact with Jobcentre Plus	<i>Ease of access</i>
Providing information relevant to customers needs and circumstances	<i>Treatment</i>
Convenience of local office	<i>Ease of access</i>
Whether been given any incorrect or conflicting information	<i>Treatment</i>
Standard Occupational Classification (SOC)	<i>n/a</i>
Sex	<i>n/a</i>
Completing business in a reasonable length of time	<i>Timely response</i>
Treating customers in a friendly and polite way	<i>Treatment</i>

Note 1: Departmental Strategic Objective 7 (DSO7).

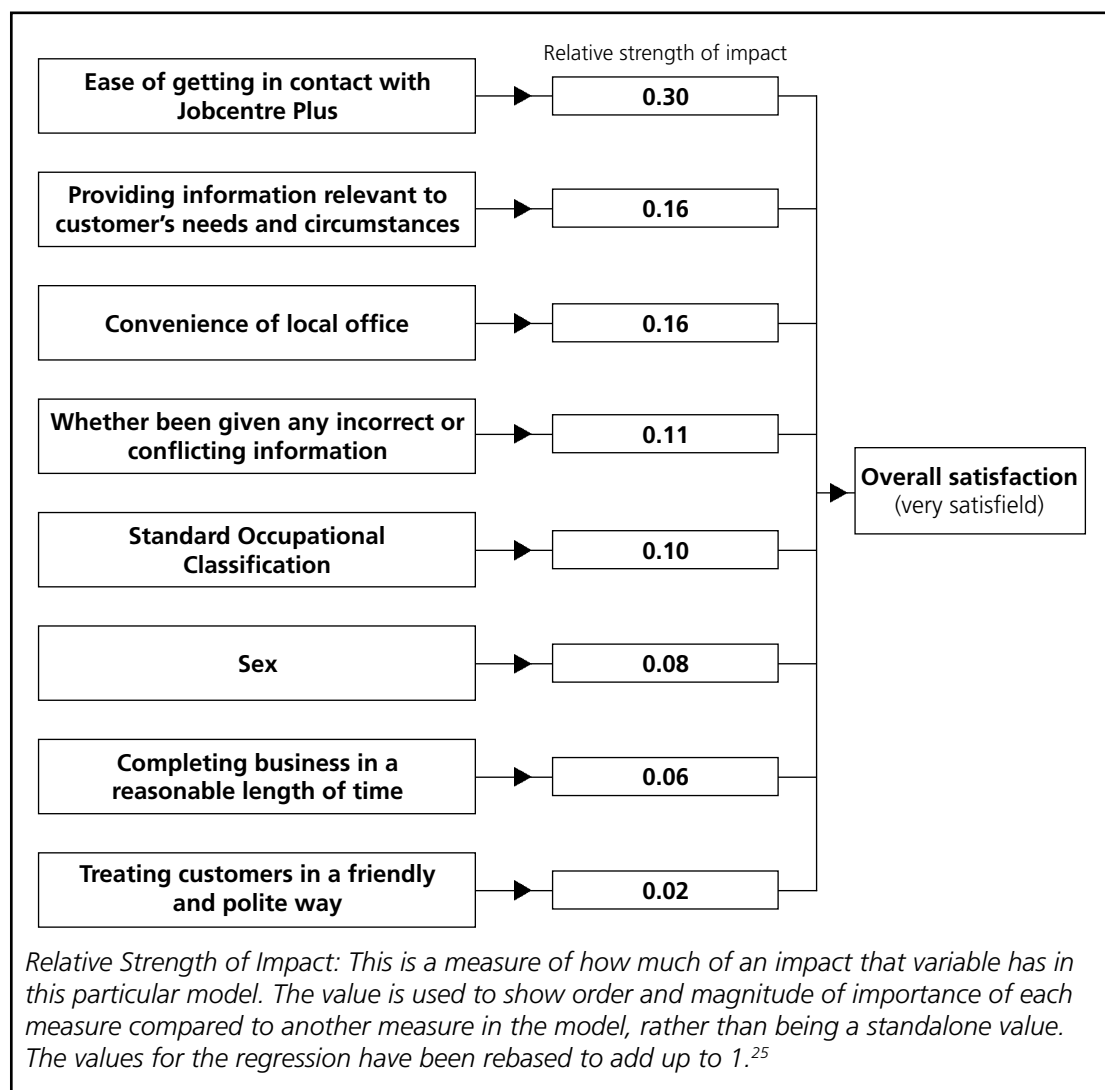
As shown in Figure 8.1, in this model, the measure with the greatest impact on overall satisfaction was '*Ease of getting in contact with Jobcentre Plus*' (0.30) with nearly twice the impact on satisfaction for all customers than the next strongest measures, '*Providing information relevant to customer's needs and circumstances*' (0.16) and '*Convenience of local Jobcentre Plus office*' (0.16)<sup>23</sup>. Other aspects of individual customer treatment were also key drivers of overall service satisfaction, including '*Whether given incorrect or contradictory information*' (0.11), '*Completing business in a reasonable amount of time*' (0.06) and finally, '*Treating you in a friendly and polite way*' (0.02). For each of these aspects of individual treatment, if the customer is treated positively, they were more likely to be satisfied overall, and indeed, *very* satisfied.

<sup>22</sup> See Appendix B, Table B.1 for list of all variables included in analysis.

<sup>23</sup> In total, the eight significant variables in this model account for 28 per cent of the variation in customer propensity to be *very* satisfied. Other variables, not specified by the research, explain the remaining variance.

In line with the results of the 2007 study, demographic variables account for only a small proportion of the variation in the propensity of a customer to be very satisfied with the service they receive. In the 2009 survey, Sex and SOC are significant drivers of satisfaction. As highlighted throughout this report, men were generally less likely to be very satisfied, as were those from professional, managerial or technical occupational backgrounds.<sup>24</sup> While these two variables are key drivers of overall satisfaction, the variation in customer satisfaction is predominantly explained by other, independent measures not based on customer characteristics.

**Figure 8.1 Overall drivers of satisfaction – all customers**



<sup>24</sup> See Appendix B, Table B.4.

<sup>25</sup> Relative Strength of Impact (beta coefficients) are the standardised regression coefficients. Their relative values reflect their relative importance in predicting a respondents' level of satisfaction. These values are only compared within a model and not between different models. Adding or subtracting variables (measures) within the model equation will affect the size of the beta values.

### 8.3 Impact on likelihood of being very satisfied

Controlling for all of these variables within the model, we are able to account for how much less likely a customer is to be very satisfied based on their individual experiences. Table 8.2 documents how much less likely a customer is to be very satisfied when they have been given information that was incorrect or contradictory, if a customer found the experience of getting in contact with Jobcentre Plus was anything less than very easy, and if a customer indicates their local office is anything less than very convenient to get to.

**Table 8.2 Impact on likelihood of being very satisfied**

Question <sup>1</sup>	Category	How much less likely someone would be 'very satisfied'
Have been given any information that was incorrect or contradictory	No	(ref) <sup>2</sup>
	Yes	62%
How easy found it to get in contact with Jobcentre Plus over the last 12 months	Very easy	(ref)
	Fairly easy	59%
	Don't know	44%
	Any difficult ('Very'/'Fairly')	66%
How convenient local office is to get to	Very convenient	(ref)
	Fairly convenient	39%
	Neither convenient nor inconvenient	42%
	Fairly inconvenient	39%
	Very inconvenient	42%

Note 1: Table 8.3 only includes those measures in the model which are categorical variables and therefore interpreted differently from the other measures which are scalar variables.

Note 2: 'ref' refers to the reference point from which any change in likelihood to be very satisfied is measured (based on the respondent providing a response to the question other than the 'ref' response as indicated).

This analysis reveals that those who had been given any incorrect or contradictory information in the past 12 months were 62 per cent less likely to be very satisfied with the overall level of service they received from Jobcentre Plus than those who had not been given incorrect information.<sup>26</sup>

To illustrate this more clearly, given two customers who were the same (based on all of the measures included in the model as outlined above), if one of these customers then indicates they have been given incorrect or contradictory advice in the last 12 months, they were 62 per cent less likely to be very satisfied than the customer not given incorrect information.

<sup>26</sup> Sixty-two per cent compared to reference category ('**not** given incorrect or contradictory information').



A similar pattern exists for those customers who indicated that they did not find it easy to get in contact with Jobcentre Plus over the last 12 months and for those who indicated that their local office was not convenient to get to. Customers who have experienced either of these situations were less likely to be *very* satisfied overall.

#### 8.4 Drivers of overall satisfaction with most recent contact method (face-to-face meeting or telephone contact) – all customer groups

The 2008 Customer Satisfaction Key Drivers research conducted by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), defined and base-lined indicators 1-4 of DSO7:

- **Ease of access:** the level of customer satisfaction with access to DWP services.
- **Treatment:** the level of customer satisfaction with feeling respected and valued.
- **Timely response:** the level of customer satisfaction with the timeliness and responsiveness of service.
- **Right outcome:** the level of customer satisfaction with the outcome.

The above four drivers of service delivery also capture a wide range of sub-driver elements of service delivery that are banded together under the broad key driver headings. The Department is confident, from the key driver research, that the four drivers above (and their sub-drivers) represent the core aspects of service delivery for DWP customers and, most importantly, that they align with customer perceptions.

Taking into account all of the individual aspects of service delivery within these core areas<sup>27</sup>, further analysis was conducted to identify more specific drivers of overall satisfaction based on most recent contact method, including face-to-face contact with a Jobcentre Plus advisor and telephone contact.

Multivariate key driver analysis provides a list of measures that have an impact (or influence) on satisfaction levels, together with a measure of their relative importance in determining how satisfied a customer is. By plotting the relative importance of each measure against its perceived performance experienced by the customer at their most recent contact (face to face or telephone) these measures can be divided into four quadrants as in Figure 8.2.<sup>28</sup> Quadrants B and D are the two key areas, containing the measures most strongly influencing satisfaction. Quadrant B contains measures that need to be maintained, as they are performing relatively strongly, and are important in driving satisfaction. Quadrant D contains measures that need to be improved – they are performing relatively weakly, but are strong drivers of satisfaction. In this way, key driver analysis can be used to identify

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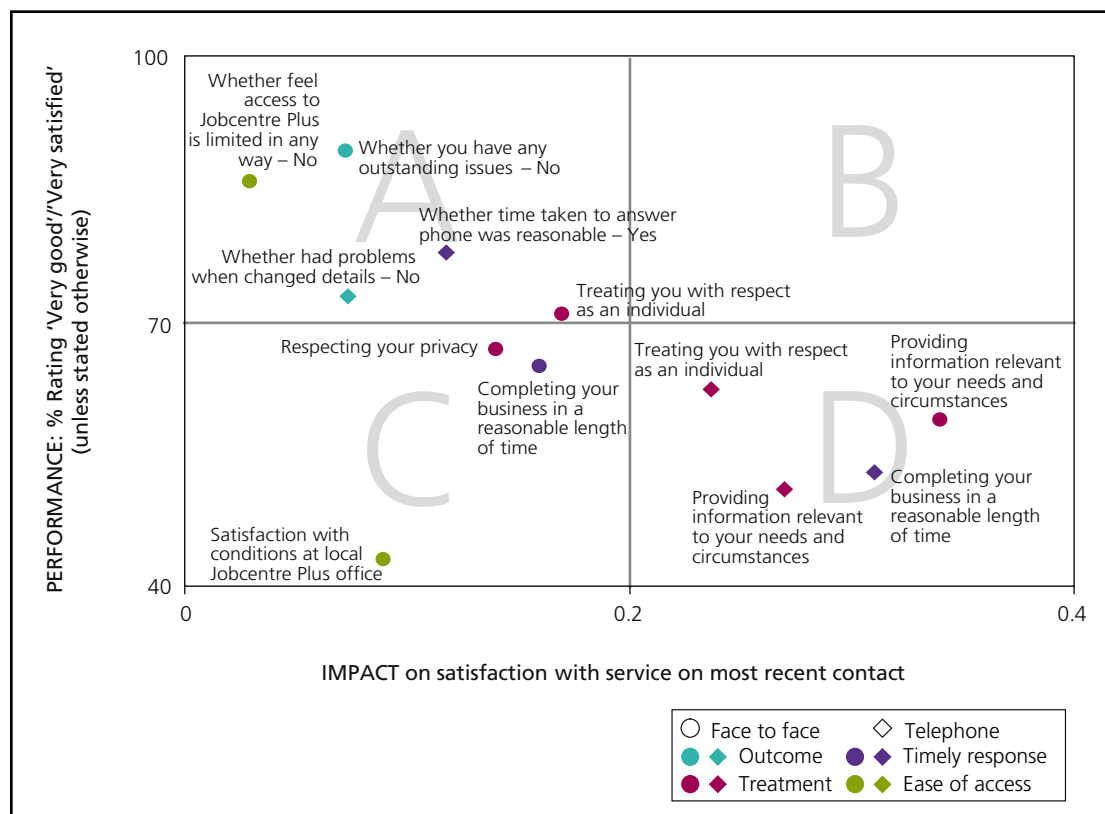
<sup>27</sup> See Appendix B, Table B.2 for list of measures and associated DSO7 indicators.

<sup>28</sup> Illustrated in Appendix B, Figure B.1.

priorities for improvement. Priority should be given to those aspects of service delivery in quadrants B and D as these have the strongest impact on satisfaction of all the measures.

Figure 8.2 illustrates both the relative importance of each aspect of service delivery that was shown to have a significant impact on satisfaction with the two main contact channels (face to face and telephone), as well as the customer rating of Jobcentre Plus performance on that driver. Each of these measures has received over 40 per cent of the most positive customer rating (either *very good* or *very satisfied*).<sup>29</sup>

**Figure 8.2 Drivers of overall satisfaction with most recent face-to-face or telephone contact – all customers**



#### 8.4.1 Drivers affecting satisfaction with face-to-face contact – all customers

There were seven significant drivers of satisfaction with face-to-face contact. The driver with the strongest impact on satisfaction with most recent face-to-face contact was 'Providing information relevant to needs and circumstances' (0.34). Fifty-nine per cent of customers rated Jobcentre Plus performance on this measure

<sup>29</sup> Figures can be found in Appendix B, Table B.3a/b.

as very good.<sup>30</sup> Overall, those aspects of service delivery based on customer *treatment*, including *'being treated with respect as an individual'* and *'respecting privacy'*, and those aspects which rely on achieving a *timely response* including *'Completing business in a reasonable length of time'* have the next strongest impact on satisfaction with face-to-face contact.

Other aspects of service delivery which define the customer experience in terms of *outcome* (whether the customer has any outstanding issues at the end of the meeting) and *ease of access* (whether the customer feels their access to Jobcentre Plus is limited in any way) also had a significant impact on satisfaction with this type of contact. According to customer ratings, Jobcentre Plus is performing well on these measures, with over eight in ten customers responding that there were no outstanding issues at the end of the meeting and that they do not feel their access to Jobcentre Plus services is limited in any way. A further driver of satisfaction within the scope of *ease of access* was *'Satisfaction with conditions at local Jobcentre Plus office'* (0.09). While this measure received a top-box rating of *very good* by 43 per cent of customers who have attended a face-to-face meeting in an office, this was the lowest performance rating of all the measures indicating there is scope for improvement in this area.

#### **8.4.2 Drivers affecting satisfaction with telephone contact – all customers**

There were five significant drivers of satisfaction with telephone contact. The drivers with the strongest impact on satisfaction with this form of contact include *'Providing information relevant to needs and circumstances'* (0.27), *'Completing business in a reasonable length of time'* (0.31), and *'Treating you with respect as an individual'* (0.23).

All these treatment measures have a strong impact on satisfaction among telephone users, and any improvements in the above areas should help to maintain and increase satisfaction with that method of contact.

As illustrated in Figure 8.2 there are more drivers of satisfaction with telephone contact in quadrant D than face-to-face contact. This indicates that there a greater number of drivers for telephone contact that have a relatively high impact on satisfaction than for face-to-face contact.

In line with established Jobcentre Plus service standards, customer agreement that the *'Time taken to answer the call was reasonable'* was a key driver of satisfaction with telephone contact specifically. In addition, the outcome of experiencing any problems with benefit payments after notifying Jobcentre Plus of a change in personal details or circumstances has a significant impact on overall satisfaction. Ensuring this aspect of service is delivered is important for maintaining high levels of satisfaction. When customers do experience problems with their benefit

<sup>30</sup> Proportions rebased to exclude customers who gave a response of 'don't know'.

payments after notifying about a change, their propensity to become dissatisfied is greater. Meeting this service standard therefore does not necessarily make customers more satisfied, but rather, keeps them from becoming less satisfied.

For both contact types, the drivers identified in this research, as having a significant impact on satisfaction are in line with indicators 1 – 4 as defined and base-lined in the 2008 Customer Satisfaction Key Drivers research of DSO7.

## 8.5 Drivers of overall satisfaction with most recent contact method (face-to-face meeting or telephone contact) – by customer group

Each aspect of service delivery within the four core areas, *Ease of access*, *Treatment*, *Timely response* and *Right outcome*, impress varying strengths of impact on overall satisfaction for each of the individual customer groups.

### 8.5.1 Drivers of satisfaction with most recent face-to-face or telephone contact – JSA customers

For JSA customers, who have been shown to have the highest prevalence of contact with Jobcentre Plus, there are several key drivers of satisfaction. Many parallels are evident when examining the drivers of satisfaction with face-to-face contact and telephone contact for this group. The drivers of satisfaction with face-to-face and telephone contact for JSA customers are shown in Table 8.3.

The driver with the strongest impact on customer satisfaction with both face-to-face contact and telephone contact was '*Being provided with information relevant to needs and circumstances*'. However, the relative strength of impact of this driver on satisfaction with telephone contact is much greater than its relative strength upon satisfaction with face-to-face contact.

For both types of contact, other key drivers including '*Being treated with respect as an individual*' and '*Completing business in a reasonable length of time*' were particularly important to satisfaction.

For those whose last contact with Jobcentre Plus was face to face, additional drivers regarding their 'in-office' experience play a role. Satisfaction with this experience is impacted by factors such as whether their privacy was respected during the meeting and the conditions at their local Jobcentre Plus office.

**Table 8.3 Drivers of overall satisfaction with most recent face-to-face or telephone contact – JSA customers<sup>1</sup>**

Key driver of satisfaction – JSA customers	DSO7 indicator	Face-to-face contact method	Telephone contact method
Being provided with information relevant to needs and circumstances	Treatment	✓ 0.29	✓ 0.40
Being treated with respect as an individual	Treatment	✓ 0.22	✓ 0.24
Completing business in a reasonable length of time	Timely response	✓ 0.14	✓ 0.14
Respecting privacy	Treatment	✓ 0.12	
Satisfaction with conditions at local Jobcentre Plus office	Ease of access	✓ 0.11	
Whether experienced problems after notifying a change in details – NO	Outcome		✓ 0.11
Whether feel access to Jobcentre Plus is limited – NO	Ease of access		✓ 0.09
Whether given incorrect or contradictory information – NO	Treatment	✓ 0.06	
Whether had any outstanding issues – NO	Outcome	✓ 0.06	
<i>(% rating 'very good'/'very satisfied', unless otherwise stated)</i>		<i>Relative impact</i>	<i>Relative impact</i>

Note 1: The tick indicates that this measure was a key driver for this contact method; no tick indicates that this measure was not a key driver for this contact method.

For those choosing a telephone contact method, another key driver was whether the customer experienced problems with their benefit payment after notifying a change in their personal circumstances.

### 8.5.2 Drivers of satisfaction with most recent face-to-face or telephone contact – IS customers

As has been highlighted throughout this report, the IS customer group are more likely to be satisfied overall with Jobcentre Plus services. The key drivers of satisfaction with face-to-face and telephone contact for IS customers are shown in Table 8.4.

While IS customers were somewhat less likely to utilise a face-to-face contact method than JSA customers, there were many drivers which contribute to their satisfaction with this contact type. Similar to JSA customers, being provided information relevant to their needs and circumstances was the aspect of service delivery that had the strongest impact on the propensity of IS customers being satisfied with the service they receive from Jobcentre Plus. Completing business quickly, being treated with respect as an individual and ensuring privacy is respected are also key drivers of satisfaction for this customer group.

**Table 8.4 Drivers of overall satisfaction with most recent face-to-face or telephone contact – IS customers<sup>1</sup>**

Key driver of satisfaction – IS customers	DSO7 indicator	Face-to-face contact method	Telephone contact method
Being provided with information relevant to needs and circumstances	Treatment	✓ 0.30	
Completing business in a reasonable length of time	Timely response	✓ 0.21	✓ 0.59
Being treated with respect as an individual	Treatment	✓ 0.15	✓ 0.27
Respecting privacy	Treatment	✓ 0.13	
Whether had any outstanding issues – NO	Outcome	✓ 0.10	
Whether feel access to Jobcentre Plus is limited – NO	Ease of access	✓ 0.09	
Whether experienced problems after notifying a change in details – NO	Outcome		✓ 0.14
<i>(% rating 'very good'/'very satisfied', unless otherwise stated)</i>		<i>Relative impact</i>	<i>Relative impact</i>

Note 1: The tick indicates that this measure was a key driver for this contact method; no tick indicates that this measure was not a key driver for this contact method.

The likelihood of an IS customer being satisfied with a face-to-face contact experience is impacted by their perceived access to Jobcentre Plus services. Those who did not feel that their access is limited were more likely to be very satisfied with their most recent face-to-face contact experience. In addition, those who indicated that there were no outstanding issues at the end of the face-to-face contact were more likely to be very satisfied.

While there are fewer drivers of satisfaction (and therefore larger scores for relative impact) with telephone contact for this customer group, satisfaction was strongly impacted by the service measure '*Completing business in a reasonable length of time*'. Like face-to-face contact, being treated with respect as an individual also had a strong impact on satisfaction with telephone contact. Ensuring customers do not experience problems with their benefit payments after notifying Jobcentre Plus of a change in their personal circumstances over the telephone will also assist in maintaining levels of satisfaction for IS customers.

### 8.5.3 Drivers of satisfaction with most recent face-to-face or telephone contact – IB customers

While IB customers generally have fewer contact occasions with Jobcentre Plus compared to the JSA and IS customer groups, the key drivers of their satisfaction with face-to-face and telephone contact follow a similar pattern. The key drivers of satisfaction with face-to-face and telephone contact for IB customers are shown in Table 8.5.

**Table 8.5 Drivers of overall satisfaction with most recent face-to-face or telephone contact – IB customers<sup>1</sup>**

Key driver of satisfaction – IB customers	DSO7 indicator	Face-to-face contact method		Telephone contact method	
Being provided with information relevant to needs and circumstances	Treatment	✓	0.53	✓	0.32
Respecting privacy	Treatment	✓	0.30		
Completing business in a reasonable length of time	Timely response	✓	0.17	✓	0.43
Being treated with respect as an individual	Treatment			✓	0.24
<i>(% rating 'very good'/'very satisfied', unless otherwise stated)</i>			Relative impact		Relative impact

Note 1: The tick indicates that this measure was a key driver for this contact method; no tick indicates that this measure was not a key driver for this contact method.

There are fewer drivers of satisfaction with both types of contact for IB customers. Overall '*being provided with information that is relevant to needs and circumstances*' is the aspect of service delivery with the strongest impact on IB customer satisfaction with face-to-face contact, while '*Completing business in a reasonable length of time*' had the strongest impact on satisfaction with telephone contact. Respect plays a key role for both contact types, with '*Respecting privacy*' being a key driver of satisfaction with face-to-face contact and '*Being treated with respect as an individual*' being a key driver with telephone contact.

## 9 New customers from the qualitative follow-up research

This chapter considers the experiences of customers who are from a professional, managerial or technical background or from another employment background but have either never claimed benefit before or have not claimed benefit for many years.

- Customers from professional, managerial or technical occupational backgrounds were more dissatisfied than other customer groups. This was because they tended to have high expectations of the service that were not met.
- This group of customers considered that they were not fully informed by the Contact Centre telephony staff of the benefit claim process; felt that Jobcentre Plus staff did not understand their job requirements or financial background; and considered the job search advice and the availability of specialist training to be poor.
- The self-service channels were considered by this group of customers to be of little use as there were few relevant jobs available and the job descriptions were thought to lack sufficient detail.
- Customers from other employment backgrounds with limited or no experience of the benefits system were less critical of Jobcentre Plus services but felt they needed reassurance, help with writing a CV, job search advice and basic training courses.



## 9.1 Background

Jobcentre Plus had noted that increasingly there were new groups of customers using their services from professional, managerial or technical occupational backgrounds and those who had not claimed benefit before or had not done so for many years. Customers from both of these groups were recruited from the survey in order to identify their overall views of Jobcentre Plus services, as well as any particular needs and expectations that they might have.

## 9.2 Customers from a professional, managerial or technical employment background

The survey found the following findings for customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds:

- They had lower levels of satisfaction compared to other customer groups.
- They were more likely to be dissatisfied with Jobcentre Plus office conditions.
- They were more likely to be dissatisfied with the self-service channels.
- They were more likely to have experienced incorrect or contradictory information.

The survey suggests that customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds are also more dissatisfied than other customer groups: they were less satisfied than other Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) customers (34 per cent were very satisfied with their meeting at an office and 29 per cent with their last telephone contact).

When discussing satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus services it was clear that both customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds and those who had not claimed benefit before had high expectations of the service which were generally not met. Typically these groups of customers were dissatisfied with what they saw as lengthy delays, insufficiently detailed information, little support and help to find work, and the manner in which they felt that staff treated them. For example:

- A 30-minute wait for a face-to-face Fortnightly Job Review (FJR) appointment was considered to be an unacceptable waste of their time.
- An expectation that prior to their telephone application for JSA they would be informed about the information that would be needed for the application and an estimate of how long the call would take.
- Customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds may have financial products that pay their mortgage or provide an income during periods of unemployment. Should they take a job then the insurance no longer pays out. However, for it to be worthwhile taking the job, it must pay at least the equivalent of their mortgage protection and unemployment insurances. However, it was apparent that Jobcentre Plus advisers did not understand this and insisted that customers apply for jobs that pay less than their unemployment insurances provide.

- An adviser criticised a customer who telephoned to explain that they were going to be late:

*'I phoned them up and said look, my car's broken down, can't make it. The member of staff said that's your problem, if you don't make it down here today by 3 o'clock your benefit will stop.'*

(JSA, 25-49)

Customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds also commented on a lack of consideration and appreciation of a customer's chosen job sector and the provision of help, advice and training that was of poor quality or at a level that was of no use to them.

The survey suggested that those from a professional, managerial or technical background were less positive than other customers about office conditions (only 28 per cent were very satisfied). The reasons were as follows:

- Poor physical signposting within the actual Jobcentre Plus office making it difficult to know where to go and where to queue.
- As discussed in Chapter 4, a lack of privacy during FJRs was a concern as they felt that confidential financial information was potentially being overheard.

In relation to the self-service channels, the survey found the following:

- Customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds (65 per cent) were less likely than other customers to use the Jobpoints in the last 12 months.
- Those previously employed in professional, managerial or technical backgrounds were less likely than average to find the Jobpoints or website services helpful.

The reasons for this were as follows:

- Jobpoints and the Jobcentre Plus website had a shortage of suitable jobs for people with a professional, managerial or technical background, with an emphasis on labouring and construction opportunities:

*'There's no suitable opportunities. The service is out of its depth as soon as you get to white collar senior management.'*

(JSA, 50+)

- Jobpoints lacked sufficient detailed job descriptions so that it was difficult to tell what the job actually involved.
- The job categories used on the Jobcentre Plus website were unclear, with office professionals and management roles being covered under the same headings.

Customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds were more likely to say that they had problems with insufficient, incorrect or contradictory information. For example, customers often wanted to know what benefits they were likely to be able to claim when telephoning the Contact Centre, but

this information was not available. Equally, customers were given conflicting information about their eligibility for benefits as well as a lack of information about how to make a claim for travel expenses.

A larger proportion of customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds made complaints compared with other customers – nine per cent overall. The reasons they made complaints were as follows:

- Customers considered that they were poorly informed about the benefits system they were entering for the first time:

*'As I'm claiming [JSA] for the first time, I want to know what's going to happen, what benefits I am entitled to.'*

(JSA, 25-49)

- Staff becoming angry with the customer for being unwilling to take jobs that were seen as 'inappropriate' given their experience and background, such as cleaning work or manual labour.
- Not being re-contacted when inquiring about an IT training course that was being operated by a contracted supplier.
- Being given a range of different reasons for benefit delays occurring when speaking to staff from the Benefit Delivery Centre and Jobcentre Plus.

### 9.3 Customers with limited or no experience of the benefits system

Customers from other employment backgrounds who had never claimed benefit or not done so for many years were much less critical of Jobcentre Plus services compared with those from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds.

Once this group of customers had accessed the Jobcentre Plus services they were very positive. They considered that the advisers they came into contact with were helpful and polite, the self-service facilities that were available were welcomed and their benefits were paid in a timely manner.

However, this group of customers had not been out of work for many years, and in some instances had never been unemployed. As a result they were very unsure about how Jobcentre Plus worked and the services it offered and felt that when making their initial contact with Jobcentre Plus, more reassurance and information would have been welcomed. Specifically, they were keen to have had a greater understanding of how to make a claim for benefit and the benefits available to them.

Some of this group of customers were particularly critical of Jobcentre Plus where they felt that they had not received sufficient support in the form of: help in constructing a CV; advice about how to find work; and the availability of basic training courses.

# 10 Satisfaction amongst ESA claimants

This chapter focuses on the experiences of claimants making a claim for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Findings in this chapter are based exclusively on qualitative research.

- Claimants making a claim for ESA were generally positive about their experiences; those who were entitled to ESA were more positive than those who were not entitled to ESA and assessed as fit for work. Claimants generally found the application process easier than previous claims for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA);
- Customer satisfaction was related to: the friendly and helpful manner of staff; staff who were able to support and console claimants who were upset and stressed; and interviews that were less hurried than previous experiences of JSA interviews.
- Dissatisfaction was associated with: poor management of customer expectations regarding how long the process would take; waiting times for interview and health assessment appointments; and poor explanations of decisions where the customer was assessed as being fit for work.

## 10.1 Background to ESA study

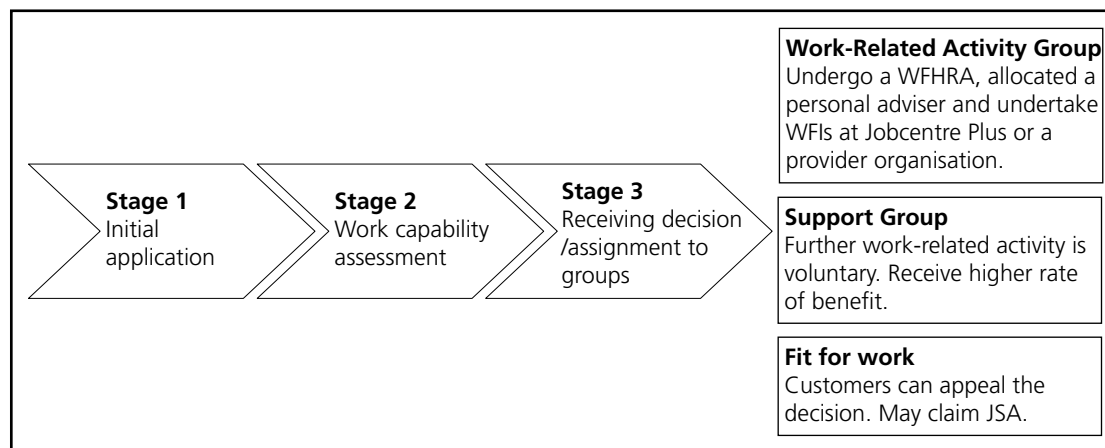
ESA replaced Incapacity Benefit (IB) and Income Support (IS) paid on the grounds of incapacity for new claimants from 27 October 2008. At the time the sample was drawn for the survey (July to October 2009) the latest available data was for December 2008, and so there were too few people claiming ESA for them to be included in the quantitative survey. Consequently, in order for their views to be investigated, a small-scale qualitative study involving 30 customer interviews was conducted.

The remainder of this chapter focuses on the qualitative findings of research with claimants who have claimed ESA only. A description of the methods used may be found in Section 1.6.

## 10.2 Overview of the customer journey for making a claim for ESA

The customer journey for ESA involves a number of stages, which have been summarised for the purposes of this research in Figure 10.1:

**Figure 10.1 ESA customer journey**



### 10.2.1 Stage 1 – Initial application

The first stage in the process of applying for ESA is usually a **telephone application**. Claimants call the Contact Centre telephone line and are asked questions about their circumstances and personal details. At this point the claimant is advised about the next steps in their application over the coming weeks. The 'ESA1' claim form is normally completed during the telephone call by Contact Centre staff. A statement is then posted to the claimant for information. The claimant is then sent the 'ESA50' form, which asks them about how their illness or disability affects their ability to complete everyday tasks. They complete this themselves, although it can be completed by someone else on their behalf, and post it back to Atos Healthcare for assessment.

Alternatively claimants can complete a **face-to-face application**. Both the ESA1 and ESA50 forms may be completed in person, either alone or with the help of an adviser. Advisers can also help a claimant complete an ESA50 form over the telephone.

If a claimant has a mental health condition, their claim will be progressed even if they fail to return their ESA50 form.

Following the submission of a claim form, the claimant is invited to an initial Work Focused Interview (WFI), which usually takes place at around eight weeks. This involves a meeting with a personal adviser, where support to help claimants prepare for suitable work is provided. A typical discussion might involve what kind of employment the claimant is looking to move into in the future. The first WFI will be with Jobcentre Plus and after this, the way these interviews are arranged depends on whether they occur in a provider-led or Jobcentre Plus-led district. In Jobcentre Plus-led Pathways districts future WFIs will be with Jobcentre Plus, and in provider-led pathways<sup>31</sup> districts, future WFIs will be with the provider.

### **10.2.2 Stage 2 – Work Capability Assessment**

Between one and 13 weeks into the application process claimants undergo a Work Capability Assessment (WCA). The WCA includes evaluation of the ESA50 form and other evidence, and can be paper based, or involve a face-to-face assessment. This is conducted by a Healthcare Professional from Atos Healthcare, who are contracted by Jobcentre Plus to undertake the ESA medical assessments, and identifies an individual's functional capability so that the health-care professional can provide advice to a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) decision maker.

### **10.2.3 Stage 3 – Receiving a decision and assigning to a group**

The report of the medical assessment is sent to a decision maker at Jobcentre Plus who will use this alongside all other available evidence including the ESA50 to decide whether the claimant is eligible for ESA. If it is decided that they are entitled to ESA, the decision maker will also decide whether they should be placed in the Work-Related Activity Group or the Support Group. A decision letter is sent to the claimant, informing them of whether they have been awarded ESA or not. If a claimant does not agree with a decision, they can appeal.

Claimants who are awarded ESA and allocated to the Work-Related Activity Group also attend a Work Focused Health-Related Assessment (WFHRA). This is conducted by a health-care professional from Atos Healthcare and explores a customer's motivations about moving into work, and any health-related interventions which would support this. A copy of the WFHRA report is sent to the customer's allocated personal adviser. Claimants in the Work-Related Activity Group are expected to take steps to prepare to move into work, including attending a series of WFIs with a personal adviser from Jobcentre Plus or a provider organisation.

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<sup>31</sup> See glossary.

## 10.3 Findings

### 10.3.1 Awareness of ESA

Prior to making a claim for ESA, awareness of the benefit was generally very low amongst research participants. Claimants became aware of ESA in a variety of different ways, depending on their circumstances. The most common ways that claimants found out about ESA were through: their GP, or hospital staff if they had recently been hospitalised; friends or family already claiming ESA; Jobcentre Plus advisers or the Jobcentre Plus website and leaflets; and the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

As awareness was low, so was claimant understanding of ESA. Prior to their application they had very little understanding about why the system of support had changed, the fact that ESA had replaced IB and IS (when paid on the grounds of incapacity) for new claimants from 27 October 2008 onwards, the amount of money they were likely to receive, or the process involved in making a claim for ESA.

### 10.3.2 Applying for ESA

The ESA application process is undertaken over the telephone, with claimants being taken through parts of the ESA claim form. This was said to last about 40 minutes.

Overall, satisfaction with the telephone application process was high. The key elements of satisfaction were: the polite and helpful manner of the Contact Centre staff, which was particularly reassuring for claimants who were nervous about telephoning the Contact Centre; the short waiting time to get through to the Contact Centre on the telephone; the overall speed of the call; and the speed with which the statement was sent to them.

As part of the call claimants were told how long the call was likely to take and how quickly they would receive the pre-populated application form. They appreciated this information and found that their expectations were usually met.

A secondary driver of satisfaction was the simplicity and clarity of the questions asked. Where there were any problems with understanding, claimants appreciated the helpfulness of Contact Centre staff in helping them through the application process.

*'Most of them [Jobcentre Plus telephony staff] were polite and helpful.'*

(Work-Related Activity Group, 16-24)

Dissatisfaction primarily arose where claimants were not provided with information that they felt ought to be available. For example, while the following information is intentionally not provided by Contact Centre staff, it was nevertheless the cause of some dissatisfaction amongst some claimants:

- How much ESA they would receive.
- When would they receive ESA.
- How long it would take to receive a decision about their ESA claim.
- How long they would have to wait for the WCA to take place.

Other drivers of dissatisfaction were the cost of the telephone call to the Contact Centre<sup>32</sup>, especially when calling from a mobile phone, and difficulty in answering some of the questions that the adviser asked them, such as remembering the address of their GP, or detailed questions about the dates of an illness.

Turning now to self-completed ESA applications, claimants either usually obtained an ESA application form from a Jobcentre Plus office and filled it in themselves, or they received help from a Jobcentre Plus adviser at the Jobcentre Plus office itself. Again, satisfaction was high for the following key reasons: polite and helpful Jobcentre Plus advisers and a feeling of reassurance because claimants felt that they were able to ask the Jobcentre Plus adviser questions as they went through the process of completing the application form.

The main driver of dissatisfaction with the face-to-face ESA application process was the same as for the Contact Centre – Jobcentre Plus advisers not being able to answer questions about eligibility for ESA, the amount likely to be payable and the timescales involved.

### **10.3.3 Claimant views about ESA forms**

There were a number of different forms involved in making a claim for ESA, including the ESA1 claim form, ESA50 form and the WFHRA report (see the glossary for further information about these forms). Claimants were asked about their experiences and views of these forms.

The forms most commonly encountered by claimants were the ESA1 claim form and the ESA50 forms. This is because claimants make the initial application for ESA using the ESA1 form (either during a face-to-face or telephone application).

Claimants' views of the ESA1 claim form were generally very positive. This was primarily because it had been pre-populated during the call to the Contact Centre. Overall, they found it easy to check and appreciated the inclusion of a pre-paid envelope for posting the form back to Jobcentre Plus.

Some claimants who had claimed JSA before noted that the form was similar to the JSA claim form; this was seen positively because they felt it was easier to fill in, or check, because they were familiar with the format.

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<sup>32</sup> Calls to the 0800 claims line have been free from most mobile networks since 18 January 2010. At the time of the research these calls were chargeable.



There were, however, some criticisms of the ESA1 claim form, primarily from those claimants who had completed it themselves. They felt that the form was very long; some of the language was considered to be complicated and the sentences used were also very long. In addition, older claimants (aged 50+), those with reading difficulties such as dyslexia, those with more complicated health issues and those who spoke English as a second language experienced similar problems when checking the form through.

### **10.3.4 Claimant understanding of the WFHRA**

Claimants were confused about the purpose of the WFHRA form and interview. Claimants generally did not understand how it related to the WCA process and this caused a degree of confusion. The WFHRA is a meeting between the customer and the health-care professional which provides the opportunity to look at the health-related barriers that the customer faces in preparing for work and identifies ways in which these barriers could be overcome. The health-care professional completes a report on the basis of the interview. Sometimes it was completed as part of a separate appointment to the WCA, but on some occasions it was done on the same day. Claimants who had to attend separate appointments for these two assessments were usually frustrated. Reasons for this included the distance travelled, the time taken, the cost of travel and complications arising from health conditions.

### **10.3.5 Work Capability Assessment**

The WCA occurs around 1-14 weeks into an ESA claim. The purpose of the WCA is to assess how illness or disability affects the customer's ability to work and is carried out by an independent health-care professional and can be paper-based or include a face-to-face assessment. All cases are looked at by an approved health-care professional at the outset. Where a health-care professional identifies an individual with the most severe limitations, they will contact the GP or other relevant professional for further evidence. Advice can then be provided to place such individuals directly into the Support Group without asking them to attend a face-to-face assessment.

In those cases where individuals are required to attend a face-to-face assessment this should take place by week 14 of the claim. Those who are severely or terminally ill (with less than six months to live) will not need to undertake a face-to-face assessment.

The WCA has two different parts:

- Part 1 determines whether the customer has a 'limited capability for work' and therefore eligible for ESA.
- Part 2 determines whether the customer has a 'limited capability for work-related activity' and is used to decide whether eligible claimants should be placed in the Support Group or the Work-Related Activity Group.

It is important to note that this research was not intended to evaluate the WCA but rather to explore customer views about satisfaction with the experience as a whole and the processes surrounding the WCA.

### **10.3.6 Claimants' views about the WCA processes**

This section considers customer reactions to the face-to-face examinations. It does not consider those who may be placed in the Support Group without having a face-to-face examination. Experiences amongst those interviewed of the WCA process were very positive, the primary reason being the positive and friendly manner of the health-care professionals which made claimants feel valued and put them at ease.

Key processes of the WCA were also noted as drivers of satisfaction, including: details of appointments and results times being made clear; short waiting times for the assessment; short waiting times at the assessment venue; and travel costs being reimbursed.

In addition, where Jobcentre Plus advisers could provide information about the location of the WCA assessment and an overview of how it would be undertaken prior to the WCA appointment, customer satisfaction was further enhanced. Where the WCA appointment letter specified the length of the assessment, claimants also found this reassuring and a further driver of satisfaction. This all demonstrates the importance of providing claimants with relevant information.

Not all experiences of the WCA process were positive however. Where dissatisfaction arose, the primary reasons were where: appointments were cancelled or postponed; appointments ran significantly late, either because previous appointments were over-running or were double-booked; the assessors were considered to be unpleasant or acted in an inappropriate way, e.g. rude or unfriendly.

These negative experiences tended to be exacerbated where the customer had travelled a long way to get to the WCA appointment.

One aspect of the WCA that gave particular cause for concern for some claimants was the nature of the questioning. Many of the questions in the WCA were said to be focused on physical abilities. Claimants making a claim for ESA on mental health grounds found this particularly dissatisfying, because they felt that such questioning was not really relevant to their situation, and that as a result they felt that the nature of their condition was not really being appreciated or understood by the assessors.

### 10.3.7 Receiving a decision following the WCA

Once claimants have been assessed through the WCA, the report of the medical assessment is sent to a decision maker at Jobcentre Plus. Based on this information, and all other available evidence including that provided by the customer or their treating physician, the decision maker makes a decision as to whether a customer is eligible for ESA and if so, whether they will be assigned to the Support Group or the Work-Related Activity Group.

According to recent DWP published data, there have been 102,500 WCA assessments from September 2009 to November 2009. Of these assessments: 68 per cent have been deemed Fit for Work<sup>33</sup> and therefore not eligible for ESA; nine per cent have been assessed as Support Group; and 23 per cent have been assessed as Work-Related Activity Group.

This piece of qualitative research enabled an examination of satisfaction amongst three sets of claimants, each of which will be considered in turn:

- Claimants who were assessed as fit for work and therefore not entitled to ESA.
- Claimants who were claiming ESA but awaiting assessment. These claimants were placed on an assessment rate for weeks 1-13 while they waited for the results of their WCA.
- Claimants who were entitled to ESA and had been allocated to either the Support Group or the Work-Related Activity Group following a face-to-face assessment.

### 10.3.8 Claimants who had been assessed as fit for work

Overall, claimants who had been assessed as fit for work and were not entitled to ESA were dissatisfied. This was primarily because they were disappointed with the decision and usually considered that the wrong decision had been made.

Feelings of dissatisfaction were exacerbated where: claimants had not been told when to expect a decision; a decision date had been provided but the decision had arrived late; there had been a lack of explanation for the decision.

Feelings of dissatisfaction were only improved where follow-up support had been provided by Jobcentre Plus staff. Claimants had sometimes been in contact with a Jobcentre Plus adviser after they had received their decision. Speaking to a sympathetic adviser generally helped dissipate some of their negative feelings, partly because they found the support reassuring and partly because advisers could provide information about the appeals process. As one informant stated:

*'Things haven't worked out the way I wanted them to work out...but the people who I have spoken to have been nice.'*

(Fit for Work, 25-49)

<sup>33</sup> [http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/esa\\_wca/esa\\_wca\\_19012010.pdf](http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/esa_wca/esa_wca_19012010.pdf)

### **10.3.9 Claimants who were claiming ESA but awaiting assessment**

Overall, this group of claimants were dissatisfied. The key reason for their dissatisfaction was not being told when to expect a decision, or a decision taking longer than they had expected to come through.

Again, a sympathetic discussion with a Jobcentre Plus adviser generally helped to reduce dissatisfaction, although the ESA claimants said advisers could not generally provide any concrete information about either the decision or when it would be made available.

### **10.3.10 Claimants who were entitled to ESA**

Perhaps unsurprisingly claimants who were entitled to ESA were generally very satisfied with the claim process and the outcome. They also expressed satisfaction with the decision letter that they had received, considering it to be very clear.

Nevertheless, there was some expression of dissatisfaction with the length of time that they had waited for a WCA/initial application decision. This was especially true in cases where the waiting time was much longer than they had been told to expect by the member(s) of staff that they had discussed the matter with. This was usually the person who they spoke to when they made their initial application on the telephone.

### **10.3.11 Allocation to the Work-Related Activity Group and Support Group**

When a decision maker decides that a customer is eligible for ESA, they also allocate them to one of two groups (Support Group or Work-Related Activity Group).

Claimants who were entitled to ESA were notified by letter the group to which they had been assigned. Around the same time, claimants who were placed in the Work-Related Activity Group were allocated to a personal adviser. Advisers meet with claimants on a regular basis, and the nature of the meetings depends on which group the customer is in.

### **10.3.12 Work-Related Activity Group**

If it is determined that a customer has a limited capability for work, they will be allocated to the Work-Related Activity Group. This group is for those who can take steps to prepare to get into work. As part of this group, claimants have to adhere to conditions in order to continue receiving the benefit in full. This involves attending a series of WFIs. These interviews will normally take place each month and focus on finding work. As part of the interview an action plan is drawn up and activities that the customer could undertake to help them move towards work are discussed. WFIs are arranged differently depending on whether they occur in a provider-led or Jobcentre Plus-led district. Jobcentre Plus conduct

the first WFI, and in some provider-led Pathways districts Jobcentre Plus advisers conduct the first WFI at the provider's site as a means of encouraging attendance at subsequent WFIs. After this, in Jobcentre Plus-led Pathways districts the WFI will be with Jobcentre Plus and in provider-led Pathways districts the WFI will be with the provider. In addition to the above parts, claimants who are assigned to the Work-Related Activity Group will undergo a WFHRA.

Overall there were high levels of satisfaction amongst claimants in the Work Related Activity Group. Claimants were positive about their experiences of the processes involved, primarily because of the friendly and polite manner of advisers and the interview sessions that were described as very proactive. This included advisers keeping in regular contact with claimants by telephone and email and the advisers regularly informing claimants about suitable job opportunities. Advisers who made the effort to stay in touch with claimants made a very good impression, even when there was no 'news' (suitable job opportunities, training opportunities). As one customer said:

*'They do try to help me as best they can. I'll get a phone call to say when my appointment is as well as a letter and they'll also ring me on the day to confirm that I am going.'*

*(Work-Related Activity Group, 16-24)*

Secondary drivers of satisfaction were: the introductory telephone call from their adviser, as this made them feel reassured and valued; an unhurried meeting with the advisers, which was often in contrast to their previous JSA experiences; and travel expenses to WFIs were reimbursed.

However, there were some aspects of the Work-Related Activity Group that claimants were dissatisfied with. The key reason was a lack of customer understanding as to why they had been allocated to the Work-Related Activity Group, especially where they were of the opinion that the Support Group would have been more appropriate.

Other aspects of the Work-Related Activity Group that some claimants were dissatisfied with were as follows:

- Claimants who believed themselves to be experiencing severe health conditions were often dissatisfied because they thought that their conditions warranted their allocation to the Support Group.
- Appointments with Jobcentre Plus advisers being cancelled or postponed at the last minute, especially where claimants had travelled long distances to the Jobcentre Plus office or provider site.
- Feelings of being pressured into work, especially when they did not want to work in that particular area or they felt that their particular health condition made them unsuited for such a role. In some of these instances, claimants felt that they should have been assigned to the Support Group.

### 10.3.13 Support group

ESA claimants with severe functional limitation are placed in the Support Group – they do not have to undertake work-related activity and receive the highest rate of benefit. However claimants in this group can volunteer for work-related activities, and can request WFIs.

Claimants in the Support Group were generally very positive about the outcome of the ESA process and in the main they felt that they had been allocated to the correct group.

The key elements of satisfaction amongst this group of claimants were being assigned to the group which they felt was most appropriate for them, and the support provided by Jobcentre Plus advisers (including a friendly manner and the readiness of the adviser to offer help and support). Although claimants in this group did not have to attend WFIs, they did attend meetings with an adviser at an earlier stage of the process.

A main reason for dissatisfaction was the experience of a short-notice postponement of an interview session with a Jobcentre Plus adviser. The usual explanation related by staff was that such instances occurred due to late running times and double bookings.

### 10.3.14 Appeals process

Claimants can appeal against a decision on a number of grounds. These include: where ESA has not been awarded; or where claimants consider they have been assigned to the wrong group. At the time of the research, DWP-published statistics were only available for those who applied for ESA in October-December 2008 and had their appeal heard by the Tribunals Service by November 2009. Of this group, 8,800 appeals had been heard, and 62 per cent of DWP decisions have been upheld.<sup>34</sup>

In this study, there were six claimants who had made an appeal against a decision. While there were other claimants in the study who were eligible to appeal, they had not chosen to do so for several reasons:

- The appeals process was perceived to take a long time.
- There was a view that it is easier to claim another benefit, such as JSA, than to appeal.
- There was an (incorrect) concern that by appealing, their current benefit (JSA) might be reduced.
- They believed that the decision would be not overturned.
- An (incorrect) fear that they would not be able to claim benefits during the time they are making their appeal.

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<sup>34</sup> [http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/esa\\_wca/esa\\_wca\\_19012010.pdf](http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/workingage/esa_wca/esa_wca_19012010.pdf)

Claimants normally found out about the appeals process after they had received the decision regarding their ESA claim (usually from the decision letter itself). However, some were told about the appeals process at the WCA appointment. Information about the appeals process was otherwise obtained from Jobcentre Plus staff.

Claimants who had made an appeal had very mixed feelings about the process. In general, making an appeal was generally a negative experience. The key reasons for this were:

- a lack of information about how to make an appeal;
- a perceived lack of support in making an appeal;
- confusion caused by conflicting advice about making an appeal;
- the number, length and perceived complexity of the forms that need to be completed in order to make an appeal; and
- poor advice on making an appeal. Some claimants said that they had been advised by Jobcentre Plus advisers to appeal against the decision, yet with hindsight they considered this to be poor advice because they had subsequently found out from another adviser that their appeal was unlikely to be successful.

As one person said:

*'They told me to appeal it...But I've just got a letter through now saying that I should have made a new claim, rather than appeal.'*

(Fit for Work, 16-24)

However, despite the overall negative experience with the appeals process, claimants also mentioned some aspects that reduced their dissatisfaction, which included Jobcentre Plus staff providing help and support to claimants when completing the appeals application form, as well as explaining how long the appeals process can take. For example, one customer described how a member of staff was very proactive in helping to explain the appeals form and filling it in (although recruited as a member of the Support Group, this customer appealed their allocation to the Work-Related Activity Group and eventually ended up in the Support Group):

*'He [member of staff] said turn up with your paperwork...he just photocopied it all, he went through the appeal form with me and he just wrote down my answers.'*

(Support Group, 25-49)

### 10.3.15 Comparison of experiences of applying for ESA compared to other benefits

Twenty claimants in the sample profile had claimed IB, IS or JSA in the past. As part of the interview these claimants were asked about how their experiences of applying for and claiming these other benefits compared with their recent experiences of making a claim for ESA.

Claimants who had experienced applying for other benefits in the past were generally more satisfied with their experiences of applying for and claiming ESA, especially those who were entitled to ESA. The reasons were as follows:

- 'ESA' advisers were seen as taking much more time during the WFIs and the meetings that took place once they had been assigned to the Work-Related Activity Group. This had the effect of making the customer feel valued.
- Advisers were also seen as being more willing to provide information and advice during ESA WFIs and this was in particular contrast to customer experiences of advisers encountered while claiming IS and JSA. The information and advice that was particularly appreciated by claimants included:
  - providing information about training available for claimants who are looking to develop skills;
  - advice about what to do in case of bankruptcy, e.g. how to apply for a crisis loan;
  - information about how to appeal if the customer does not agree with a decision about their ESA status; and
  - providing relevant contact details, e.g. Business Link (where a customer wanted advice on how to go back into self employment).

In addition, it was appreciated by claimants with health conditions that there were not as many meetings required during the ESA process compared with when they claimed JSA, particularly the absence of the Fortnightly Job Reviews. This view was not restricted to those who were entitled to ESA.

There was also the view that ESA advisers were much more sympathetic to the fact that claimants may have a health condition that made it difficult to work. With a few exceptions they also felt much less pressured to take work that they felt was not right for them.



## 10.4 Conclusion

Levels of satisfaction with the ESA application process tended to depend on the situation of claimants. Those who were entitled to ESA tended to be much more satisfied with the claim process; those who were still waiting for a decision or had been assessed as not being entitled to ESA tended to be much more negative. Throughout, there were similarities with the results of the quantitative Customer Satisfaction Survey 2009, as this study found that '*Timely response*' and '*Treatment*' were key drivers of satisfaction for telephone and face-to-face services.

Regardless of the situation of claimants, the friendly manner of the service was felt to be the most important driver of satisfaction. A positive attitude was appreciated from all staff that claimants came into contact with, from the initial staff in the Contact Centre that assisted with telephone application claims, all the way through to personal advisers allocated at the later stages. Face-to-face contact particularly added to satisfaction, creating a sense of reassurance because it made claimants feel that their questions could be more easily answered.

As a service feature, '*Right treatment*' was also important for those who were still waiting for a decision or were not entitled to claim benefit. Though these claimants tended to be dissatisfied, their experience was often improved by staff engaging with them in the right way. For example: by explaining the claim decision; consoling claimants who were upset or stressed; and explaining the appeals process. Right treatment is especially important in cases where the customer thought that the wrong decision had been made about their ESA status.

Delays were seen as key elements of dissatisfaction for claimants regardless of their situation, although there were differing expectations as to how long certain processes would take. Examples of this included: waiting times to get through on the telephone and waiting times related to WCA appointments. Those who were waiting to receive a decision and those who had been assessed as not being eligible for ESA tended to have additional reasons for dissatisfaction: a lack of explanation as to why the decision was made, and not being told when a decision was to be expected.

Where claimants had applied for other benefits in the past, such as JSA, these claimants considered their experience of the ESA application process to be more positive. This was because the advisers seemed much more knowledgeable, were more willing to impart information and advice, and spent more time with them.

# 11 Implications and conclusions

This chapter draws out some key messages from the 2009 Customer Satisfaction Research. While this may indicate priorities for improvement in Jobcentre Plus services, it does not include policy recommendations.

## 11.1 Overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus

The majority of customers (75 per cent) were satisfied with the service they received from Jobcentre Plus, and were positive towards specific aspects of service from different channels. It is possible to break this overall picture down a little further, to identify three groups of customers (in terms of their perceptions of Jobcentre Plus):

- One in three customers (33 per cent) were *very* satisfied, and generally did not see any need for improvement.
- One in eight (12 per cent) were dissatisfied. These same customers were also often dissatisfied with specific aspects of service and were more likely to say they had felt like complaining.
- The remainder of customers were *fairly* satisfied or neutral, often feeling that services were in line with expectations.

Increasing the overall level of satisfaction in the future will depend on dealing with the sources of dissatisfaction in the second group, while raising service standards above the expectations of the third group.

The qualitative follow-up research suggests that customers who expressed dissatisfaction with Jobcentre Plus services were generally dissatisfied with only one aspect of the service they had received and were very positive about other aspects of service delivery.

## 11.2 Variations in satisfaction

The survey indicated a general pattern, whereby Income Support (IS) customers were most satisfied, and Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) customers least satisfied. While this overall comparison is useful, it is important to recognise the very different benefit regimes concerned, and the resulting levels of contact with Jobcentre Plus. JSA customers have much more frequent contact with Jobcentre Plus, often related to the greater conditionality of JSA compared with other benefits (the most common face-to-face contact being the Fortnightly Job Review). By contrast, many Incapacity Benefit (IB) customers had very little contact with Jobcentre Plus over the previous 12 months.

IB customers in the qualitative research tended to be critical about the service provided by the Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs). Whilst delays in making appointments was a key issue, there were some concerns about the level of knowledge that some DEAs had about health conditions and how these might affect a person in the working environment.

There were differences within the samples of JSA and IS customers:

- Amongst JSA customers, 16–24-year-olds were more positive, while those from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds were much less positive than other customers, a clear indication that the economic downturn is putting additional pressure on Jobcentre Plus to maintain satisfaction levels amongst customers (although the proportion of JSA customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds cannot be compared with previous surveys). It is not clear from the survey to what extent the lower satisfaction amongst these customers stems from their expectations or the ability of Jobcentre Plus to provide a tailored service that meets their needs.
- The qualitative research suggested that amongst JSA customers, those from a professional, managerial or technical employment background have a high level of expectation about the Jobcentre Plus service. Delays in getting through to the Contact Centre, a lack of clarity around the information they need to supply in making a claim for benefit, a perception that the level of job search support available is poor, a lack of jobs relevant to their skills and background and the lack of advanced training courses available only serves to increase their level of dissatisfaction with the service provided. Jobcentre Plus staff recognise that in terms of the availability of suitable jobs and advanced-level training, the service is unlikely to meet this customer group's needs. However, there is a firm belief that as the recession recedes this customer group will rapidly reduce and that Jobcentre Plus services should not be re-focused on this customer group for the long term.
- The qualitative research also indicated that JSA customers who had been made recently redundant but had either never been out of work before or had claimed benefit many years ago needed a considerable amount of reassurance about the benefit system and Jobcentre Plus services. Whilst they were generally positive about their experiences with Jobcentre Plus services they expressed a need for more information about how the benefit claim and job search processes works as well as requiring support in the form of CV training and basic job search techniques.

- Amongst IS customers, female customers tended to be more positive than males, and customers with a limiting long-standing illness or disability tended to be less positive. Although not directly examined in the survey, this appears to draw a distinction between IS customers claiming on the grounds of disability rather than as a lone parent, the latter being more positive.

Findings were generally consistent within the sample of IB customers.

Satisfaction was also higher amongst Asian customers whose first language is not English. It would be useful to examine this issue in further research to identify the reason for this higher level of satisfaction in more detail. Similarly, satisfaction was considerably higher amongst current than former (recent) claimants, and it would be useful to understand the reasons for this.

### 11.3 Key drivers of satisfaction

At an overall level, '*Ease of getting in contact with Jobcentre Plus*' (*Ease of access*) had the greatest impact on overall satisfaction. However, for the two contact channels considered (face-to-face and telephone contact), the key aspect of service was '*Providing information relevant to needs and circumstances*' (*Treatment*). The importance of providing information relevant to needs and circumstances can also be seen in analysis of overall satisfaction.

Satisfaction with office-based meetings was greater where the meeting was to talk about jobs or finding work and lower for Fortnightly Job Reviews (FJR). It may not be surprising that FJR were less able to reflect personal needs and circumstances than other types of meeting (given the length and coverage of these meetings), and indeed this may be part of the reason why JSA customers were less satisfied than other customers overall. Similarly, when asked about specific aspects of service, JSA customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds were particularly critical of the relevance to their own needs and circumstances. Indeed, the qualitative research indicated some lack of understanding as to the purpose of FJR, and where these were seen as 'box ticking' exercises and did not provide any job search help and support, dissatisfaction was more likely to be expressed.

At the same time, it may not be surprising that satisfaction was higher amongst IS customers, particularly female customers: previous research has shown positive views amongst lone parents towards the tailored support and individual service given by personal advisers.<sup>35</sup>

Overall, the survey confirms that indicators 1-4 of Departmental Strategic Objective 7 (DSO7) (*Ease of access, Treatment, Timely response and Right outcome*) are aspects of service that are considered important by customers, and the findings

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<sup>35</sup> Thomas, A. (2007). *Lone Parent Work Focused Interviews: Synthesis of findings*. DWP Research Report No. 443.

are therefore in line with previous research<sup>36</sup>. In addition, the survey shows that Jobcentre Plus is generally performing well in these areas, while indicating specific areas for improvement, both in terms of specific aspects of service (*'Making information relevant to needs and circumstances'*, and *'Convenience of making contact'*) and types of customers who are less satisfied (male IS customers and those with a limiting long-term illness or disability, and JSA customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds).

## 11.4 Staff and customer ideas for improvement

A summary of the key findings from the quantitative survey which were also explored in the qualitative follow-up research can be found in Table 11.1. Ideas for improvement, as suggested by customers and staff for consideration by Jobcentre Plus, are presented below.

**Table 11.1 Key findings and ideas for improvement**

<b>Key findings</b> <i>(Quantitative survey)</i>	<b>Customer and staff ideas for improvement</b> <i>(Qualitative follow-up research)</i>
<p><b>Overall customer satisfaction</b></p> <p>Three in four (75 per cent) customers were satisfied with services provided by Jobcentre Plus. Overall, IS customers were most satisfied (82 per cent satisfied) and JSA customers were least satisfied (68 per cent satisfied, 19 per cent dissatisfied).</p> <p>Amongst JSA customers specifically, those in professional, managerial or technical occupations were less satisfied with Jobcentre Plus services overall (57 per cent) and were more likely to be dissatisfied (27 per cent) than JSA customers from other occupational backgrounds.</p> <p>Although 84 per cent of customers rated Jobcentre Plus at least as well as they expected, 13 per cent said they were worse than expected. One in three (32 per cent) customers said that Jobcentre Plus does not need to make any improvements to services, however, 46 per cent felt that <i>some</i> or <i>slight</i> improvements were needed. Fifteen per cent said that <i>much</i> or <i>huge</i> improvements were needed.</p>	<p>Where customers were dissatisfied this tended to be due to one or two incidents in a specific aspect of service delivery. In part this may be due to the pressure on the organisation from the very rapid increase in unemployment and in part to staff training. Jobcentre Plus has already addressed the issue of staff resources and should maintain regular staff training.</p> <p>Jobcentre Plus should recognise that customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds have higher expectations. Their needs should be addressed by improving staff awareness and understanding, providing more detailed information about the benefit claim process and associated timescales, and manage their expectations regarding the jobs and services available.</p> <p>Overall, customers were very satisfied with the service provided by Jobcentre Plus. However, isolated incidents, such as experiencing a poor staff attitude, benefits not being paid on time, or being given incorrect information, had a very negative effect on customer views. Jobcentre Plus needs to ensure it provides a consistent quality of service, even at peak times during the day or year.</p>
	Continued

<sup>36</sup> The 2008 Customer Satisfaction Key Drivers research defined and base-lined Indicators 1 – 4 of DSO7. These findings were published alongside the 2009 findings and can be accessed at: [http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/dsopsa/DSO7\\_REPORT.pdf](http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd1/dsopsa/DSO7_REPORT.pdf)

Table 11.1 Continued

<b>Key findings</b> (Quantitative survey)	<b>Customer and staff ideas for improvement</b> (Qualitative follow-up research)
	Jobcentre Plus should ensure that customers understand the benefit claim process. For JSA, IB and IS customers, this includes informing customers of the forms they need to complete, the different types of interview they will attend, their content and purpose, and overall timescales. For ESA claimants, this should also include informing them of the role of the WFHRA and the WFHRA report.
<p><b>Satisfaction with contact</b></p> <p>Overall, 56 per cent of customers whose most recent contact was an office-based face-to-face meeting were <i>very satisfied</i> with the service they received. Satisfaction was greater where the meeting was to talk about jobs or finding work and lower for Fortnightly Job Reviews.</p> <p>Half (50 per cent) of customers whose most recent contact with Jobcentre Plus was by telephone were <i>very satisfied</i> with the service they received. Satisfaction was lower when the reason for contact was to discuss an existing claim or to report non-receipt of payment.</p> <p>While 45 per cent of customers who had received a response from Jobcentre Plus to written contact were <i>very satisfied</i>, this is lower than for other contact channels.</p>	<p>Dissatisfaction tended to occur either where a customer had to wait for their appointment (particularly ESA claimants waiting for a WFHRA) or where the meeting did not provide them with the information, advice or job search that they had hoped for. It is important that customers are not kept waiting and that advisers are explicit about what services Jobcentre Plus can deliver. The purpose of the FJR should be fully explained so that customers do not have unrealistic expectations of its purpose.</p> <p>It is important to manage customer expectations regarding how long written responses take to produce. This is especially true where the issue concerns multiple benefits.</p>
<p><b>Jobcentre Plus offices</b></p> <p>Customers who had visited a Jobcentre Plus office for any purpose in the previous 12 months were mostly satisfied with the conditions at their local office (82 per cent). Eight per cent of customers were dissatisfied with the conditions.</p> <p>When rating various aspects of office conditions, customers were most positive in relation to the safety of the environment (58 per cent <i>very good</i>), while views were slightly less positive in relation to privacy (41 per cent <i>very good</i>, but 14 per cent <i>very or fairly poor</i>).</p> <p>Although eight in ten (80 per cent) customers found their local office convenient to get to, 13 per cent found it inconvenient.</p>	<p>Customers were mostly concerned about waiting in cramped and busy offices, and in some cases poor signage. Jobcentre Plus needs to address how customers are processed at busy times and review their signage arrangements.</p> <p>Jobpoints and the Customer Access Phones were particularly noted for their lack of privacy, which should be reviewed. Staff should be aware that customers are concerned about their privacy and should make it clear to customers that interviews can be conducted in private rooms.</p> <p>Where customers find it difficult to travel to a specific office, staff should actively see if a different office is more appropriate for the customer.</p>

Continued

Table 11.1 Continued

<b>Key findings</b> <i>(Quantitative survey)</i>	<b>Customer and staff ideas for improvement</b> <i>(Qualitative follow-up research)</i>
<p><b>Treatment</b></p> <p>Ratings of specific aspects of service were also generally positive, with at least half of respondents rating each aspect <i>very good</i>. For both most recent face-to-face and telephone contact, the highest ratings were given for being treated '<i>in a friendly and polite way</i>', while ratings were least positive in relation to 'providing information that was relevant to needs and circumstances'.</p>	<p>Customers were very satisfied generally with the way they were treated. However, instances where staff were considered to be rude, curt or unhelpful resulted in dissatisfaction. Jobcentre Plus should emphasise the importance of consistency of service.</p>
<p><b>Timely response</b></p> <p>Where appointments were made for a face-to-face meeting or telephone call with Jobcentre Plus, most said that this happened at the appointed time. However, 11 per cent said the face-to-face meeting time did not occur on time and 17 per cent said a telephone appointment did not occur on time.</p> <p>While the majority of customers who made a telephone call to Jobcentre Plus felt that the amount of time they waited for the call to be answered was reasonable, 26 per cent indicated it was not.</p> <p>A third of customers whose most recent contact was a call to Jobcentre Plus indicated that the telephone rang for more than 30 seconds (32 per cent) or that they were not able to get through to Jobcentre Plus the first time they called (32 per cent).</p> <p>Although most customers who had written to Jobcentre Plus felt the time they waited to receive a reply was reasonable, 18 per cent indicated the time taken to receive a reply was not reasonable.</p>	<p>Unexpectedly having to wait for meetings was a cause of dissatisfaction. Jobcentre Plus should manage customer expectations and ensure consistency of service.</p> <p>Lengthy waiting times for calls to the Contact Centre were experienced during the height of the recession. Jobcentre Plus responded by increasing staff resources; this had been recognised by customers who had subsequently called the Contact Centre and experienced much shorter waiting times.</p> <p>Customer expectations should be managed, especially where the issue concerns more than one benefit.</p>
<p><b>Right outcome</b></p> <p>One in ten (10 per cent) customers who attended a face-to-face meeting at a Jobcentre Plus office said there were issues that had not been addressed.</p> <p>A slightly higher proportion of customers who had made contact by telephone said there were issues that had not been addressed (15 per cent).</p> <p>Among customer who had written contact with Jobcentre Plus, nine per cent of those who had received a reply said that it had not dealt fully with their query.</p>	<p>Issues that had not been fully addressed were: being given insufficient information; insufficient job search advice or being referred to inappropriate jobs; or a lack of explanation for benefits being stopped. ESA claimants felt that there were insufficient reasons given for not being entitled to ESA and being assessed as fit for work. Jobcentre Plus should ensure that customers' needs are met by asking them whether there is anything that has not been addressed. Reasons for benefit decisions should be fully explained in simple and clear language.</p>

Continued

Table 11.1 Continued

<b>Key findings</b> <i>(Quantitative survey)</i>	<b>Customer and staff ideas for improvement</b> <i>(Qualitative follow-up research)</i>
<p><b>Problems experienced by customers</b></p> <p>Seven per cent of customers had encountered problems with their benefit payment in the previous 12 months, immediately after notifying a change in personal details or circumstances.</p> <p>Ten per cent said they had received incorrect or contradictory information from Jobcentre Plus.</p>	<p>Jobcentre Plus staff should ensure that customers are made fully aware of the benefit claim process and should encourage customers to take responsibility for reporting changes in circumstances. Where changes in circumstances are notified, Jobcentre Plus should log this information and follow-up with the customer where additional information is required.</p> <p>Jobcentre Plus should ensure that staff are fully trained so that correct information is provided.</p>
<p><b>Complaints</b></p> <p>One in six customers (17 per cent) said they had felt like complaining in the previous 12 months, and three per cent had actually made a complaint.</p> <p>Customers who had complained were likely to be dissatisfied with the way the complaint was handled (59 per cent dissatisfied).</p> <p>Equal numbers were satisfied and dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint (35 per cent satisfied, 36 per cent dissatisfied).</p>	<p>Customers should be fully informed about how to make a complaint and how long the process takes. This could include better promotion of the 'Our Service Standards' leaflet.</p> <p>Staff should be trained to handle complaints in a neutral, but supportive manner. Customers considered they needed support during an appeals process, with regular updating as to its progress.</p> <p>Customers tend to be less satisfied when the outcome is not the one desired. Jobcentre Plus should manage expectations from the outset and provide a full explanation of the decision.</p>
<p><b>Self-service contact channels</b></p> <p>At least three in four customers were aware of self-service contact channels: Jobpoints (87 per cent), the Jobcentre Plus website (82 per cent) and Customer Access Phones (78 per cent).</p> <p>Customers were more likely to have used a Jobpoint (46 per cent) or the website (45 per cent) than the Customer Access Phones (25 per cent) in the last year.</p> <p>While the majority of customers who had used each of the channels found them at least <i>fairly</i> helpful, two in ten indicated the Jobpoints (22 per cent) or Jobcentre Plus website (18 per cent) were not helpful and one in ten (11 per cent) found that the Customer Access Phones were not helpful.</p>	<p>Awareness of the alternative contact channels should be raised where appropriate.</p> <p>Both the Jobpoints and the website require better local geographical filtering, and job descriptions should be enhanced with more detail. Customers from professional, managerial or technical backgrounds would like to see a greater range of relevant jobs.</p> <p>As the alternative contact channels can become very busy, a booking system is suggested.</p> <p>Jobpoint and Customer Access Phone privacy should be enhanced.</p> <p>The maintenance of Customer Access Phones should be enhanced.</p> <p>Improvements to the navigation and geographical filtering on the Jobcentre Plus website (now on the Direct.gov website) should be undertaken as part of Jobcentre Plus's work to improve its job search facilities.</p>

Continued



**Table 11.1 Continued**

<b>Key findings</b> <i>(Quantitative survey)</i>	<b>Customer and staff ideas for improvement</b> <i>(Qualitative follow-up research)</i>
<p data-bbox="245 472 427 501"><b>Ease of access</b></p> <p data-bbox="245 510 742 640">Three in four (76 per cent) customers said that they found it <i>very</i> or <i>fairly</i> easy to get in contact with Jobcentre Plus, although one in six (16 per cent) found it difficult.</p> <p data-bbox="245 649 742 741">Fifteen per cent of customers said their access to Jobcentre Plus was limited in some way.</p>	<p data-bbox="759 510 1332 703">Jobcentre Plus should ensure that customers are made fully aware of the special arrangements that can be put in place in order to assist customers, especially those with a disability. Jobcentre Plus should not rely on customers spontaneously informing them of any special requirements.</p>

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This report presents the findings of the national 2009 Jobcentre Plus Customer Satisfaction Research, which included:

- a quantitative survey of Income Support, Incapacity Benefit and Jobseeker's Allowance customers;
- qualitative follow-up research with Jobcentre Plus staff and customers; and
- a small-scale qualitative study of satisfaction amongst claimants of Employment and Support Allowance.

The research reports levels of customer satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus services and identifies the key drivers of satisfaction.

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