



# DWP Employer Experience Survey 2015-16

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## About the survey

This report presents findings from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Employer Experience Survey 2015/16 conducted on behalf of DWP by IFF Research. The findings are based on 4,200 telephone interviews with employers. The survey was conducted between October 2015 and February 2016 with employers across all sectors and regions of Great Britain (GB).

The survey enables DWP to understand employers' recruitment practices and experiences of the services offered by DWP, and to feed employer views into operational and policy development.

The research follows on from a similar wave of research, the 2013 Employer Engagement and Experience Survey, which was intended to act as a baseline against which the impact of policy changes could be assessed. To this end, key questions used in the 2013 survey were replicated in the 2015/16 survey, and the remit of the 2015/16 survey was broadened to cover a wider range of policy initiatives. Further details are provided in the methodological note that accompanies the report<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> As well as demographic data on the organisations, the survey sought to gather information on the following topics: Workplace structure; Use of DWP recruitment services; Experience of DWP recruitment initiatives; Older workers; Mental health; Access channels and internet usage; Experience of labour market and Universal Credit; Child maintenance; Disadvantaged groups; pensions; Fit for work; Debt recovery; DWP assistance with workforce management. Not all of the 4,200 employers were asked questions in every section. Details are given in the accompanying Methodological Note.

## Key findings

### Access channels and information needs

Businesses contact DWP for a wide variety of reasons. The most common reason for employers to contact DWP in the 12 months prior to being interviewed was for information on pensions (17 per cent of all employers). Other reasons for contacting DWP included advertising jobs on Universal Jobmatch (8 per cent), payroll (6 per cent) and contracts of employment (6 per cent).

Of those employers who had made contact with the Department in the 12 months prior to interview, 39 per cent had made contact about pensions on the most recent occasion and 20 per cent had made contact about advertising jobs on Universal Jobmatch. Small and micro employers (less than ten employees) who had made contact with the Department tended to do so for pension-related issues (42 per cent), on the most recent occasion. Larger employers (250+ employees) were significantly less likely to make contact about pension-related issues (11 per cent) and most commonly made contact about Universal Jobmatch queries (32 per cent).

Of those businesses that had contacted the Department in the previous 12 months, 54 per cent had done so online on the most recent occasion. Twenty-seven per cent had made contact by telephone. Method of contact varies considerably by sector. Businesses from the construction (72 per cent) and manufacturing (67 per cent) sectors were more likely to contact DWP through online channels than businesses

from the non-market services (42 per cent) and primary/utilities (30 per cent) sectors.

However, the preferred method of contact with DWP was via the telephone (36 per cent of all employers, including those who had not made contact in the previous 12 months), followed by online (33 per cent). The main reasons for preferring to contact the Department by telephone include employers preferring a personal interaction as well as it being easier and more convenient. Those employers who had no contact with DWP were less likely to say online would be their preferred method (25 per cent).

### **Satisfaction with service received from DWP**

Levels of satisfaction with how queries were dealt with by DWP were relatively high. Of those businesses who contacted the Department directly (not via gov.uk) the average satisfaction score with how their query was dealt with was 7.7 out of 10 (where 10 = extremely satisfied).

A high proportion of businesses contacting the Department either in person or over the phone agreed that the staff were polite (91 per cent); staff were knowledgeable (87 per cent) and provided them with the right information (82 per cent).

### **Recruitment activity and use of Universal Jobmatch and Jobcentre Plus**

Just over half of businesses (54 per cent) had recruited (or tried to recruit) in the 12 months prior to interview, an increase of four percentage points since the 2013 survey. The proportion of recruiting employers was highest in London (58 per cent – up nine percentage points since 2013) and lowest in the North East (48 per cent).

There has been a slight increase in employers using Universal Jobmatch since the previous survey in 2013 (up four percentage points to

13 per cent of recruiting employers)<sup>2</sup>. However, there has been a drop in the proportion of employers using Jobcentre Plus for recruitment purposes over the same time period (down 11 percentage points to 19 per cent of recruiting employers).

Overall satisfaction levels with Universal Jobmatch and Jobcentre Plus services were very similar, with employers scoring them both just over six out of ten (where ten is extremely satisfied). Around three-quarters of employers who had used Universal Jobmatch in the previous 12 months said that they anticipated using the service again in the future. Sixty per cent of employers who had used Jobcentre Plus for recruiting said they would recommend the service to other businesses.

### **Recruitment of older workers and those with a long-term health condition or disability**

There has been a significant increase in the proportion of employers recruiting older workers (aged 50 or over) since the 2013 survey. Overall, a third (33 per cent) of recruiting employers had taken on someone from this group in the previous 12 months, compared to just over a quarter (27 per cent) in 2013.

The two most common benefits identified by employers of employing older workers were the experience (64 per cent) and reliability that older workers bring (24 per cent). Businesses who have employees aged over 50 in their organisation are twice as likely to say a benefit of having someone approaching or considering retirement is their reliability (27 per cent) compared with businesses without an employee over the age of 50 (13 per cent).

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<sup>2</sup> Universal Jobmatch had only been in operation for seven months at the time of the 2013 survey.

The proportion of recruiting employers taking on someone with a long-term health condition or a self-defined disability has almost doubled since 2013. Fifteen per cent of recruiting employers had taken on someone from this group in the previous 12 months, compared to eight per cent in 2013. Of these, around one in ten employers had received assistance from Jobcentre Plus or DWP in meeting this recruitment need.

### **Awareness of Universal Credit**

More than half (58 per cent) of employers are aware of Universal Credit (UC). Awareness of UC was highest amongst employers in the non-market services sector (66 per cent) and 'business and other services' sector (62 per cent). Businesses in the North West (64 per cent) are more likely to have heard of UC, compared to all other regions, with the exception of London (63 per cent). The high awareness of UC in the North West is perhaps to be expected given the roll-out of the UC programme in this region during 2013-2014.

Of those employers who are aware of UC, a small proportion (11 per cent) felt that the introduction of UC had resulted in any benefits to their organisation. The most common suggested benefits included an 'increase in the number of available job applicants' (22 per cent) and having a 'wider range of suitable candidates' and 'topping up employee wages' (17 per cent respectively).

### **Support for staff with a mental health condition**

Overall, around four in ten organisations (39 per cent) have policies or systems in place to support employees with common mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression. Around a quarter (24 per cent) of employers have policies or systems in place to support employees with psychotic conditions such as schizophrenia and personality disorder.

Eighty-six per cent of large employers (250+ staff) have policies in place to support common mental health conditions compared to thirty-one per cent of micro employers (2-9 staff). Around two-thirds (67 per cent) of large employers have policies or systems to support employees with psychotic conditions compared to around a fifth (19 per cent) of employers.

There are clear sector differences in the propensity to provide support to employees with mental health conditions. Those firms in the non-market sector are most likely to provide support for mental health conditions, with seven in ten providing support for common mental health issues and almost a half for psychotic conditions. Organisations in the primary and utilities sector are least likely to provide support for mental health conditions, with around one in eight (12 per cent) providing support for common mental health issues and around one in 20 (4 per cent) for psychotic conditions.

The most common type of support offered to employees with mental health conditions was time off to attend medical appointments or therapy sessions (91 per cent of employers). Around two-third of businesses offer to change an individual's type of work in order to reduce stress. Around eight in ten employers reported no incidents of employees informing them of a mental health condition in the twelve months prior to being interviewed.

More than half of employers (53 per cent) agreed that people with mental health conditions are as productive as everyone else. More than half of employers (54 per cent) agreed that having a mental health condition does not make a difference when recruiting a new employee.

## **Workplace pensions and automatic enrolment**

Eight out of ten employers said they were aware of automatic enrolment before responding to the survey. Awareness varies with organisation size with micro-employers (2-9 employees) employers being less likely to be aware of automatic enrolment than larger businesses.

Thirty-seven per cent of employers had reached their staging date and had enrolled staff into a qualifying scheme.

Around two-thirds of employers (66 per cent) had sought information on the introduction of automatic enrolment in the 12 months prior to being interviewed, and a similar proportion (69 per cent) had sought information on how to provide a workplace pension.

Forty-two per cent of businesses that had reached a staging date or were close to doing so at the time of interview had obtained paid advice on automatic enrolment. Of these companies who had sought paid advice, the most common source of information was an accountant (29 per cent) followed by their payroll or pension provider (19 per cent).

Micro employers were much more likely to use an accountant as a source of paid advice than large employers (45 per cent compared to 2 per cent). Larger employers were more likely to rely on their payroll or pension provider (38 per cent) as a source of advice.

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The full report of these research findings is published by the Department for Work and Pensions (ISBN 978 1 78425 953 2. Research Report 948. September 2017).

You can download the full report free from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/about/research#research-publications>

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