Response to the user consultation seeking views on the changes to Jobcentre Plus vacancy series: Summary of feedback and next steps
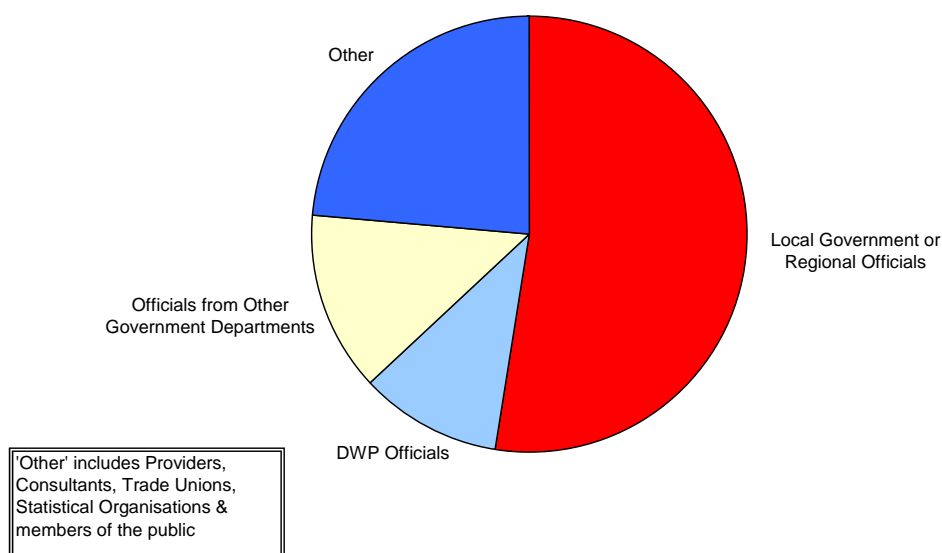
1. Introduction

Between the 14th August 2012 and 14th November 2012, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) requested users views on the changes to the Jobcentre Plus vacancy series. The consultation can be found in the "Focus On" article on page 4 of the DWP Quarterly Statistical Summary 🔴 which also provides a useful summary of the changes and statistical issues.

We would like to thank all those who took the time to respond to this consultation. This document summarises the feedback we received and how we plan to use it.

2. Summary of respondents views

i) Breakdown of respondents by type

Other

Officials from Other
Government Departments

Local Government or
Regional Officials

DWP Officials

'Other' includes Providers,
Consultants, Trade Unions,
Statistical Organisations &
members of the public

Over half of the 38 individual respondents were from Regional or Local Authority Officials. There were also several respondents from DWP Officials and other central Government Departments.

ii) Common areas of concern

Respondents had some significant concerns around the data quality of the new series available through Universal Jobmatch. In particular this centred on the issue of duplication, with many respondents citing a lack of checks on the job vacancies recorded as particularly worrying. It was pointed out that the changes would have an adverse effect for the user and many respondents asked for improved metadata in support of the new reporting tool.

Respondents queried the 'preset' methodology of how geographies would be defined. Lack of data at low level data and Parliamentary Constituency level was a key concern. Many respondents expressed a desire to retain all of the breakdowns currently available on NOMIS for the existing vacancy data, in particular the need for low level geographies such as Lower Super Output Area to produce user-defined geographies by aggregation. It was noted that analysis of bespoke geographies is now more frequently demanded in line with the requirements of the Localism Act and therefore it is useful to be able to produce user-defined

geographies by aggregation. This is also needed in order to monitor different labour markets which may not follow administrative boundaries, to monitor trends within particular project delivery areas and to meet the needs of different organisations such as Local Enterprise Partnerships and Local Authorities.

There were several responses which queried the definitions for Occupation classifications. Many questioned why Standard Occupational (SOC) Codes were only being collected in the background of the Universal Jobmatch system remarking that an alternative method of occupation classification would be very unwelcome to users. An underlying theme from the responses was that SOC 2000 classification – preferably four digit but as a minimum, two digit - should continue to be made available as part of the new data series to allow users to accurately identify labour market trends.

There were similar concerns over the definitions for Industry classifications. Again, respondents stated they would not wish to see an alternative method of classifying industries. Retention of the current two digit SIC 2003 classification was a key requirement for many users although some respondents even remarked an upgrade to two or three digit SIC 2007 would be useful.

Respondents raised concerns about limiting the availability of time-series data to 12 months. Many commented that this would make it difficult to monitor economic and seasonal trends and to make comparisons with the situation before the recession. A popular response was the suggestion of a time series of at least 5 years.

Respondents raised concerns related to the functionality of the new system and its limited ability to produce tabulations, indicating that they preferred NOMIS as a central dissemination tool. Respondents appreciated that the display of daily information from the new service would be useful for jobseekers and those working directly with jobseekers. However, many respondents preferred to have comprehensive data via a regular monthly release to be coordinated with labour market official statistics.

A few users also remarked they were unhappy with the timing of the consultation questioning why this was not done earlier to allow more time for comments and concerns to be addressed prior to the launch of the beta phase of Universal Jobmatch.

iii) Common areas of improvements welcomed

The majority of respondents - particularly those from Regions & Local Authorities - welcomed the new improvements brought about by Universal Jobmatch. This was mainly related to the additional information on the size of the recruiting business, plus additional data on skills and qualifications. However, there was some apprehension that the qualifications data would prove less useful for Scottish areas due to the differing educational qualification systems.

iv) Top 5 list of user requirements for improvements to the Universal Jobmatch MI Tool

- Longer time-series (than 12 months) available
- More detailed levels of standard geographies
- Standard Occupational and Industrial codings (SOC and SIC)
- Improved training/metadata/guidance
- ability to cross-tabulate data queries

3. Next Steps

Thank you to all those who responded to this consultation. All points raised will be considered as part of phased planned improvements to the Universal Jobmatch MI Tool. An update of these will be available in Spring 2013.

If you would like to be kept up to date on news of DWP statistical publications and wish to subscribe to our mailing list, please contact general.statistics@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.