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National Careers Service: Customer Satisfaction and Progression Annual Report

May 2016 – April 2017 fieldwork

Ipsos MORI

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Executive Summary

Introduction and methodology

The National Careers Service (“the service”) is delivered via a multi-channel approach: face-to-face, telephone, and online, both through its website and via social media. Adults aged 19 or older (or 18 or older, who have been referred by Jobcentre Plus or are in custody) are eligible for face-to-face advice. Young people aged between 13 and 18 may also use the National Careers Service, through its website or digital channels, or through a dedicated young people’s telephone service. Schools and colleges are responsible for the delivery of careers advice (either directly or through their own contracted provision) and the National Careers Service does not deliver face-to-face advice to young people who are still in full-time education. It does promote its online and telephone services via schools, colleges and other training providers, as well as providing labour market information and supporting materials to their careers services. Furthermore, as part of its “inspiration” agenda, the National Careers Service is also actively engaged in building partnerships between schools, colleges and employers.

The services provided by the National Careers Service are contracted to a number of area-based Prime Contractors and a National Contact Centre. From October 2014, the service was re-configured under a new contract and a range of other changes was introduced, the principal one being that area-based contractors moved away from purely delivering face-to-face advice and became responsible for the provision of advice by telephone, as well as diversifying into online and digital methods.

This report presents the findings from three strands of research. The first two, the National Careers Service customer satisfaction and progression surveys, are based on regular monthly surveys undertaken by telephone or online, among customers aged 18-plus (using the face-to-face or telephone service) or aged 16-plus (using the website). It is the sixth year of research on telephone and face-to-face customers (fieldwork years are referred to in this report at Year 6, Year 5, etc.), and the fifth year that research evidence has been collected of customers’ experience of using the National Careers Service website. This fieldwork was undertaken from May 2016 to April 2017 by monthly telephone interviews, a continuous online survey, and a quarterly email survey.

The main aims of this research are to monitor customers’ experiences of using the National Careers Service, under a range of Key Performance Indicators and other measures, and to measure changes in customers’ employment and learning progression, personal development, and career management skills, six months after dealing with the service.

Customer profile

The customer profile of those responding to the face-to-face, telephone, or online services remains largely consistent to previous waves. There are also similarities in which customers are accessing each channel and for what purpose

- Online users are predominantly younger females, and as expected are in work but it is also the preferred channel for those in learning. Therefore, the challenge of being an online source for all customer types that is engaging remains key.
- Face-to-face customers, as with previous waves, are more likely to be unemployed and looking for work.

- Telephone customers, in contrast, are predominantly in work (over half of which were telephone information customers) and more likely to have higher qualifications.

Why do customers contact the National Careers Service?

Over half of customers first heard of this service through Jobcentre Plus centres, emphasising the importance of this information channel. For those using the telephone service internet/google searches are also key points on entry. Jobcentre Plus is also a key source of information for older customers, those with English as a second language and BME customers.

The most common channel way online customers found out about the National Careers Service was from an internet search or google. This was followed by Jobcentre Plus, friends and family or from an advisor.

National Careers Service advisers, and in particular Jobcentre Plus advisers, continue to be an important source of referral for key groups of interests (customers over 50, 18-24 year olds who were Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) customers and disabled customers).

Reasons for contacting the National Careers service were focussed on exploring career options. Fewer contacted the service to find out more about their learning options. Help with CV writing is the most common reason for using the face-to-face service, whilst the telephone information service is often used for wider understanding of the funding available for studying/training. Website use is largely for obtaining information and advice about jobs or careers.

Experiences of using the National Careers Service

Three-quarters of telephone customers had their enquiry handled in one call (75%), similar to last year.

Less than a quarter of face-to-face customers had two or more meetings with the National Careers Service adviser (22%), lower than previous years. Customers aged 50 plus were more likely to have multiple meetings (28%). Two-thirds of customers who had more than one meeting saw the same adviser each time (66%).

Just over half of website visitors got all or most of the information they wanted on their first visit to the website (55%). Similarly, most customers who visited the website multiple times said they got all or most of the information they wanted (60%). Customers aged 50 plus and those with a disability were less likely than average to find all or most of the information they wanted, a similar finding to last year. Customers were much less likely to say they got the information they wanted after the website was redesigned.

The National Careers Service provides three key tools to support its customers across multiple platforms: the Skills Action Plan, the Skills Health Check and the Lifelong Learning Account. The majority of customers found these tools useful. However, online customers were less likely to have found these and other tools and features useful after the website was redesigned.

A quarter of face-to-face and telephone customers reported that they had been followed-up by the National Careers Service since their initial contact (26%). This was more common among customers likely to be in need of further support: those aged 50 plus, those facing redundancy or recently made redundant, and those for whom English is a second language.

Customer satisfaction with the National Careers Service

The overall quality of the service continued to be rated highly by telephone and face-to-face customers, with over nine in ten agreeing that it was good (93%).

In line with this, the vast majority of face-to-face and telephone customers were satisfied with the National Careers Service overall (85%), consistent with previous years. Younger customers who were more satisfied than older customers, and satisfaction levels were also higher than average among telephone information customers and those in learning.

Among telephone and face-to-face customers, satisfaction with individual aspects of the service was also high, especially the professionalism and helpfulness of advisers.

Overall satisfaction with the National Careers Service website has declined, reflecting negative views of the redesigned website. In Year 6 before the redesign, 80% of website customers were satisfied, but this fell to 48% after the redesign.

Reflecting the high levels of customer satisfaction and positive views of service quality, almost nine in ten face-to-face or telephone customers either had already recommended or would recommend the National Careers Service (88%). Three-quarters of online customers said they would recommend the National Careers Service website to friends, family or colleagues (76%). However, this figure fell from 83% before the website was redesigned to 60% afterwards.

Suggestions for improvement from face-to-face and telephone customers focused on more tailored help and follow-up. Online customers felt that improvements could be made to the new website, in terms of the appearance and design, and in providing more detailed information on jobs and careers.

Customer progression six months after their contact with the National Careers Service

Almost all face-to-face and telephone customers (96%) experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months since their call/meeting.

The proportion of customers who achieved any employment progression averaged 54% across the year, in line with Year 5. Face-to-face customers were much more likely to have progressed into new employment (42% compared with 34% of telephone information customers). To a large extent this reflects the differences in their employment status at the time they first had contact with the service.

Learning progression averaged 67% in Year 6, in line with Year 5. It was higher among telephone than among face-to-face customers, related to the reasons why telephone customers contact the National Careers Service in the first place.

Customers were asked if they had achieved one or more of the range of 'softer' outcomes known as 'Personal Added Value'. Overall 92% of face-to-face or telephone customers indicated that they had gained some form of Personal Added Value since their contact with the National Careers Service. As a whole, young people aged 18-24 were consistently more likely than older people to report any personal development outcomes, in particular young people who were NEET.

Nine in ten (87%) face-to-face and telephone customers reported developing career management skills during the six months since their contact with the National Careers Service. This was highest among 18-24 year olds NEETs and 18-24 year olds generally.

Almost all website visitors (90%) who completed the online progression survey had achieved some form of progression three months after their visit. This was most commonly learning progression (71%) although half (49%) had made progress in employment, either getting or improving a job.

1 Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Background

The Education and Skills Funding Agency is responsible for the commissioning, contracting and performance management of the National Careers Service (before April 2012, known as Next Step) which provides information, advice and guidance to help individuals make decisions on learning, training and work. The service offers confidential and impartial advice, provided by qualified careers advisers.

The National Careers Service is delivered via a multi-channel approach: face-to-face, telephone, and online, both through its website and via social media. Adults aged 19 or older (or 18 or older, who have been referred by Jobcentre Plus or are in custody) are eligible for face-to-face advice. Young people aged between 13 and 18 may also use the National Careers Service, through its website or digital channels, or through a dedicated young people's telephone service. Schools and colleges are responsible for the delivery of careers advice (either directly or through their own contracted provision) and the National Careers Service does not deliver face-to-face advice to young people who are still in full-time education. It does promote its online and telephone services via schools, colleges and other training providers, as well as providing labour market information and supporting materials to their careers services. Furthermore, in line with the government's "Inspiration Vision Statement"¹ the National Careers Service is also actively engaged in building partnerships between schools, colleges and employers.

The National Careers Service is delivered by a network of area-based Prime Contractors and one National Contact Centre. To ensure and assure the quality of the National Careers Service all National Careers Service Prime Contractors and subcontractors must achieve and retain the Matrix Standard. This is a government-endorsed, national, independent quality standard for any organisation that provides information and advice as part of its service offer. To achieve and retain accreditation, organisations must undergo a comprehensive assessment and commit to annual reviews that explore how well the organisation is performing in the areas of leadership and management, deployment of resources, service delivery and continuous quality improvement.

From October 2014, the service was re-configured under a new contract which meant that some area-based contractors were replaced, either by new providers or by providers who were already delivering the service in other regions. A range of other changes were introduced from October 2014, the principal ones being the introduction of an outcome-based funding model and the requirement that area-based contractors move away from purely delivering face-to-face advice and diversify into telephone, online and digital methods.

¹ BIS Inspiration Vision Statement: Careers, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-inspiration-vision-statement> [Last accessed 7/1/2016]

1.2 Research aims

An extensive programme of research has been developed to understand customer views of the National Careers Service and to help inform its development and continuous improvement. This involves continuous monthly research to:

- Measure customer satisfaction, with face-to-face and telephone customers interviewed in the month after their session, and website visitors asked about their views of the site at the time they access it (via an overlay survey).
- Assess customer progression, with face-to-face and telephone customers interviewed six months after their last adviser session, and website visitors assessed three months after they completed the online satisfaction survey.

This report is based on fieldwork conducted between May 2016 and April 2017. For face-to-face and telephone customers this means the satisfaction survey covers sessions with an adviser between April 2016 and March 2017. For face-to-face and telephone customers, the progression survey covers the period six months beforehand (i.e. from October 2015 to September 2016).

The research among web visitors covers those accessing the National Careers Service website between April 2016 and March 2017 (for the online satisfaction survey) and between January 2016 and December 2016 (for the progression survey which is conducted three months after they participated in the online satisfaction research).

The overall aims of this research are to:

- Provide full analysis of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the National Careers Service, which incorporate specific measures on customer satisfaction and progression following their contact with an adviser. It should be noted that the progression measures reported here are not designed to provide an impact evaluation of the National Careers Service as they are self-reported outcomes with no counterfactual (i.e. there is no way of knowing whether that impact would have occurred anyway, without the intervention of the National Careers Service).
- Understand customer views of the service at different points in their journey, to provide actionable feedback to help the National Careers Service to identify areas for improvement and to inform its service development.
- Identify and understand any demographic differences in how customers experience and rate the service, in particular among priority groups such as young people who are NEET.
- Measure variations in performance among the area-based contractors delivering the service. The research also allows a comparison of customers receiving the face-to-face service at Jobcentre Plus locations with those receiving it elsewhere.
- Monitor changes over time by comparing the annual results for this year with those in the preceding five years.

1.3 Methodology

This report presents the results from Year 6 of the customer satisfaction and progression study, covering fieldwork between May 2016 and April 2017.

1.3.1 Telephone surveys

For face-to-face and telephone customers this involved a total of 8,821 interviews for the satisfaction survey and 6,413 interviews for the progression survey. The fieldwork pattern is shown in the Table 1.1 which also shows comparative sample sizes and fieldwork dates for the previous years of the survey.

In order to clearly demarcate satisfaction results under the new National Careers Service contracts which started in October 2014, it was agreed to adjust the quarterly coverage of the satisfaction survey so that it aligned with the start of the new contract. This means that the October 2014 fieldwork (with customers who first had contact with the service in September 2014, the last month under the old contracts) is treated as a stand-alone month, with adjusted quarters then running from November 2014 fieldwork (with customers whose first contact with the service was in October 2014, under the new contract).

Table 1.1: Achieved interviews by quarter (face-to-face and telephone customers)

		Satisfaction survey		Progression survey	
	Fieldwork month	Month of adviser session	No. of interviews	Month of adviser session	No. of interviews
Quarter 1	Sept 11	Aug 11	2,217	Mar 2011	1,601
Quarter 2	Oct-Dec 11	Sept-Nov 11	2,195	Apr-Jun 11	1,599
Quarter 3	Jan-Mar 12	Dec 11-Feb 12	2,198	Jul-Sept 11	1,638
Year 1			6,610		4,398
Quarter 1	Apr-Jun 12	March-May 12	2,211	Oct-Dec 11	1,599
Quarter 2	Jul-Sept 12	Jun-Aug 12	2,199	Jan-Mar 12	1,599
Quarter 3	Oct-Dec 12	Sept-Nov 12	2,199	Apr-Jun 12	1,599
Quarter 4	Jan-Mar 13	Dec 12-Feb 13	2,199	Jul-Sept 12	1,599
Year 2			8,808		6,395

		Satisfaction survey			Progression survey	
Quarter 1	Apr-Jun 13	Mar-May 13	2,199	Oct-Dec 12	1,598	
Quarter 2	Jul-Sept 13	Jun-Aug 13	2,199	Jan-Mar 13	1,599	
Quarter 3	Oct-Dec 13	Sep-Nov 13	2,198	Apr-Jun 13	1,598	
Quarter 4	Jan-Mar 14	Dec 13-Feb 14	2,199	Jul-Sept 13	1,597	
Year 3			8,795		6,392	
Quarter 1	Apr-Jun 14	Mar-May 14	2,100	Oct-Dec 13	1,603	
Quarter 2	Jul-Sept 14	Jun-Aug 14	2,210	Jan-Mar 14	1,602	
	Oct 14	Sept 14	747			
Quarter 3	Nov 14-Jan 15 (sat) Oct-Dec 14 (prog)	Oct-Dec 14	2,222	Apr-Jun 14	1,064	
Quarter 4	Feb-Apr 15 (sat) Jan-Mar 15 (prog)	Jan-Mar 15	2,197	Jul-Sept 14	797	
Year 4			9,576		5,066	
Quarter 1	May – Jul 2015 (sat ²) April – Jun 2015 (prog ³)	Apr-Jun 15	2,200	Oct-Dec 14	1,599	
Quarter 2	Aug – Oct 2015 (sat) Jul – Sept 2015 (prog)	Jul-Sept 15	2,210	Jan-Mar 15	1,601	
Quarter 3	Nov 15-Jan 16 (sat) Oct-Dec 15 (prog)	Oct-Dec 15	2,200	Apr-Jun 15	1,600	
Quarter 4	Feb-Apr 16 (sat) Jan-Mar 16 (prog)	Jan-Mar 16	2,202	Jul-Sept 15	1,611	
Year 5			8,812		6,411	
Quarter 1	May – Jul 2016 (sat) April – Jun 2016 (prog)	Apr-Jun 16	2,201	Oct-Dec 15	1,600	

² Satisfaction³ Progression

		Satisfaction survey		Progression survey	
Quarter 2	Aug – Oct 2016 (sat)	Jul-Sept 16	2,207	Jan-Mar 16	1,605
	Jul – Sept 2016 (prog)				
Quarter 3	Nov 16-Jan 17 (sat)	Oct-Dec 16	2,209	Apr-Jun 16	1,606
	Oct-Dec 16 (prog)				
Quarter 4	Feb-Apr 17 (sat)	Jan-Mar 17	2,204	Jul-Sept 16	1,602
	Jan-Mar 17 (prog)				
Year 6			8,821		6,413

All survey interviews among face-to-face or telephone customers were conducted by telephone using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). Targets were set each month based on the type of service they received, namely:

- Face-to-face National Careers Service customers;
- Telephone customers who received the information service from the National Contact Centre – referred to as ‘telephone information’ customers; and
- Telephone customers who received the advice service (typically for customers who have more complex needs or require skills assessment) directly from area-based contractors alongside their face-to-face service provision – these are referred to as ‘telephone advice’ customers.

The survey identifies whether customers have accessed the service via different means, while continuing to assign them to a ‘primary’ channel based on their first substantive interaction with the service. As in previous years, the targets on service channel involved oversampling telephone customers in order to ensure sufficient numbers for robust analysis each quarter.

In addition to these overall targets, quotas for each month of fieldwork were set on age, gender and employment status at the time of the call (within service type), in proportion to the profile of those having contact with advisers in the corresponding month.

At the analysis stage, the data was weighted by the substantive type of service received to match the customer profile. As the same number of interviews was conducted each month regardless of changes in the volume of customers, the annual data was also weighted to the profile of customer contacts by quarter.

1.4 Online surveys

In total 7,259 website users took part in the website satisfaction survey. Use of cookies means that someone accessing the site from the same computer will only be asked to participate once. As in previous years, no weighting has been applied to the web satisfaction survey because the demographic profile of the population of website users is unknown.

The progression survey for website users is entirely longitudinal and conducted online, with respondents sent an email with a link to the online questionnaire. The email is only sent to individuals (rather than employers or careers advisers) who accessed the site seeking information on their own behalf, were willing to be re-contacted, and supplied a valid email address for this purpose. Data for the online progression survey is weighted to reflect the age, gender and employment profile of people who participated in the online satisfaction survey. In the 12 months covered by this year's survey period, 519 website customers took part in the progression survey.

The website underwent a redesign during the third quarter of Year 6. The previous version of the site was replaced on 23rd October 2016. The survey relaunched on 29th November 2016. As well as changes to the look and feel of the site, some tools and features were removed or changed. Reporting on the website satisfaction survey has therefore been separated into 'before' and 'after' the redesign where appropriate.

1.5 The structure of this report

The rest of this report presents the results of Year 6 of the National Careers Service customer satisfaction and progression surveys, as follows:

- Chapter 2 details the profile of customers accessing the National Careers Service;
- Chapter 3 explores customers' reasons for contacting the service, how they found out about it, and what they wanted from it;
- Chapter 4 examines the customer journey in detail, looking at their experiences of using specific aspects of the service across all of its main channels;
- Chapter 5 assesses customer satisfaction with the service, and willingness to recommend it to other people, including relevant National Careers Service Key Performance Indicators (KPIs);
- Chapter 6 explores customer progression six months on from their interaction with the service, including relevant National Careers Service Key Performance Indicators (KPIs);
- Chapter 7 looks at face-to-face customers' experiences across the different contracting regions, identifying any variations in performance;

Wherever differences are discussed between respondent sub-groups, or over time, they are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. This means that we can be 95% confident (i.e. 19 times out of 20) that the difference is a 'real' difference rather than one resulting from having spoken to a sample of customers.

2 Customer Profile

The customer profile of those responding to the face-to-face, telephone, or online services remains largely consistent to previous waves. There are also similarities in which customers are accessing each channel and for what purpose.

- **Online users are predominantly younger females, and as expected are in work but it is also the preferred channel for those in learning. Therefore, the challenge of being an online source for all customer types that is engaging remains key.**
- **Face-to-face customers, as with previous waves, are more likely to be older, unemployed and looking for work, have lower level qualifications.**
- **Telephone customers, in contrast, are predominantly in work (over half of which were telephone information customers) and have higher qualifications.**

2.1 Customer characteristics

This chapter examines the profile of customers accessing the service in Year 6, from May 2016 to April 2017, and those accessing the National Careers Service website from April 2016 to March 2017. It looks at demographic characteristics such as gender, age and ethnicity; work status; and highest qualification at the time of accessing the service.

Table 2.1 shows the age, gender and ethnicity profiles of National Careers Service face-to-face, telephone and website customers surveyed during Year 6. The figures presented for face-to-face and telephone customers are based on weighted data whilst website and online figures are based on unweighted data. Overall the customer base varies by service channel, but still has a similar profile to that found in previous years.

Table 2.1: Demographic profile of National Careers Service customers⁴

Base:	Channel used as main way of accessing the service				
	Face-to-face (7,608) %	Telephone all (1,213) %	Telephone advice (319) %	Telephone information (894) %	Online (7,259) %
Gender					
Male	58	44	49	44	35
Female	42	56	51	56	61
Age group					
19 or younger ⁵	6	9	6	9	23
20-24	14	22	17	23	9
25-49	50	57	63	56	43
50 or older	30	12	14	11	22
Ethnicity					
White British	70	54	58	54	62
White other	7	9	9	9	10
Black/Black British	9	17	11	18	7
Asian/Asian British	9	13	13	13	9
Mixed/other	5	6	9	6	3
Prefer not to say	*	1	1	1	4
English not first language	16	17	20	17	16
Long term illness/disability	27	17	17	17	16

⁴ Asterisks denote values greater than zero but less than 0.5

⁵ The age ranges are 18-19 for face-to-face and telephone customers, 16-19 for website customers.

2.1.1 Age and gender

As with the previous wave men were more likely to be face-to-face customers (58%), whilst the majority of telephone customers were women (56%). Compared to Year 5, fewer men are using the telephone service (44% Year 6 vs 48% Year 5), with far fewer being advice telephone customers (49% Year 6 vs 54% Year 5).

Most face-to-face (50%) and telephone (57%) customers were aged 25-49, which is line with previous years. Those aged 20-24 (22%) show a preference for telephone services, with slightly more in this age group using the telephone information service than the telephone advice service. Those aged 50 and above were more likely to opt for face-to-face services (30%) than telephone (12%). Within telephone services this age group used both the telephone advice service and the telephone information service.

Web users who completed the survey were predominantly women (61%) and aged 25-49 (43%). Compared to last year, fewer customers in our sample who were older or younger and completed the survey mentioned they had used the online service. The National Careers Service does not collect any management information on the demographic profile of its website users so it is not possible to ascertain how representative the survey profile is (and the data is therefore unweighted). However, up to now the demographic characteristics have largely been consistent year on year

2.1.2 Ethnicity and English as a first language

Seven in ten face-to-face customers were white British (70%) whilst the profile of telephone users was more ethnically diverse. This is in line with previous waves. A significantly higher proportion of BME customers called the telephone service (45%) compared to face-to-face (30%).

Most website users who participated in the survey were White British (62%), which is in line with the previous wave (61%). The proportion of Black/Black British using the online service (7%) is in line with those using the face-to-face service (9%), though higher proportions reported using the telephone advice (11%) and information service (18%).

A similar proportion of face-to-face customers noted that English was not their first language, compared to the last wave (16% vs 14%). The number of telephone information customers whose first language was not English was in line with the last wave at one in six (17%). However, compared to the last wave the number of online customers for whom English was not the first language was lower at 16%, whereas last wave one in five (20%) online customers had English not as their first language.

2.1.3 Disability

Just over a quarter of face-to-face customers had a disability or long-term limiting health condition (27%), up four percentage points from last wave. This is compared to 17% of those who used a telephone service and 16% who used the online service. There was no difference in how many customers used either the advice or information telephone service.

As with previous waves, the difference among face-to-face customers partly reflects the relatively high proportion of these customers who have been referred for advice by Jobcentre Plus. This will include people who are claiming the work-related component of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). For example, among disabled customers who replied to our survey, 65% first heard about the National Careers Service from Jobcentre Plus compared with 54% overall.

They were slightly fewer disabled customers since Year 5 who said their main reason for contacting the National Careers Service was to avoid their benefits being cut (7% compared with 3% overall).

2.2 Employment status

Table 2.2 provides an overview of customers' employment status at the time of their first adviser session or visit to the website.

Table 2.2: Economic activity of National Careers Service customers at the time of the call, meeting or website visit⁶

Base:	Channel used as main way of accessing the service				
	Face-to-face (7608) %	Telephone (1,213) %	Telephone advice (319) %	Telephone information (894) %	Online (7,259) %
In work	15	49	38	51	44
Full-time employee	8	29	21	30	29
Part-time employee	6	16	12	16	11
Self-employed	1	5	5	5	4
In learning	4	17	6	19	22
Full-time learning	2	15	4	16	9
Part-time learning	2	3	2	3	2
All not working	11	8	10	8	7
Unemployed and looking for work	68	23	45	20	22
Unable to work due to health	7	5	5	5	3
Looking after home/family	3	3	4	3	3
Retired	*	*	*	*	1
Other	1	2	2	2	6

⁶ Asterisks denote values greater than zero but less than 0.5

Like previous years, face-to-face customers have a very different employment profile to other channels, with the majority being unemployed and looking for work (68%) compared with just over one in ten using online and one in five National Contact Centre customers (20%).

The same customer groups are more likely to be unemployed as in previous years:

- those over 50+ (65%);
- men (64% vs 50% among women);
- customers with no or Level 1 qualifications (65%, compared with 51% among those with degree-level qualifications); and
- White British (61% vs 53% Non-white British).

Looking at the telephone services, of those who were unemployed but looking for work, one in five report using the telephone information service, which is back in line with previous waves and suggests last year's (14%) drop was inconsistent with previous trends. Fewer of those in learning have used a telephone service (17%) than last year (18%).

Of those in work, there is an increase in online use of services since last wave (44% vs 39%). But the overall profile of website users by employment status has remained relatively stable, and continues to be the most diverse of all the channels. This has implications for National Careers Service in terms of the design and content of its website, which consequently has to appeal to a very broad range of customers.

There are no differences in use of service between those not working due to health or because they are looking after their home/family.

For those in work, the preference for telephone services remain consistent with previous waves with just over a half using the telephone information service and almost four in ten using the telephone advice service.

For those in learning, online is the preferred channel (22%). Among face-to-face and telephone customers who were not working at the time of their call/meeting, 21% last worked within a month before their contact with the National Careers Service and 48% had worked within the past six months. Three in ten (29%) had not worked for more than a year.

In addition to this, around one in ten customers (9%) had never had paid work, which is at the same proportion to those who responded to the survey in previous waves. This includes just over a third of 18-19 year olds using the face-to-face or telephone service (35%) and 19% of 20-24 year olds. Altogether, one quarter (23%) of 18-24-year-old customers who were Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) had never had a paid job which is consistent with wave five levels.

As with previous waves these figures illustrate the continuing challenge faced by the National Careers Service in terms of its diverse customer base. Customers who have never worked or who have been out of work for several years will have very different advice and information needs to those who are in work and seeking to progress or change career, or to those who have recently been made redundant and may be looking to re-train or get a new job.

2.3 Highest qualification

Table 2.3: Highest qualification and NEET status among National Careers Service customers⁷

Base:	Channel used as main way of accessing the service				
	Face-to-face (7,608)	Telephone (1,213)	Telephone advice (319)	Telephone information (894)	Online (7,259)
	%	%	%	%	%
Highest qualification					
Level 4 or higher (e.g. degree or equivalent)	24	48	34	50	39
Level 3 (e.g. A-levels)	17	20	22	20	16
Level 2 (5 GCSEs A*-C)	20	14	18	14	17
Level 1/entry level	13	6	6	5	12
No qualifications	1	*	*	*	7
Level unclear	8	4	5	4	9
Below Level 2	30	13	10	12	18
Level 2 or higher	61	82	75	83	73
Key groups					
18-24 NEET	15	9	14	8	4
Recently made redundant/facing redundancy	20	7	16	6	n/a

As before, a key client group for the National Careers Service is those with low qualifications, defined as people whose highest qualification is below Level 2 (i.e. equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C). The majority of customers already had qualifications at or above this level, regardless of which channel they used to access the service, as shown in Table 2.3. This is consistent with previous waves. Those with a Level 2 or above qualification were more likely to make use of the telephone service (83% vs 12% below level 2 qualification) and the website (73% vs 18% below level 2 qualification).

One in six face-to-face customers (15%) were aged 18-24 and Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) at the time of their meeting, consistent with the previous wave. In this wave, as with previous ones, young people who

⁷ Asterisks denote values greater than zero but less than 0.5

were NEET favoured face-to-face or telephone advice service. Being NEET was more common among customers who were male (16%, vs 11% of females) and white British (15%, vs 12% of non-white British).

Again similar to Year 5, one in five (20%) face-to-face customers were facing redundancy or had recently been made redundant, and this was more common among those aged 50 plus and males.

3 How and why do customers contact the National Careers Service?

Over half of customers first heard of this service through Jobcentre Plus, emphasising the importance of this information channel. For those using the telephone service internet/google searches are also key points on entry for using the service.

Online customers found out about the National Careers Service through Jobcentre Plus, friends and family and from an advisor. But, the main channel was, as expected, from an internet search or google.

National Careers Service advisers, and in particular Jobcentre Plus advisers, continue to be an important source of referral for key groups of interests (customers over 50, 18-24 NEET customers, and disabled customers).

Reasons for contacting the National Careers service were focussed on exploring career options. Fewer contacted the service to find out more about their learning options than seen in previous years. Help with CV writing is the most common reason for using the face-to-face service, whilst the telephone information service is often used for wider understanding of the funding available for studying/training. Website use is largely for obtaining information and advice about jobs or careers.

This chapter explores how customers first found out about the National Careers Service and the drivers behind contact, including what sort of information or advice they were seeking prior to using the service. It is important to look at these factors because customers' reasons for contacting the service and whether their expectations of it were met will influence subsequent views on satisfaction. It is also important for the National Careers Service to be aware of how motivators for accessing the service may vary amongst different customer groups so that they can tailor provision more closely to customer need.

3.1 How did customers first find out about the National Careers Service?

Overall, a similar proportion of customers accessed the service through Jobcentre Plus (54%) as in Year 5. The proportion of face-to-face customers being referred to the service through Jobcentre Plus remains similar (67% in Year 5 and 66% in Year 6). However, the proportion of telephone advice customers being referred this way has decreased significantly from 49% to 27%. That said Jobcentre Plus is still the dominant means in which customers

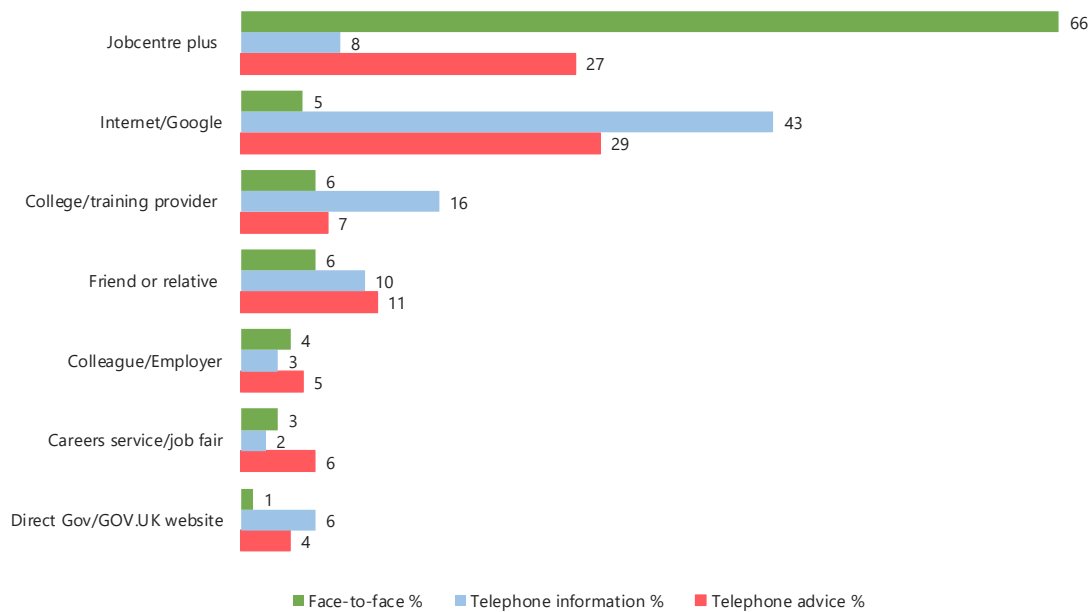
first hear about the service. The prominence of Jobcentre Plus reflects the longstanding referral and co-location arrangements between Jobcentre plus and National Careers Service (formerly Next Step) as part of a continued commitment for a more integrated approach to the provision of employment and skills advice to unemployed people.

3.1.1 Telephone and Face-to-Face Customers

As last year customers who called the National Contact Centre (NCC) were much more likely to have heard about the service through the internet (43%) than area-based telephone advice (29%) or face-to-face (5%) customers. These customers were also more likely to have found the service through their college or training provider. Telephone advice customers more commonly heard about the service through Jobcentre Plus (27%) compared to National Contact Centre customers (8%), however, both have fallen since Year 5.

Despite more telephone customers being in work than face-to-face customers, similar proportions of telephone and face-to-face customers first heard about the service through their employer. Channel-related differences also existed in less common ways of hearing about the service. Whilst six per cent of National Contact Centre customers first heard about the service through the direct.gov website, only one per cent of face-to-face customers reported finding out about the service in this way.

Figure 3.1: Where customers first found out about the National Careers Service



Base: All customers (8,821)

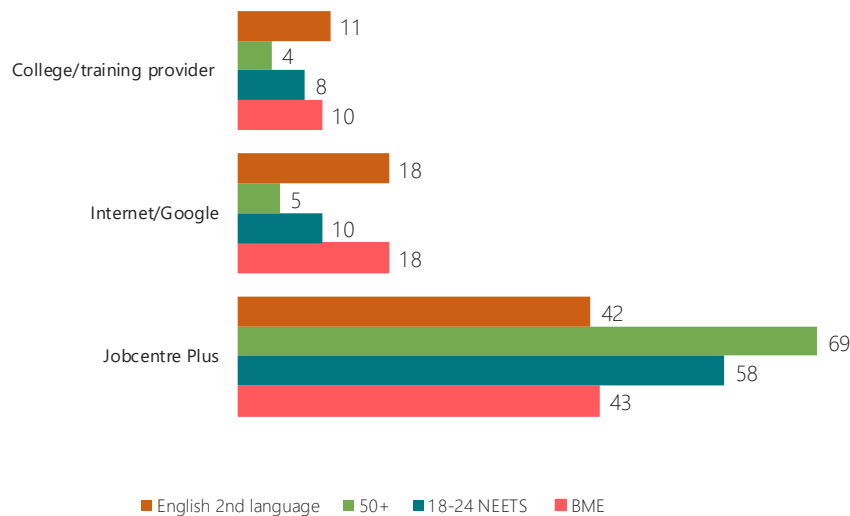
Data reflects that whilst Jobcentre Plus was the main way in which customers heard about the service, men were significantly more likely than women to have heard about the service for the first time through this channel (58% vs 49%), reflecting that they were more likely to be unemployed. This is the same pattern as seen last year. While the most common way for women to find out about the National Careers Service was also via Jobcentre Plus (49%),

they were more likely than men to have heard about it via alternative means such as the internet/Google (15% vs 11%) or through their college or training provider, though this was less common for both groups (10% vs 6%).

Older customers aged 50 plus were more likely to have first heard about the National Careers Service via Jobcentre Plus (69%), especially compared to younger customers aged 18-24 (41%). Other groups more likely than average to have first found out about the service via Jobcentre Plus were 18-24 year olds NEETs (58% vs 60% last wave) and customers with a disability (65% vs 63% last wave) – both groups were more likely to be unemployed and seeking advice about finding a job.

Finding out about the National Careers Service through means other than Jobcentre Plus was more common among Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) customers and those who spoke English as a second language. Figure 3.2 shows that these groups were more likely than average to have first heard about the service through the internet, or through their college/training provider. These channels of referral are also prominent amongst 18-25 NEET customers.

Figure 3.2: Where customers first found out about the National Careers Service, by key group



Base: All customers (8,821)

Since Year 5 the National Careers Service seems to have achieved some in steps in promoting its service through colleges and training providers, as figures across key groups have increased. There is however still opportunity to bolster this. Among those who heard about the service while in learning, 26% found out through their college or training provider, compared to 23% in Year 5. One in five customers in learning had heard about the National Careers Service through Jobcentre Plus, reflecting an increase of 5% from last wave. Yet, a quarter of customers in

learning first heard about the service through the internet, reflecting that customers in learning or training are likely to be younger.

3.1.2 Website customers

The most common ways for website users to have first heard about the National Careers Service were through an internet search (39%), via Jobcentre Plus (15%), from a friend or relative (10%) or from a National Careers Service adviser (10%).

Those who were unemployed and looking for work were far more likely to have been signposted to the service by Jobcentre Plus (40%) or a National Careers Service adviser (16%). In line with this, customers aged 50 plus (35%) and those with a disability (36%) (who were more likely to be unemployed) were also more likely to have been signposted to the website by Jobcentre Plus or the National Careers Service adviser.

Table 3.1: Website visitor referral

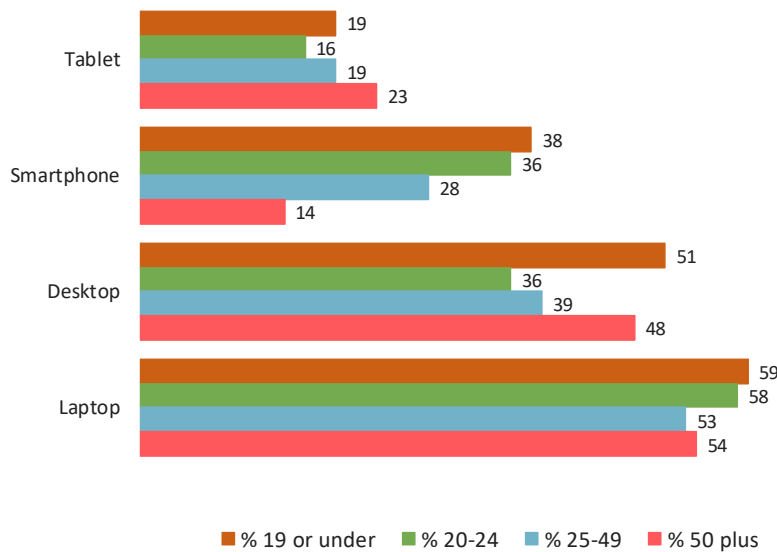
	Overall	18-24 NEET (273)	Disabled (1,133)	50 Plus (1,630)
Jobcentre Plus adviser	15%	28%	28%	25%
National Careers Service adviser	10%	13%	13%	12%

Base: All online satisfaction survey customers (7,259)

The proportion of younger customers aged under-19 (15% vs 16% last wave) or 20-24 (15% vs 12% last wave) who found the website through recommendation from a friend or relative remains at similar levels as previous waves, showing how important word of mouth is to take-up of the service among young people.

Whilst the majority of customers were at home when they accessed the website (69%), this has fallen since Year 5. There continues to be an increase in access from work (17% overall, rising from 11% last wave). For those who are employed this rises to 36% accessing the website from work. Overall 14% access the site from school, college or university (rising to 39% of those still currently in learning and 41% of young people aged under-19), and 5% from a library or other public place. This was more common among 18-24 year-old NEETs, where one in ten customers accessed from a library or other public place and for those who were unemployed (9%), both are consistent with last wave and reflect the fact these customers are less likely to have internet access at home.

This wave sees consistent use of Laptops (55%) and desktops (44%) as favoured means of accessing the website. Smartphone use continues to rise (28%, up from 21% in Year 5, 15% in Year 4 and 10% in Year 3) and tablet use remains the same as Year 5 (20%, up from 17% in Year 4 and 12% in Year 3). As in previous years, young people were most likely to use laptops (59% of those 19 or under, 58% among 20-24 year olds compared with 53% among those aged 25-49 and 54% aged 50 and above), or smartphones (31% of 16-19s, and 26% of those aged 20-24, compared with just nine per cent of those aged 50 plus). Of those aged 16-19 around half (51%) accessed the site using a desktop, still reflecting the likelihood of those aged 16-19 making use of computers in school or college.

Figure 3.3: How customers accessed the National Careers Service website

Base: All online satisfaction survey customers (7,259)

3.2 To what extent have customers used the National Careers service before?

All customers were asked whether they had previously had any contact with the National Careers Service or another organisation providing advice about learning, skills or careers. As the service offers an integrated and multi-channel approach, it remains important to monitor cross-referrals between face-to-face, telephone and web services.

Around one in ten telephone (6%) and face-to-face customers (12%) had previously met with a National Careers Service adviser face-to-face. One quarter (24%) of telephone customers had already spoken to an advisor via the telephone helpline. Those who were unemployed (12%), disabled (12%) or had English as a second language (15%) were more likely to have spoken to an advisor face-to-face beforehand.

Almost one-third (27%) of customers had accessed the website before they used the service. As seen in previous waves, the proportion of telephone customers who used the website before accessing the service was significantly higher than face-to-face customers (52% vs 20%). Those that were working (38%) or in learning (47%) were also more likely to have used the website prior to their contact with the service, as were those that had qualifications of Level 4 or above (36%). Again, those with English as a second language were more likely to have visited the website (34%) before using the service, as were those who identified as being from an ethnic minority.

Around three in ten (28%) of customers called the helpline to get help in writing or developing their CV. These customers were more likely to be unemployed during the time of calling.

Four in ten web users were 'new' service users who were visiting the site for the first time, this is down slightly from Year 5. Compared to last year, there was no difference in those with qualifications of Level 2 or below as being

more likely to be visiting the website for the first time, compared to those with higher qualifications (56%). Only one in five web customers had previous dealings with the National Careers Service via face-to-face (20%) or phone (9%), which is in line with Year 5 but the proportion of those who had previously used the phone service has fallen.

Consistent with previous years, unemployed web customers were significantly more likely to have had prior contact with the National Careers Service than those in employment, particularly through a face-to-face meeting (36%) rather than speaking to an adviser on the telephone helpline (10%), as were those aged 50 plus (26% face-to-face), and NEET young people aged 18-24 (18% face-to-face) but this has fallen since last year (24%).

Customers with qualifications of Level 4 (13%) or above and disabled customers (13%) were more likely than average to have had previous contact through the National Careers Service telephone helpline.

3.3 Reasons for contacting the National Careers Service

3.3.1 Telephone and face-to-face customers

General service needs

Before asking customers about their detailed reasons for contacting the National Careers Service, they were asked if they mainly wanted to discuss career options, learning options, or both. More wanted to explore career options (75% - similar to Year 5) than learning options (61% - down three percentage points from Year 5). The youngest customers were the most likely to be seeking advice on careers options, with 82% of 18-19 year olds and 81% of NEET customers aged 18-24 contacting the service for this reason. Those that were recently made redundant or facing redundancy were more likely than average to want to explore career option (79% - similar to Year 5).

Wanting advice on learning or training options was more common among BME groups (70%) and customers who had English as a second language (72%). As seen in previous years, customers already in work and those in learning were also more likely than average to be seeking advice on learning or training options (74% and 71% respectively), as were those aged 20-24 and 25-49 (65% and 66% respectively).

NEET young people were less likely than average to be considering learning or training options (58% of NEET customers were exploring these options compared to 61% overall). However, this is consistent with Year 5.

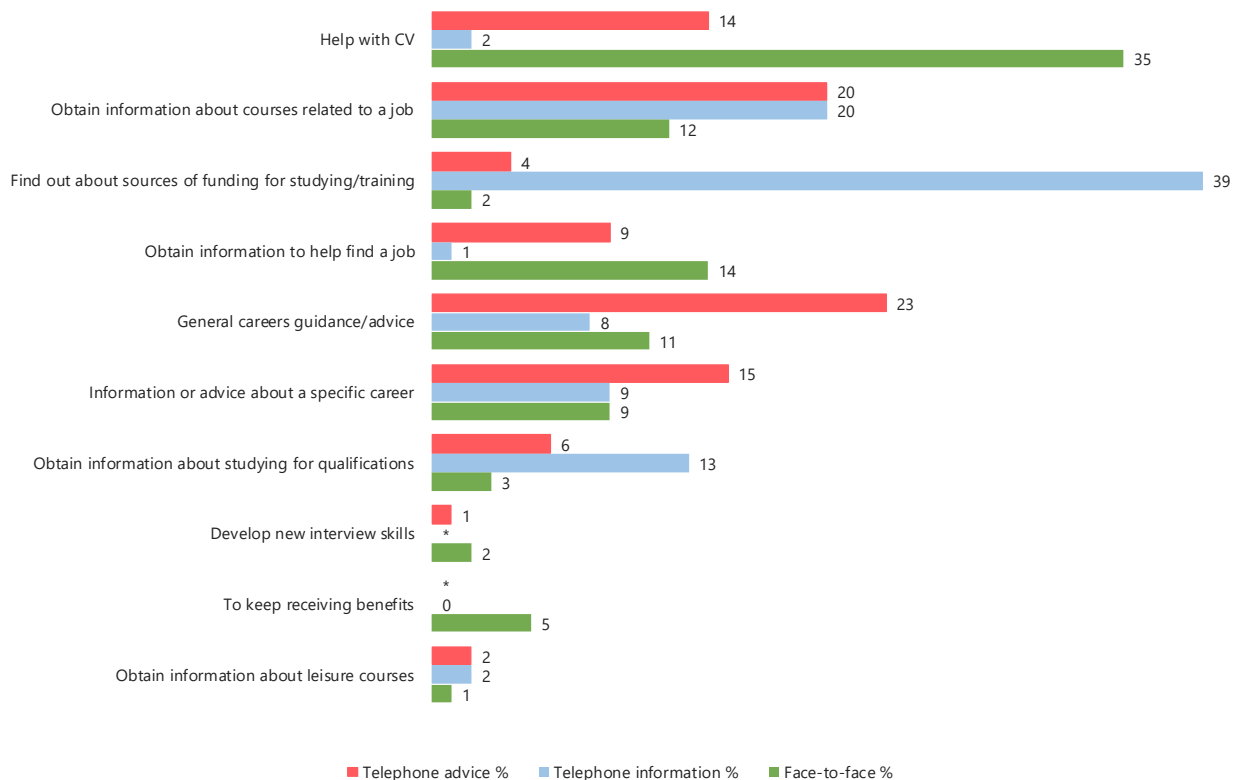
By channel, telephone advice customers were more likely than telephone information customers to be looking to explore career options (87% compared to 80%). In contrast to Year 5, in this wave telephone customers (81%) were more likely to be looking to explore career options than face-to-face (73%) customers. This reflects both a rise in the proportion of telephone customers who said this and a fall in that of face-to-face customers.

Telephone information customers were also most likely to be planning on doing some type of learning or training (88% compared to 69% of telephone advice and 54% of face-to-face customers). The proportion of face-to-face customers accessing the service in order to plan or think about doing a course or some learning is similar to the last wave (56% of face-to-face customers in Year 5 and 54% in Year 6.)

Specific service needs

Customers were asked for their main reason for contacting the National Careers Service. The most common reason was to get help in writing or developing a CV via face-to-face service and finding out about sources of funding for studying/training via telephone.

Figure 3.4: Reasons for contacting the National Careers Service⁸



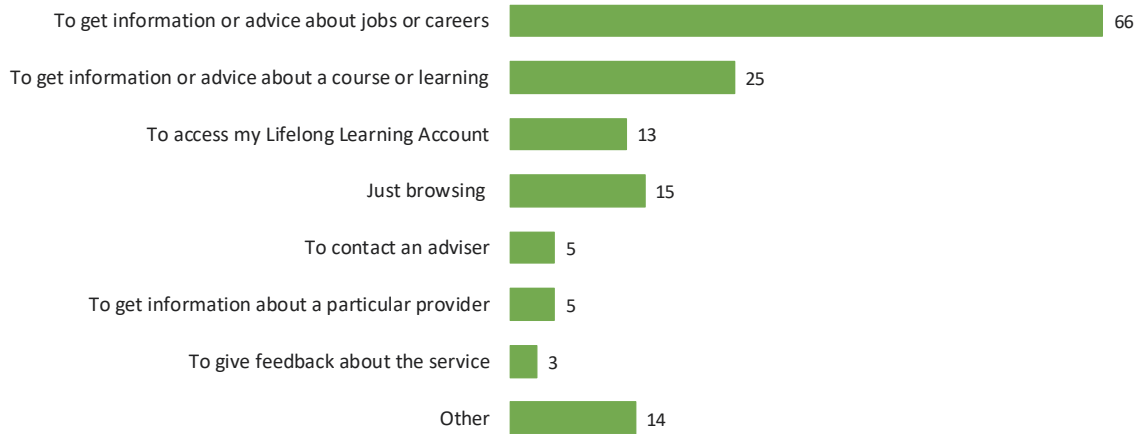
Base: All customers (8,821)

We continue to see a wide variety of reasons for using the service covering careers/jobs and learning, and ranging from information on courses relating to a specific job to developing interview skills.

3.3.2 Website users

Figure 3.3 shows that the majority of website visitors were looking for information or advice on jobs or careers (66%) similar to Year 5 (65%) and a rise from 62% in Year 4 and 53% in Year 3. This increases to 76% (up four percentage points on Year 5) of website visitors who were currently in-learning.

⁸ Asterisks denote values greater than zero but less than 0.5

Figure 3.5: Reasons for customers visiting the National Careers Service website

Base: All online satisfaction survey customers (7,259)

Women remain more likely than men to have used the website to access information or advice on jobs and careers (68% vs 63% of men) whilst men were more likely to be using the website to access their Lifelong Learning Account (16% vs 11% of women). These differences between men and women show a consistent trend as seen in previous waves.

Customers using the website for jobs or careers advice or information on learning were asked what sort of information they wanted (Tables 3.2 and 3.3).

Table 3.2: Specific job-related information sought by website visitors

	Year 6 (4,764)	Year 5 (5,793)	Year 4 (6,129)	Year 3 (5,606)	Year 2 (3,649)
Information about different careers	65%	61%	61%	61%	61%
Applying for jobs	34%	37%	36%	37%	37%
CVs	27%	30%	34%	37%	39%
Information about progressing in a career	32%	30%	29%	28%	29%
Information about the jobs market	27%	25%	25%	26%	27%
Interview skills	19%	19%	21%	21%	21%
How to get back into work	17%	17%	20%	26%	26%
Voluntary work	11%	11%	11%	11%	11%
Issues around redundancy	3%	3%	4%	5%	5%
Other	7%	8%	7%	5%	5%

Base: All those looking for information/advice about jobs and careers on the National Careers Service website

The most common form of employment related information that customers were looking for was information about different careers (65%), followed by more practical support in applying for jobs (34%) and with CVs (27%). Those in the early stages of career-planning, aged 19 and under, were likely to be looking for information about different careers (71%), as were those in learning (73%) who may have still been in school or college. There were also other notable differences:

- Men were more likely to be looking for information on actively getting back into the job market, either through help with applying for jobs (42% vs 30% of women), information on the jobs market (32% vs 25% of women) or how to get back into work (21% vs 15% of women). Women were more likely than men to be looking for information about different careers (68% vs 57% of men).
- Customers aged 50 plus were more likely to be seeking help with how to get back into work (30%).

As with last year there was a small minority of those aged over 50 seeking help with issues around redundancy (5%).

Table 3.3: Specific course-related information sought by website visitors

	Year 6 (1,791)	Year 5 (2,345)	Year 4 (2,406)	Year 3 (2,459)	Year 2 (1,754)
A specific course	48%	47%	47%	43%	43%
Different ways of learning	36%	38%	39%	41%	38%
How to get back into learning	26%	26%	29%	35%	35%
Apprenticeships	23%	22%	19%	20%	15%
Paying for a course	21%	21%	25%	29%	28%
Other caring responsibilities	10%	10%	9%	8%	7%
Childcare	8%	8%	7%	8%	7%
Other	14%	13%	12%	10%	10%

Base: All those looking for information/advice about a course or learning on the National Careers Service website

Customers across all age ranges were consistently interested in finding out about different ways of learning. Information on apprenticeships was more commonly sought by those aged 19 or under (31%) and 20-24 (34%), as well as by 18-24 NEETS (46%). These findings are similar to Year 5.

4 Experiences of using the Service

Three-quarters of telephone customers had their enquiry handled in one call (75%), similar to last year.

Less than a quarter of face-to-face customers had two or more meetings with the National Careers Service adviser (22%), lower than previous years. Customers aged 50 plus were more likely to have multiple meetings (28%). Two thirds of customers who had more than one meeting saw the same adviser each time (66%).

Just over half of website visitors got all or most of the information they wanted on their first visit to the website (55%). Similarly, most customers who visited the website multiple times said they got all or most of the information they wanted (60%). Customers aged 50 plus and those with a disability were less likely than average to find all or most of the information they wanted, a similar finding to last year. Customers were much less likely to say they got the information they wanted after the website was redesigned.

The National Careers Service provides three key tools to support its customers across multiple platforms: the Skills Action Plan, the Skills Health Check and the Lifelong Learning Account. The majority of customers found these tools useful. However, online customers were less likely to have found these and other tools and features useful after the website was redesigned.

A quarter of face-to-face and telephone customers reported that they had been followed-up by the National Careers Service since their initial contact (26%). This was more common among customers likely to be in need of further support: those aged 50 plus, those facing redundancy or recently made redundant, and those for whom English is a second language.

This chapter examines customer experience of contacting the National Careers Service over the phone and face-to-face, and of using the website. It also looks at the specific tools and features that customers across all channels used, including the Skills Health Check, the Action Plan and Lifelong Learning Accounts.

4.1 Making contact with the National Careers Service by phone

Around three-quarters of telephone customer queries were handled in a single call in Year 6 (76%), very similar to the proportion in Year 5 (75%). The customers who had their query dealt with in a single call were most likely to be in learning (84%) or qualified to Level 2 or higher (78%). They were also more likely to have called the national helpline for information (79%) rather than to receive advice (59%); this suggests that the calls to the national helpline may be more straightforward requests for information about a course or type of work. Indeed, those requiring more than one call were twice as likely to be telephone advice customers as telephone information customers (39% compared with 19%).

Of the customers who had their enquiry handled in more than one call, around a third dealt with the same adviser (32%), while over half dealt with two or more advisers (62%). Telephone advice customers who had more than one call were more likely to have dealt with one adviser (49%), whereas telephone information customers who had more than one call were more likely to have two or more different advisers (67%). This is because people calling the national helpline will come through to any adviser who is available, rather than to the adviser they spoke to originally.

During the phone call with the National Careers Service, around half of customers were told that their adviser would send them further information (48%). Of these, nearly nine in ten (87%) received this information. Disabled customers (40%) and those with either no qualifications or qualifications below Level 2 (38%) were least likely to be offered information. This suggests that the type of information and advice the service provides to these customers may be specific to their own circumstances, and that these customers may be better helped through one-on-one advice rather than general information.

Telephone advice customers were more likely than telephone information customers to have been offered further information (77% compared with 44%). This is in contrast to Year 5, when the opposite was true, but is a return to the pattern seen in previous years of the survey (Wave 4 and before). Telephone advice customers were also more likely to say they actually received the information (92% compared with 86%).

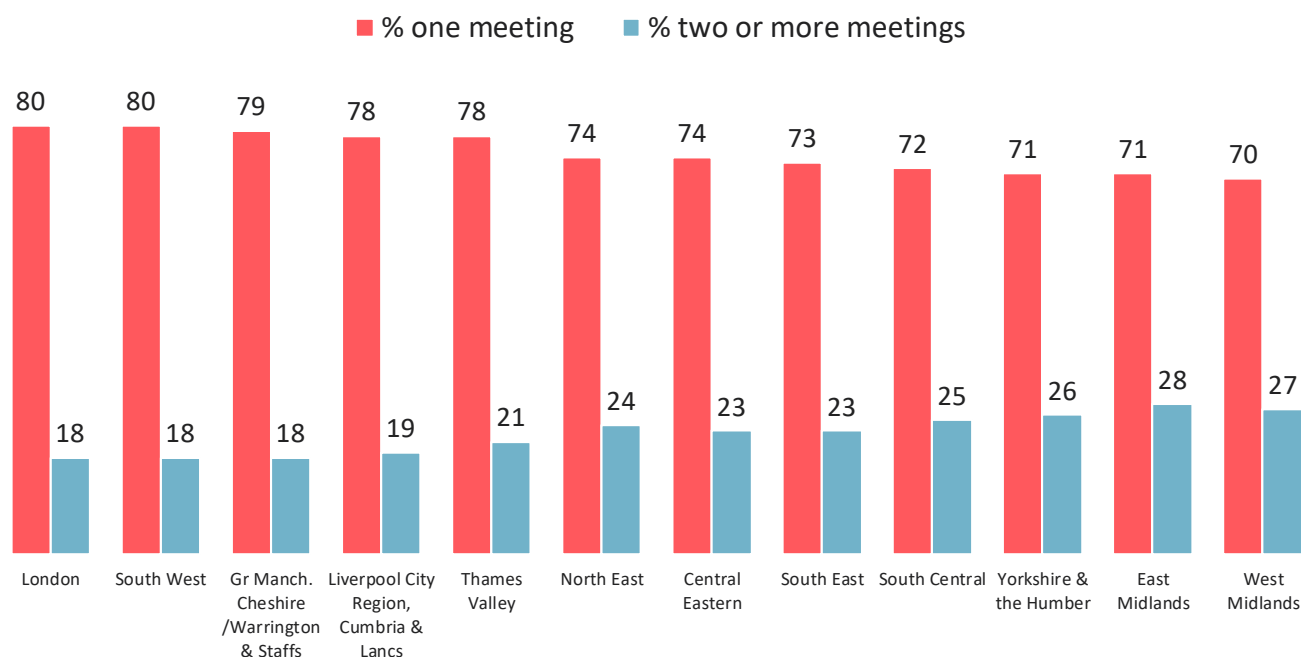
Since Year 5, there has been a large decrease in the proportion of customers offered further information (from 72% to 48% in Year 6), and a lower proportion of customers have received that information (down from 93% to 87%). Further analysis indicates a sudden drop in the early part of Year 6. Analysis by quarter shows that, in the first quarter of Year 6, 77% of customers said they were offered information, and of these 93% said they received it. These figures fell in the second quarter to 41% and 75% respectively.

The vast majority of telephone customers found the information they received useful (92%), and most found it very useful (70%). Six per cent of customers found the information not very or not at all useful. These findings are mostly in line with Year 5, except that customers were less likely to say the information was very useful in Year 6 than in Year 5 (70% compared with 77%).

4.2 Face-to-face contact with the National Careers Service

Three-quarters of face-to-face customers had just one meeting with a National Careers Service adviser (75%), while 22% had two or more meetings. The proportion that had two or more meetings has fallen in recent years (34% in Year 4 and 24% in Year 5). Customers aged 50 plus were more likely to have multiple meetings with their adviser (28% compared with 20% of 18-49 year olds), as were customers with either below Level 2 qualifications or no qualifications (25% compared with 21% qualified to Level 2 or higher). Customers who were mandated to the Service were also more likely to have two or more meetings (26%).

The number of meetings customers had with advisers varied between contracting regions (Figure 4.1). Customers in London, the South West and the Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Warrington and Staffordshire region were significantly more likely to have just one meeting, while customers in the East Midlands, West Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber were more likely to have multiple meetings.

Figure 4.1: Number of face-to-face meetings by contracting region

Base: All face-to-face customers (6,836)

The four main reasons for attending more than one meeting were that: the adviser was reviewing or amending their CV (31%); the adviser recommended they come back (24%); because the adviser could not answer all the questions during the first meeting and needed to provide more information (16%); or because there wasn't time to go through everything in the first meeting (14%). These reasons were more commonplace for particular customers: customers for whom English was their second language were more likely to have another meeting because the adviser could not answer all of their questions (21%); this reason was also more common among customers with Level 2 or higher qualifications (18%).

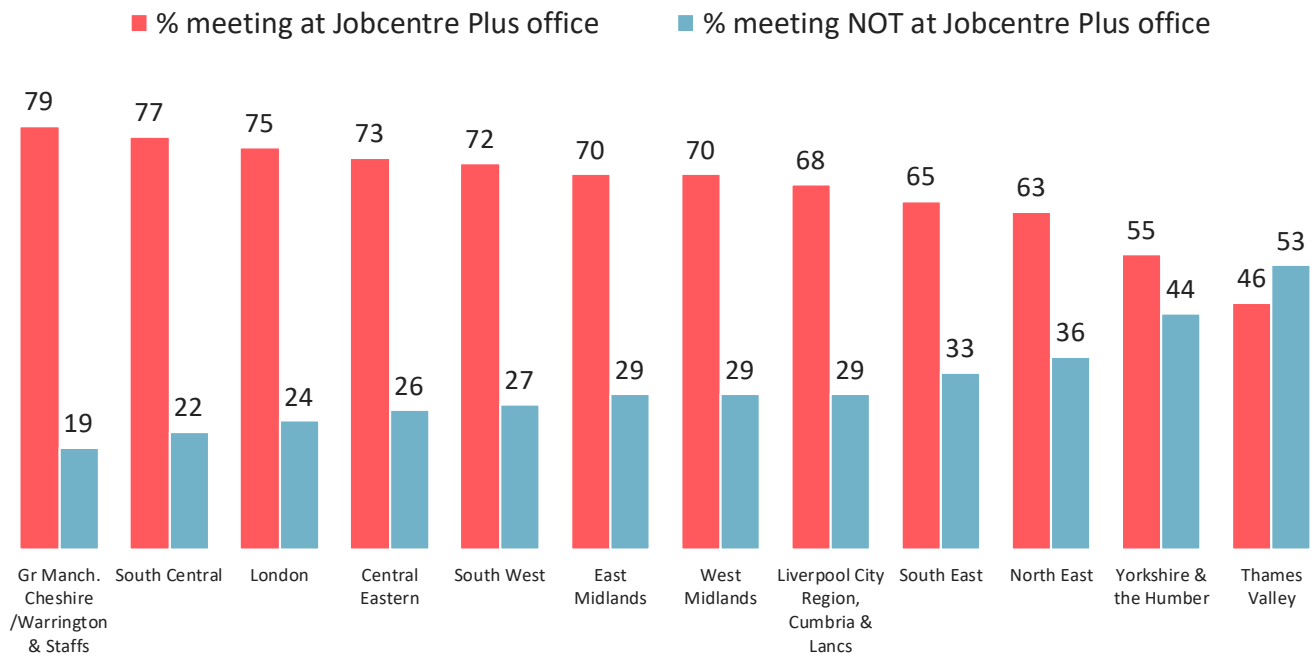
Customers in South Central were most likely to visit the adviser again to have their CV reviewed or amended (41%) or because there wasn't time to go through everything in the first meeting (20%). Customers in Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Warrington and Staffordshire were more likely to have multiple meetings because the adviser suggested that they come back in (33%).

Two thirds of customers who had more than one meeting saw the same adviser each time (66%), lower than the proportion in Year 5 (70%). A third (33%) saw different advisers, although the vast majority (76%) did not mind this. Disabled customers were more likely to prefer to see the same adviser for each of their meetings (28%), as were customers with Level 2 or higher qualifications (25%). This may be because these customers felt they had specific issues that they needed to discuss, and that seeing the same adviser would reduce the need to repeat information.

More than two thirds of customers had the meeting with an adviser in a Jobcentre Plus office (69%); as might be expected, this was higher among customers who were mandated to the Service (82%). Customers aged 50 or over were also more likely to see an adviser in a Jobcentre Plus office (74%), as were disabled customers (73%) and 18-24 year olds who were either seeking benefits (73%) or NEET (72%).

Figure 4.2 shows that the location of the meeting varied by contracting region. Customers in Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Warrington and Staffordshire, South Central, London and Central Eastern were more likely to have their meeting in a Jobcentre Plus office. Customers in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber and Thames Valley were less likely to have their meeting in a Jobcentre Plus office.

Figure 4.2: Location of meeting by contracting region



Base: All face-to-face customers (6,836)

4.3 Using the National Careers Service website

Customers who used the National Careers Service website were asked which tools or features they had accessed (Figure 4.3). Usage of all these tools and features varied by employment status (shown in Figure 4.3). There were also differences between customers who used the website before and after it was redesigned, and these are highlighted in the commentary below.

The most commonly utilised feature was Job Profiles (used by 42%), and usage increased markedly after the website was redesigned. Before redesign, 35% of customers used Job Profiles (very similar to the proportion in Year 5), but this increased to 57% after the website was redesigned. Careers advisers were significantly more likely to use this feature compared with the general public (86% compared with 37% across Year 6 as a whole), as were customers in learning (52%) and customers aged 19 or under (50% compared with 37-40% in the older age groups).

Careers Advice pages were another feature more commonly used by careers advisers than the general public (45% compared with 24%), consistent with Year 5. As shown in Figure 4.3, unemployed customers were less likely to use this feature (23%). Usage of this feature increased after the website was redesigned (from 24% to 31%).

The CV Builder tool was used by around one in six customers in Year 6 (18%), but this feature was not available after the website was redesigned. Focusing just on the period before redesign, 26% of customers used the CV Builder tool (the same proportion as in Year 5), with usage most common among unemployed customers (33%) and young people aged 18-24 NEET (35%).

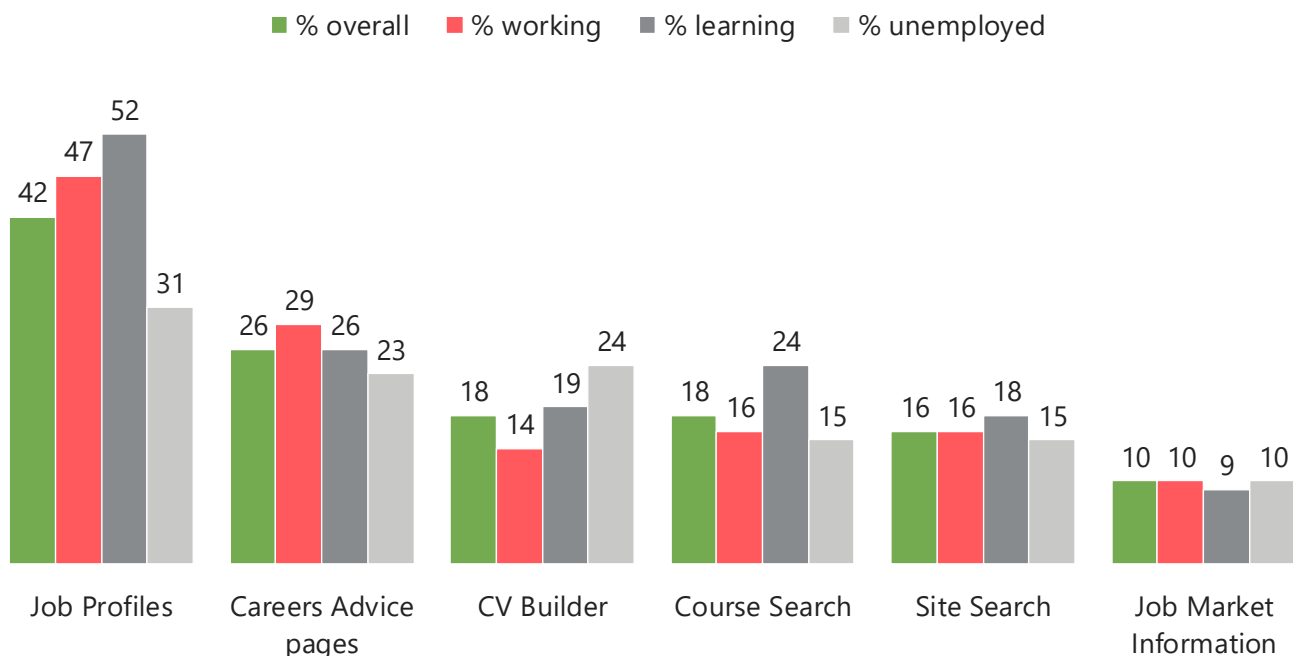
Around one in six customers used Course Search (18%, similar to 17% in Year 5). Younger people aged 19 or under (23%) and those in learning (24%) were significantly more likely than average to use this tool, reflecting the greater focus among these customers on information about further learning or training.

One in six website visitors used Site Search (16%), and one in ten used the Job Market Information (10%). The proportion that used Site Search increased after the website was redesigned (from 13% to 21%), whereas Job Market Information was only available before the redesign (when 14% used it). Job Market Information was especially popular among career advisers (42% in the period before redesign).

Only a small proportion of customers used features that offer contact with an adviser: webchat (4%), direct contact with an adviser (4%) and a request for a call back from an adviser (3%).

There were several features that were used more by female customers than male customers: Job Profiles (45% compared with 36%), Careers Advice pages (29% compared with 21%) and Course Search (20% compared with 15%).

Figure 4.3: Customer usage of website features by status



Base: All online satisfaction survey customers (7,259)

The majority of customers who used the various tools and features found them useful: the CV Builder (85%), Job Profiles (84%), Job Market information (84%), Careers Advice pages (83%), Site Search (82%), and Course Search (75%).

Where features were available both before and after the redesign of the website, ratings became less positive after the redesign. The largest decrease applied to Job Profiles: 93% found this useful before the website was redesigned, compared with 74% afterwards. The equivalent figures for other features were:

- Careers Advice pages: 90% before redesign, 73% afterwards;
- Site Search: 87% before redesign, 76% afterwards;
- Course Search: 79% before redesign, 67% afterwards.

For all of the features shown in Figure 4.3, customer ratings before redesign were very similar to those seen in Year 5. As noted above, ratings then decreased after the redesign where the features were still available.

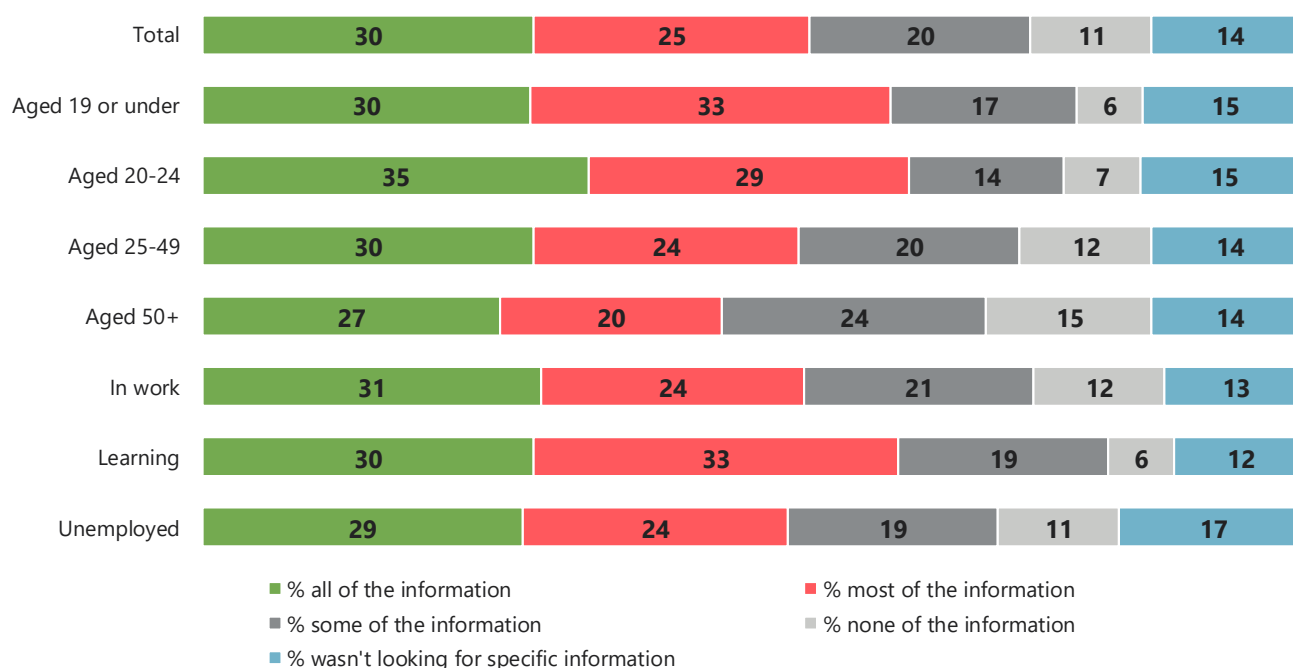
There were some consistent patterns across the various features. General public customers were generally more likely than careers advisers to say they found the various features useful. Customers who were in learning were more likely to find the features useful, compared with those who were working or unemployed. Customers aged 50 or over were generally less likely than younger customers to find the various features useful.

Just over half of website visitors got all or most of the information they wanted on their first visit to the website (55%), while one in five got some of the information (20%) and 11% got none. The remaining 14% were just browsing. Customers who visited the website multiple times were slightly more positive, with 60% saying they got all or most of the information they wanted; customers who visited more than once were also less likely to be just browsing the website (7%).

There were differences in findings before and after the redesign of the website. Those making multiple visits were much more likely to say they found all or most of the information they wanted before the redesign rather than afterwards (71% compared with 42%), with those visiting the website after the redesign more likely to say they only found some of the information they wanted (40% compared with 17% before the redesign). Among those making a single visit to the website, the proportion that found all or most of the information they wanted was also higher before the redesign than afterwards (58% compared with 46%); those visiting the website after the redesign were more likely to say they found none of the information they wanted (16% compared with 10% before the redesign) or were just browsing (17% compared with 13%).

Through either single or multiple visits to the website, customers aged 16-19 or 20-24 and those in learning were more likely than other customers to get all or most of the information they wanted. By contrast, customers aged 50 plus or who were disabled were less likely than average to get all or most of the information they wanted (Figure 4.4).

Figure 4.4: Information obtained by one-time visitors to the National Careers Service website by age and work status



Base: All customers who visited the National Careers Service website once (2,983)

4.4 Use and usefulness of common National Careers Service tools

4.4.1 Skills Health Check

The Skills Health Check (SHC) is a diagnostic computer programme that assesses your skills, interests, personal working style and motivations. More than a third of face-to-face customers used this tool (37%, a similar proportion to Year 5), while over half did not (54%) and the remaining nine per cent could not remember. Customers aged 18-24 were most likely to make use of the tool (40%), as were those who had more than one face-to-face meeting (41% compared with 35% of those who only had one session), and those who also recalled having an action plan (48% compared with 22% of customers who did not recall an action plan). Usage of the SHC was also prominent in Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Warrington and Staffordshire (46%) and the North East (41%).

The majority of face-to-face customers who used this tool found it useful (88%), exactly the same proportion as the preceding four years. This includes 46% who found it very useful and 42% who said it was fairly useful. Only ten per cent did not find it useful. Customers aged 18-24 were most likely to find the SHC useful (90%), particularly those who were seeking benefits (92%). Those with no qualifications or with qualifications below Level 2 were also more likely to find it useful (90%), whereas those with Level 4 or higher qualifications were more likely than other customers to say that it wasn't useful (15%). Customers who were mandated to the Service were also more likely to say that the SHC was not useful (24%).

The main reasons why customers did not find the SHC useful were that they thought it told them things they already knew (33%) and that they did not find the questions relevant (24%). Unemployed customers were most likely to say that the SHC told them things they already knew (37%). This was also a particular issue among

customers with Level 2 or higher qualifications (40% compared with 22% of those with qualifications below Level 2 or with no qualifications).

Just over a quarter of online customers used the SHC (27%), very similar to the proportion in Year 5 (26%). Usage was highest among customers aged 50 plus (35%), those who were unemployed and seeking work (38%) and disabled customers (38%). The proportion that used the SHC was higher after the website was redesigned than beforehand (31% compared with 26%).

The majority of website users found the SHC useful (80%), while 13% said that it was not useful. These findings were slightly less positive than for face-to-face customers (as described above). There were no major demographic differences among website users, other than fewer disabled customers finding the SHC useful (77% compared with 82% of non-disabled customers). The overall proportion in Year 6 that found the SHC useful was the same as in Year 5. However, responses were less positive after the website was redesigned (76% compared with 82% before redesign).

4.4.2 Skills Action Plan

As part of their interaction with National Careers Service, face-to-face and telephone advice customers were asked if an action plan had been drawn up for achieving their goals and targets. The expectation is that the majority of these customers should participate in the creation of a Skills Action Plan which sets out their agreed next steps.

Overall, just over half of telephone and face-to-face customers recalled a Skills Action Plan (55%), similar to the proportion in Year 5 (54%). Younger customers aged 18-24 (60%) or 25-34 (59%), 18-24 year olds who were NEET (59%) and those who had Level 2 or higher qualifications (58%) were most likely to recall a Skills Action Plan. Furthermore, those who also recall using the Skills Health Check were also more likely to recall a Skills Action Plan being drawn up (71%), as were those customers who had more than one meeting or phone call with an adviser, especially if this was with the same adviser. This suggests that these customers have a more intensive level of interaction with the service. Overall, telephone advice customers were more likely than face-to-face customers to recall a Skills Action Plan (64% compared with 54%).

Half of customers had a great deal of involvement in drawing up their Skills Action Plan (50%), while a further 37% reported that they had some involvement. The Year 6 findings were very similar to those seen in Year 5 (when 51% reported a great deal of involvement). Customers qualified to Level 2 or higher were more likely than other customers to say they had a great deal of involvement (52%).

The majority of telephone and face-to-face customers who recalled having a Skills Action Plan found it useful (88%). This is consistent with last year (89%). Around one in ten (9%) found the Skills Action Plan not very or not at all useful; the main reasons were that they did not think it was relevant to their situation (29%), it was too general/insufficiently tailored (27%), or it did not contain any new information (21%). Face-to-face customers were more likely than telephone advice customers to say that the Skills Action Plan was useful (89% compared with 80%).

Prior to the redesign of the website, the National Careers Service offered a self-completed online action plan as an initial step. However, this feature was not available after the redesign. In the period of Year 6 before redesign, 8% of online customers recalled completing an action plan on the website, the same proportion as in Year 5.

More than three-quarters of online customers who completed an action plan on the website found it useful (78%), similar to last year (76%).

4.4.3 Lifelong Learning Accounts

A Lifelong Learning Account allows customers to access a range of tools, such as updating and storing their CV, actions plans, qualifications and other information into an account which they could return to as their career develops.

Overall, less than one in ten face-to-face and telephone customers had a Lifelong Learning Account (7%), a decrease since last year, and the continuation of a downward trend since Year 4 (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Use of Lifelong Learning Accounts

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Base:	(6,610)	(8,808)	(8,795)	(9,576)	(8,812)	(8,821)
Already had an account	2%	3%	4%	6%		
Opened an account during the session	6%	7%	8%	8%	10%	7%
Opened an account after the session	4%	6%	8%	8%		
Was offered during session but not interested	8%	11%	11%	10%	13%	14%
It was not discussed	70%	64%	58%	55%	66%	68%
Can't remember	8%	8%	10%	10%	9%	10%

Note: the question was altered in Year 5 to merge 'already had an account', 'opened an account during the session' and opened an account after the session' into one code 'you have opened a Lifelong Learning Account'.

Customers whose first language was not English were more likely to have opened an account (9%). There were no differences by channel, although face-to-face customers who had more than one meeting were more likely to have opened an account than those with just one face-to-face meeting (10% compared with 7%).

More than two thirds of customers who had opened a Lifelong Learning Account had progressed as far as activating it (69%). The proportion was similar in Year 5 (67%). Once again, there was a difference according to the number of meetings: face-to-face customers who had more than one meeting were more likely to have activated their account than those with just one face-to-face meeting (77% compared with 65%).

Around one in seven online customers used their Lifelong Learning Account in Year 6 (15%), the same as in Year 5. Customers were more likely to use their Lifelong Learning Account after the redesign of the website than beforehand (17% compared with 14%). Unemployed and disabled customers were most likely to use the Lifelong Learning Account when they visited the website (23% in each case).

Around three-quarters of online customers who had used the Lifelong Learning Account said that they found it useful (77%), lower than the proportion in Year 5 (82%). There was a difference in responses before and after the

redesign of the website: the proportion that found it useful fell from 80% to 72%, with a corresponding increase in the proportion that said it was not useful (from 8% to 19%).

4.5 Follow up actions

4.5.1 Reported follow-up by the National Careers Service

Around a quarter of face-to-face or telephone customers said that the National Careers Service had been in touch with them again after their initial contact (26%), similar to the Year 5 figure (25%). Email (15%) and telephone (8%) were the most common communication channels used for follow-up, followed by meeting face-to-face (3%), text (2%) or letter (1%). Levels of follow-up remained consistent throughout the year.

Reported follow-up was more common among customers who were unemployed and seeking work (29%), those facing or with recent experience of redundancy (31%), or where English was their second language (33%). It was also substantially more common among telephone advice customers (33%) or face-to-face (30%) customers than among those accessing the service for telephone information (9%).

Table 4.2 shows that there are variations between area-based contractors in terms of whether customers reported having any follow-up. Customers of CfBT, Economic Solutions and the national call centre were least likely to say their contractor followed up after their first contact.

Table 4.2: Customer follow up by contractor

	Base	No	Yes - all	Yes - email	Yes - phone	Yes – face-to-face
Adviza	533	61%	37%	24%	9%	4%
Futures Advice	1,323	61%	37%	23%	10%	4%
Careers Yorkshire & the Humber	879	66%	32%	15%	10%	4%
Prospects	2,323	67%	31%	17%	9%	5%
Babcock/CXK	588	68%	30%	17%	13%	3%
CfBT	1,159	72%	26%	16%	7%	3%
Economic Solutions	1,122	72%	25%	14%	9%	3%
National Call Centre/Serco	894	88%	9%	4%	5%	1%

4.5.2 Follow up actions carried out by customers

Encouragingly, within the month following the first meeting or call with the National Careers Service adviser, more than three-quarters of face-to-face customers who recalled having a Skills Action Plan had carried out at least one of the agreed actions (77%). The proportion of customers doing this has remained consistent with Year 5 (78%).

Customers who were most likely to carry out any actions were:

- those unemployed and looking for work (80%) or recently made redundant or facing redundancy (80%);
- customers with Level 2 or higher qualifications (79%), compared with 72% of those with no qualifications or qualifications below Level 2;
- 18-24 year olds NEET (81%); and
- customers who had more than one face-to-face meeting and had the same adviser (83%).

Customers were less likely to have carried out any of the actions in their Skills Action Plan if they did not have English as their first language (70%) or if they had been mandated to the Service (67%).

More than two thirds of telephone customers who had been sent any information by their adviser had acted upon this in the month following their session (71%); this was similar to the proportion in Year 5 (67%). There were few significant differences, except that those with Level 2 or higher qualifications were more likely to have done so (73% compared with 62% of those with qualifications below Level 2 or with no qualifications).

Over half of the remaining telephone and face-to-face customers (who did not recall an Action Plan or who had not been sent any follow-up information) had acted on something they discussed with their adviser within the first month (57%, an increase on the Year 5 figure of 54%). This was more common among customers with Level 4 or higher qualifications (65%), and less common among those who did not speak English as their first language (49%) and those who had been mandated to the Service (42%).

Following their first contact, over a third of telephone and face-to-face customers visited the National Careers Service website (38%, similar to the proportion in Year 5). Customers were significantly more likely to have done this if they were in learning (44%), aged 18-24 (46%), qualified to Level 2 or higher (41%), or spoke English as a second language (42%).

One in five telephone or face-to-face customers had started a new course since their initial session (20%), a slight decrease from the proportion in Year 5 (22%). This was more common among customers who were in learning at the time of their initial contact (i.e. these customers had started a new/different course to the one they were on) and those who had English as a second language (25% and 24% respectively). Customers who contacted the telephone information line were also more likely than those using other channels to say they had started a new course (27%).

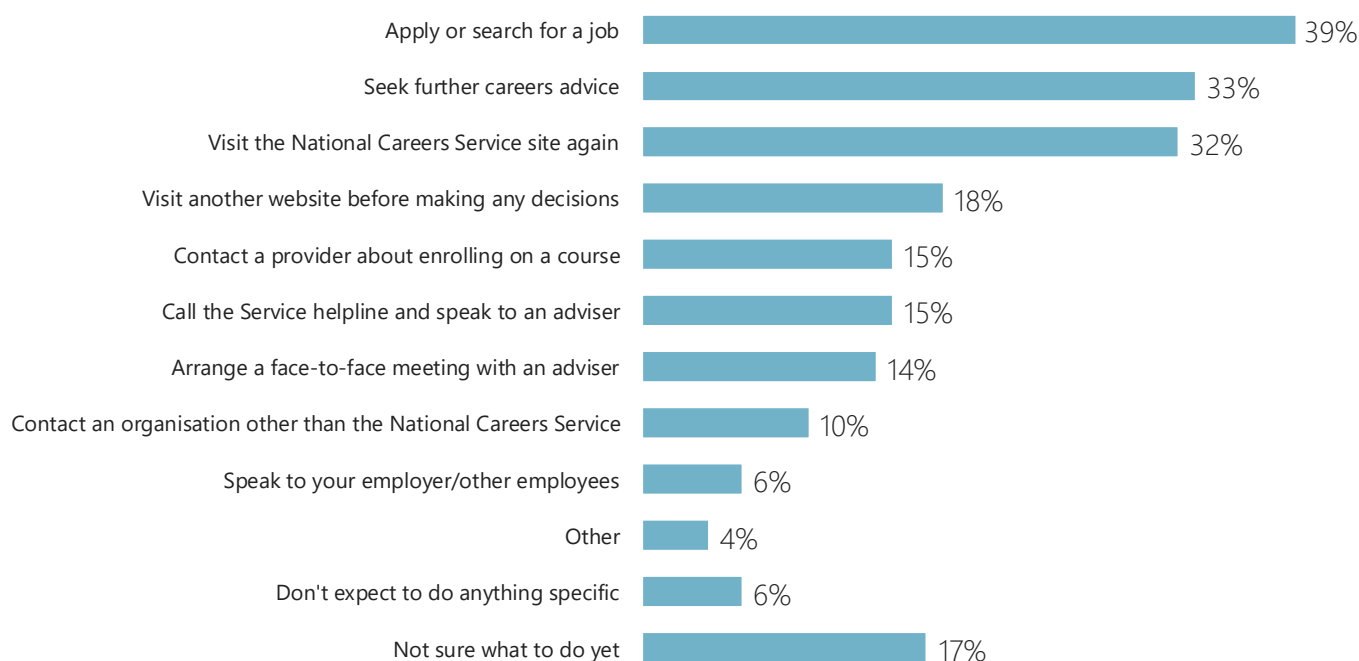
Among those who had not started a new course, 30% reported they had *decided* to start a new learning or training course. This rose to over half of customers using the telephone information line (52%), which indicates that they were already more interested in finding out about learning/training when they used the service. Customers who had English as a second language were also more likely than average to say they had decided to start a new learning or training course (41%).

Online customers were asked what they were likely to do as a result of visiting the National Careers Service website (Figure 4.5). They were most likely to apply or search for a job following their visit (39%), seek further careers advice (33%) or visit the site again (32%). Customers who planned to apply or search for a job following their visit to the website were more likely to be unemployed rather than in work or learning (49% compared with 36% and 35%

respectively). Customers who had English as a second language were also more likely than average to say they planned to apply or search for a job (48%).

There were some differences in the findings before and after the redesign of the website. Following the redesign, customers were less likely to say that they planned to apply or search for a job (33% compared with 41%), and to visit the National Careers Service site again (29% compared with 34%). However, they were more likely to say they would visit another website (23% compared with 16%) and contact an organisation other than the National Careers Service (13% compared with 9%). These differences reflect some negative perceptions of the website after it was redesigned; this issue is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Figure 4.5: Online customers' planned next steps after visiting the National Careers Service website



Base: All online customers looking for advice for themselves or someone else (6,043)

Online customers who were looking for advice for themselves were asked whether various things were more likely as a result of visiting the National Careers Service website. A third said that it was more likely that they would start a course or enter learning (33%), while around a quarter said that it was more likely they would get a job having been unemployed (27%) or undertake some training (26%). There were also customers who said it was more likely they would progress at work (17%), start voluntary work (15%) or start an apprenticeship (13%).

Customers with no qualifications or with qualifications below Level 2 were more likely than other customers to say that their visit to the website had increased their likelihood of starting a course or entering learning (41%), while customers aged 18-24 and NEET were most likely to say it had increased their chances of getting a job (56%) or of starting an Apprenticeship (25%).

5 Customer Satisfaction

The overall quality of the service continued to be rated highly by telephone and face-to-face customers, with over nine in ten agreeing that it was good (93%).

In line with this, the vast majority of face-to-face and telephone customers were satisfied with the National Careers Service overall (85%), consistent with previous years. Younger customers were more satisfied than older customers, and satisfaction levels were also higher than average among telephone information customers and those in learning.

Among telephone and face-to-face customers, satisfaction with individual aspects of the Service was also high, especially the professionalism and helpfulness of advisers.

Overall satisfaction with the National Careers Service website has declined, reflecting negative views of the redesigned website. In Year 6 before the redesign, 80% of website customers were satisfied, but this fell to 48% after the redesign.

Reflecting the high levels of customer satisfaction and positive views of service quality, almost nine in ten face-to-face or telephone customers either had already recommended or would recommend the National Careers Service (88%). Three-quarters of online customers said they would recommend the National Careers Service website to friends, family or colleagues (76%). However, this figure fell from 83% before the website was redesigned to 60% afterwards.

Suggestions for improvement from face-to-face and telephone customers focused on more tailored help and follow-up. Online customers felt that improvements could be made to the new website, in terms of the appearance and design, and in providing more detailed information on jobs and careers.

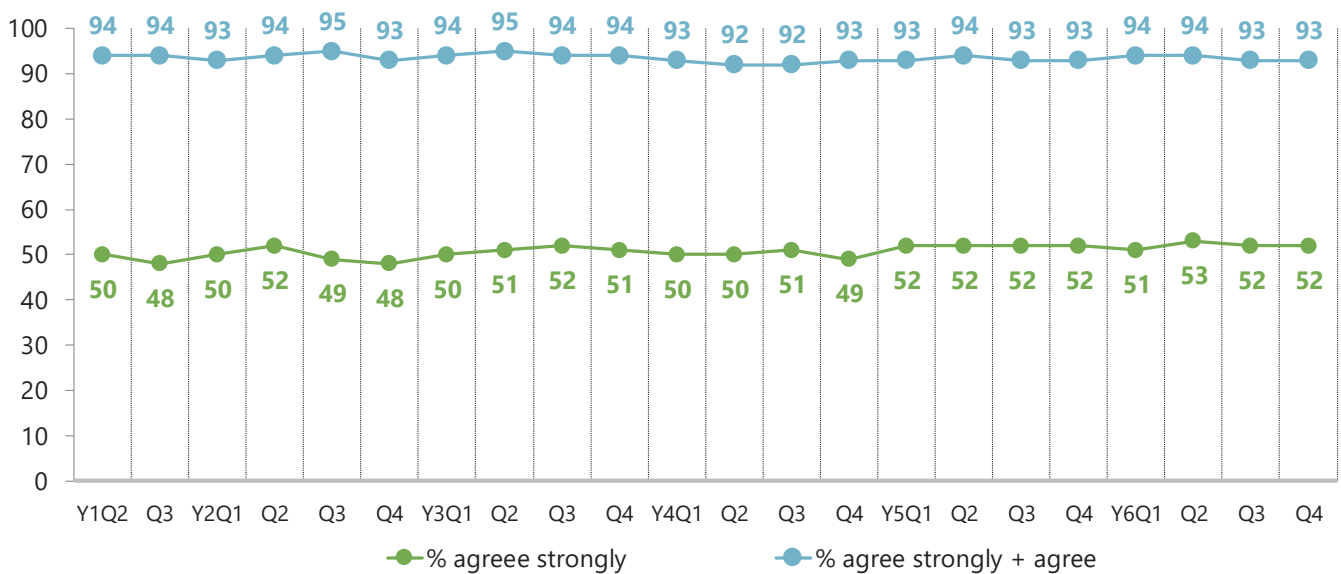
This chapter examines customer satisfaction with the National Careers Service. As well as overall satisfaction, it explores satisfaction with more specific aspects of the service ranging from logistical issues, such as the timing of appointments, to views on the quality of the advice received and on the helpfulness and professionalism of the adviser. It also details satisfaction with specific aspects of the National Careers Service website.

5.1 Overall perceptions about the quality of the service

5.1.1 Face-to-face and telephone customers

The overall quality of the service was rated highly by telephone and face-to-face customers. The vast majority in Year 6 agreed that it was good (93%), while only a small minority disagreed (6%). Ratings have been consistently high over the last six years (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Agreement overall quality of service was good, by survey quarter



Base: All face-to-face and telephone customers (see Table 1.1 for base sizes per quarter)

There were no differences in the findings according to employment status. However, there were some variations by customer group, as follows:

- Young people aged 18-24 were more likely to agree that the overall quality of the service was good (96%), compared with those aged 25-49 (93%) or aged 50 plus (92%). Levels of agreement were high among both 18-24s who were seeking benefits (97%) and 18-24 year old NEETs (96%).
- Disabled customers were slightly less likely to agree than non-disabled customers (91% compared with 94%).
- Customers who had been mandated to the Service were less positive than other customers: 88% agreed and 10% disagreed.
- Customers who had a deeper level of engagement with the service overall were more likely to agree that the quality of the service was good. For example, levels of agreement were higher among those who recalled using the Skills Health Check (96%) or agreeing an Action Plan (96%).

- Telephone advice customers were less positive than other types of customer: 89% agreed that the overall quality of the service was good, compared with 95% of telephone information customers and 93% of face-to-face customers. As in previous years, telephone information customers were also significantly more likely to agree strongly that the service was good (60% strongly agreed compared with 46% of telephone advice and 50% of face-to-face customers).
- There were no differences according to the number of face-to-face meetings or whether the customer saw the same adviser for each of their meetings. However, telephone customers were more positive if they had called the National Careers Service once rather than calling multiple times (95% compared with 90%). This is linked to the difference noted above for telephone information and telephone advice customers (as telephone information customers were more likely to make a single call).

The main reasons why customers disagreed that the service was good were that they did not receive any relevant information that they requested (45%), they did not consider they had received any help at all (28%) and that staff lacked knowledge/could not answer their questions (28%). In addition, 15% reported they did not receive a promised call back, while 11% said that they were given incorrect advice. These reasons were consistent with those given in Year 5.

5.2 Overall satisfaction with the National Careers Service

5.2.1 Face-to-face and telephone customers

The vast majority of face-to-face and telephone customers were satisfied with the National Careers Service overall (85%), and only five per cent of customers were dissatisfied, largely unchanged from previous findings (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: Annual ratings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction



Base: As shown in chart

Younger customers were more satisfied than older customers. The proportion who were satisfied ranged from 88% among 18-24 year olds to 85% of 25-49 year olds and 81% of those aged 50 plus. Among 18-24 year olds, those who were seeking benefits were particularly positive (89% satisfied).

In terms of employment status, customers who were in learning were most satisfied (89%), followed by those in work (86%), with unemployed customers the least satisfied (84%). Satisfaction was also lower than average among disabled customers (80%) and those who had been mandated to the National Careers Service (72%).

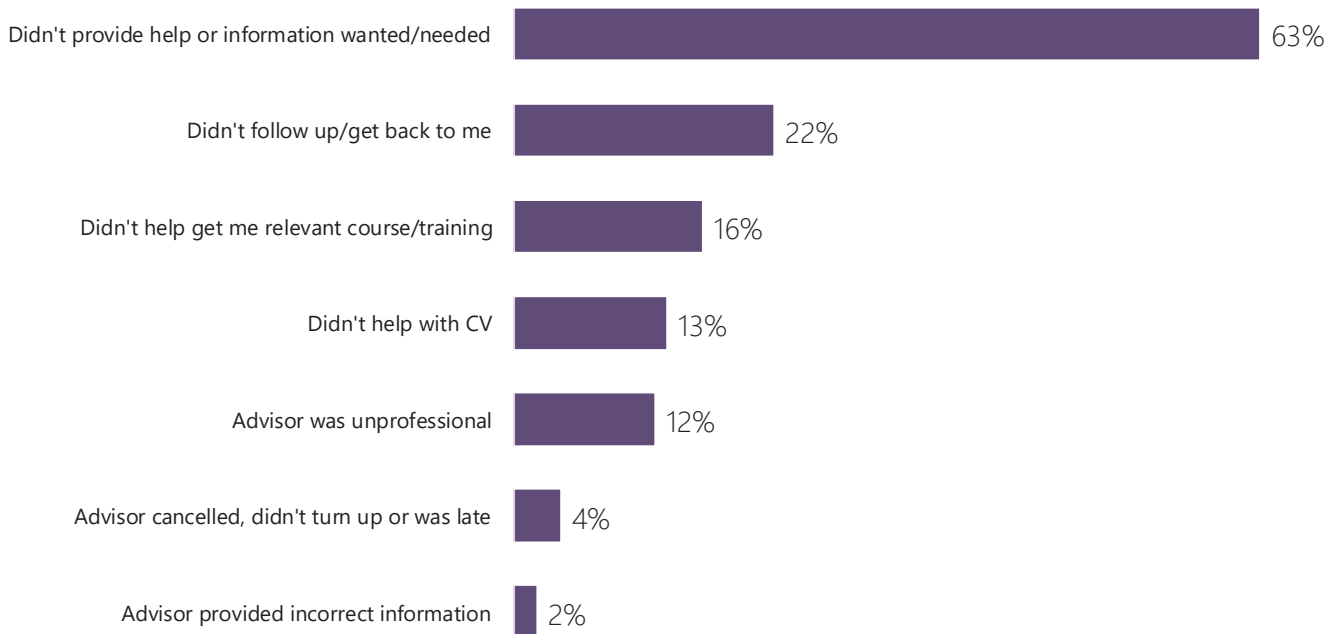
Reflecting the overall service quality rating, telephone information customers were the most likely to be satisfied with the service (88%), followed by face-to-face customers (84%), while telephone advice customers were the least likely to be satisfied (79%).

Telephone customers whose enquiry was dealt with in a single call were more satisfied than those who made multiple calls (89% compared with 80%). By contrast, face-to-face customers who had more than one meeting were more likely to be satisfied than those who only had one session, provided that they saw the same adviser across multiple sessions. The differences were most pronounced in relation to the proportions that were very satisfied: 45% among those who saw the same adviser over multiple sessions, compared with 39% of those who saw different advisers and 39% of those who had only one meeting.

As was the case for the rating of overall service quality, customers who recalled using the Skills Health Check or agreeing an Action Plan were more positive than other customers (89% satisfied in each case).

The main reasons for satisfaction relate to the individual advisers that customers dealt with. Most frequently, customers said that the adviser was knowledgeable, helpful or gave good advice (54%), while the other main reasons were that the adviser was friendly, personable or understanding (34%), gave good advice or helped with their CV (28%), or gave good advice relating to courses or training (16%). In addition, 11% said they were satisfied because the service was straightforward, convenient or easy to use.

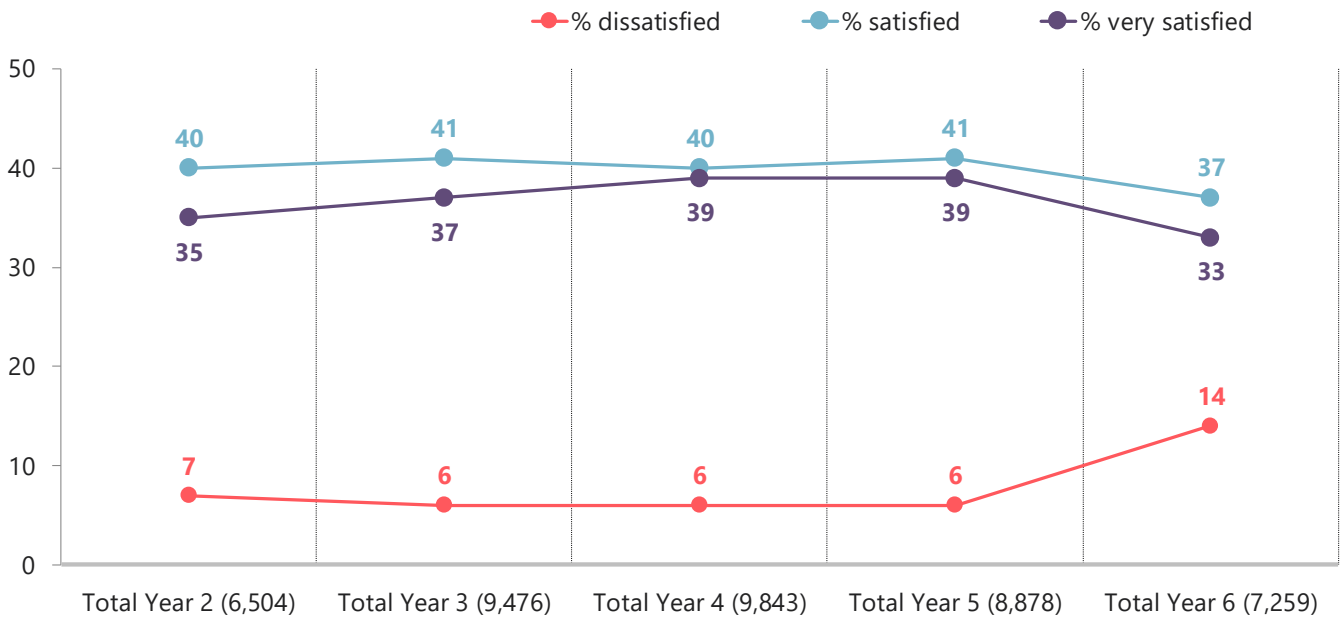
The main reason for dissatisfaction was not receiving the help or information that customers wanted and/or needed (63%), while other reasons were a lack of follow-up (22%), not being helped to get a relevant course or training (16%), not getting help with their CV (13%), and the adviser being perceived as unprofessional (12%). These reasons were consistent with those given in Year 5.

Figure 5.3: Main reasons for being dissatisfied with the Service

Base: All dissatisfied customers (484)

5.2.2 Online customers

Overall satisfaction with the National Careers Service website has fallen, from 80% in Year 5 to 70% in Year 6 (Figure 5.4). This can be linked to the redesign of the website. Prior to the redesign, satisfaction in Year 6 was very similar to the levels seen in previous years (39% very satisfied, 41% satisfied and 6% dissatisfied). However, customers were much less positive after the website was redesigned, with 20% very satisfied, 28% satisfied and 32% dissatisfied (including 17% who were very dissatisfied).

Figure 5.4: Annual ratings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction

Base: As shown in chart

Prior to the redesign of the website, satisfaction levels were consistently high among different groups of website visitors. However, there were some large differences after the redesign had taken place, as outlined below:

- Satisfaction decreased with age, from 75% of young people aged 19 or under to 36% of those aged 50 plus.
- In relation to employment status, satisfaction was higher among those in learning (73%) than those who were unemployed (56%), and was lowest among those in work (37%).
- Those with no qualifications or with qualifications below Level 2 were more likely to be satisfied than those qualified to Level 4 or above (69% compared with 33%).
- Customers who did not speak English as their first language were more satisfied than those who did have English as their first language (70% compared with 46%).
- There was a big difference between customers in the general public (60% of whom were satisfied and 19% dissatisfied) and careers advisers (14% satisfied and 72% dissatisfied).

The reasons for dissatisfaction were dominated by comments about the new design of the website and comparisons with the previous version. The main criticisms of the new design are summarised below.

- The information on the new site is felt to be less detailed and comprehensive than on the previous version, with some features removed altogether.

“All useful information on Job Profiles has been removed. No CV advice, no interview help, no information on self-employment.”

"[The old website] ... was a fantastic resource which had detailed, comprehensive, easy to understand, up to date information covering every aspect of the careers information, advice and guidance sector. This new version of the website has had so much of that vital and detailed information stripped away, particularly around Job Profiles, making it look basic and unprofessional. It saddens me to say this but as a practitioner I no longer use the new version of this website and discourage my clients from using it as I feel that they can get more substantial information from elsewhere."

"No longer able to signpost clients to information about CV's, Interviews or Job applications. Job Profiles too basic and need to have links to specialist job sites re-instated. Skills section of Job Profiles also needs expanding again."

"Using the older version of the website, I could find local labour market information - this is no longer available. I can no longer access information on preparing for interviews. I find it difficult now to adapt my CV to jobs, as the information on the Job Profiles section has been reduced massively. Please go back to your old site!"

- The visual design of the new website is considered less attractive and appealing than the previous version.

"The visual design of the new website is very boring; and has lost its uniqueness and appeal to young people. Though the intention may have been to create a professional touch, I feel that the website now resembles the other bland gov.uk websites that are associated with monotonous and judicial information."

"The content of the website is excellent, as it always has been, however the visuals of the site have drastically changed for the worse. The website was inviting and colourful but the new format is extremely dull - it looks like any other .gov website, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it's nothing like what it used to be."

"The previous National Careers Service website was far more detailed, with greater functionality (particularly in the Job Profiles section), and also far more interesting/appealing in terms of graphics, layout and design. There is very little/no branding on the new website and it is difficult to find information."

5.3 Satisfaction with different aspects of the adviser sessions

National Careers Service face-to-face and telephone customers were asked for their views on a range of specific aspects of their session(s). The logistical aspects of the services scored highly on satisfaction, carrying on the trend seen in previous years (Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5: Face-to-face and telephone customer satisfaction with logistical arrangements of their contact with the National Careers Service

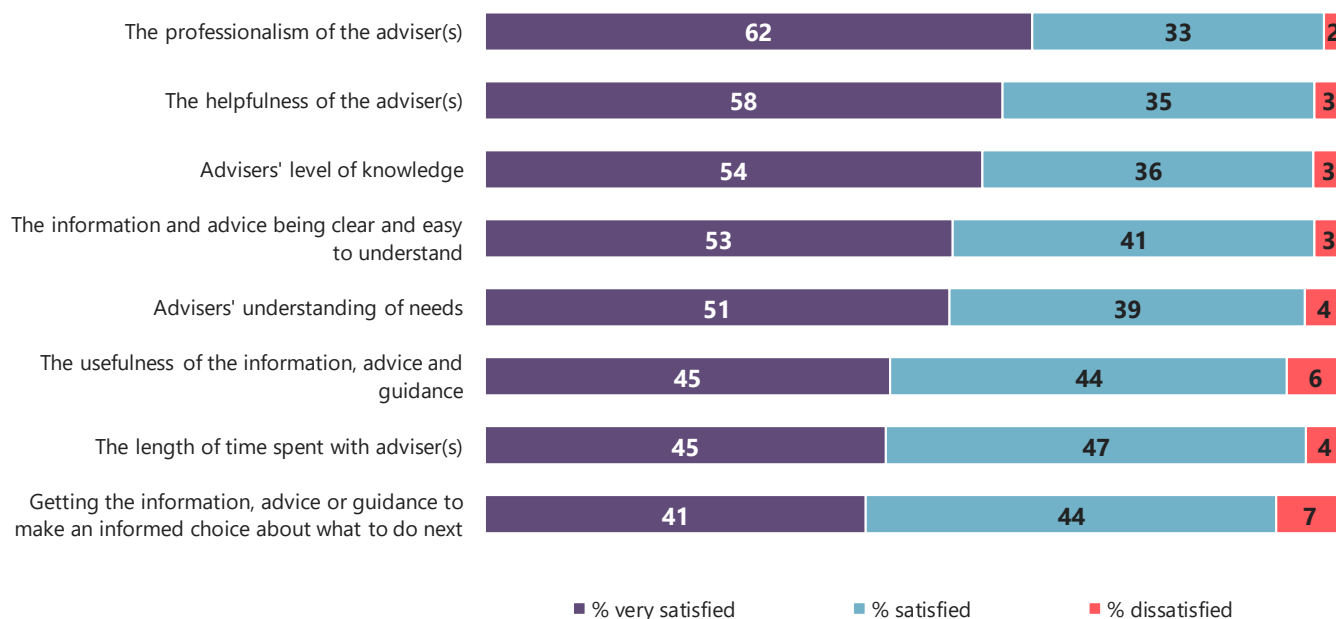


Base: All telephone customers (1,213); all face-to-face customers (7,608)

Nine in ten telephone customers were satisfied with the time it took for someone to answer their call (90%). When telephone customers spoke with more than one adviser, almost nine in ten said they were satisfied with the time it took to get through to the person who helped them (88%).

More than nine in ten face-to-face customers were satisfied with the convenience of their appointment time (94%), the location and venue where they received their advice (92%) and the waiting time before the appointment (92%). Disabled customers were slightly less satisfied than non-disabled customers on these issues; for example, 89% of disabled customers were satisfied with the location, compared with 93% of non-disabled customers.

Customers were predominantly happy with both the assistance of their advisers and with the content and outcome of the National Careers Service intervention, as demonstrated by Figure 5.6. On each measure, around 90% of customers were satisfied, with over two-fifths very satisfied. The two areas that customers were particularly satisfied with were the professionalism and helpfulness of the advisers. This confirms the findings in section 5.2.1 on the reasons for overall satisfaction, which focused on positive impressions of advisers' helpfulness and ability to give good advice.

Figure 5.6: Satisfaction with information and advice from the Service

Base: All telephone and face-to-face customers (8,821)

Although satisfaction across all of the measures was consistently high (at around 90%), there were some variations between customer groups:

- Younger customers were slightly more satisfied than older customers on a number of measures. In particular, 18-24 year olds who were seeking benefits tended to be particularly positive; for example, 97% were satisfied with the clarity of the information and advice.
- Satisfaction was lower on some measures among BME customers and those who did not speak English as their first language. For instance, 92% of white British customers were satisfied with the adviser's level of knowledge, compared with 89% of BME customers; among those who did not speak English as their first language, 89% were satisfied.
- Disabled customers were slightly less satisfied than non-disabled customers. For instance, when asked about the information, advice and guidance to make an informed choice about what to do next, disabled customers were less likely to be satisfied than non-disabled customers (82% compared with 86%).
- Customers who were mandated to the service were less satisfied than other customers. For example, 80% were satisfied with the usefulness of the information, advice and guidance, compared with 88% of customers overall.
- Telephone advice customers were less satisfied than other customers on most of the issues. For example, 81% were satisfied with the adviser's level of knowledge, compared with 89% of telephone information customers and 91% of face-to-face customers.

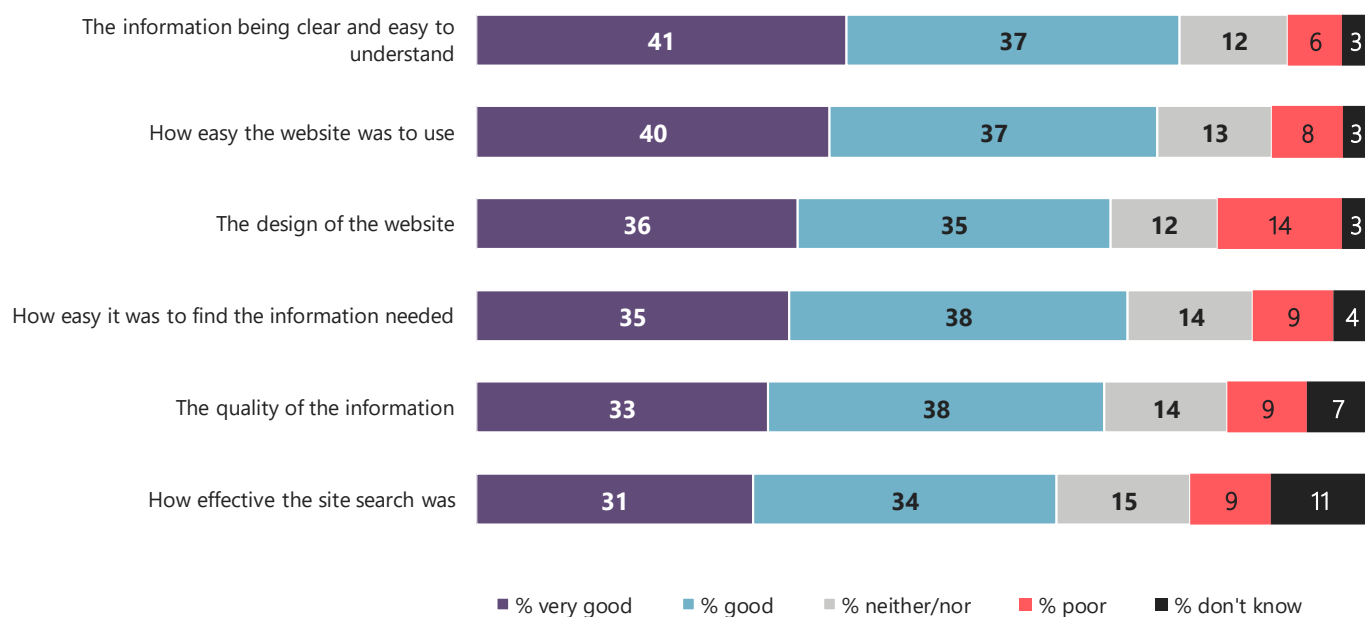
- Among face-to-face customers, satisfaction was slightly higher if they had multiple meetings and saw the same adviser each time; for example, 94% were satisfied with the adviser's level of knowledge, compared with 91% of those who saw different advisers or who had only one meeting.

Levels of satisfaction have remained consistently high between Year 5 and Year 6. The only statistically significant change was a slight decrease in the proportion that were very satisfied with advisers' understanding of their needs (from 53% to 51%). At the same time, satisfaction levels were slightly lower among some groups of customers (such as disabled customers), and these patterns are the same as seen in previous years. This suggests that improvements may be possible to enhance the experience of some groups of customers.

5.4 Satisfaction with the different aspects of the website

Visitors to the National Careers Service website were also asked to rate a number of different features of the website, on a scale from very good to very poor. Between two thirds and three-quarters of customers rated each individual aspect of the website as good or very good. Customers were most positive towards information being clear and easy to understand (78% rated this as good or very good) and the website being easy to use (77% good or very good). Customers were least positive in relation to the effectiveness of the site search (65%).

Customer ratings in Year 6 were less positive than in Year 5, and this relates to the redesign of the website. Prior to the redesign, ratings were very similar to those seen in Year 5. However, customers were much less positive after the website was redesigned. The largest change was for the design of the website: 82% rated this as good or very good before the redesign, but this fell to 49% after the redesign; the proportion that rated this aspect as poor increased from 4% to 34%. For the other aspects, the proportion of good or very good ratings fell by between 17 and 25 percentage points after the website was redesigned, while the proportion of poor ratings increased by between 10 and 15 percentage points.

Figure 5.7: Ratings on various aspects of the website

Base: All online satisfaction survey customers (7,259)

In the period before the website was redesigned, ratings were broadly consistent across different groups of website customers. After the redesign, however, there were some large differences, and these are discussed below.

Careers advisers were less positive than general public customers about the various aspects of the website, the largest difference being in relation to the design of the website (10% of careers advisers rated this as good or very good, compared with 61% of general public customers).

Ratings were more positive from younger customers. For example, when rating the quality of the information, 77% of those aged 19 or under rated it as good or very good, falling to 43% of customers aged 50 plus. Related to this, ratings were more positive among customers who were in learning, compared with those in work or unemployed. For instance, 77% of those in learning said that the website was good or very good in terms of ease of use, compared with 71% of unemployed customers and 56% of those in work.

After the redesign, ratings were also more positive among:

- Customers whose first language was not English: for instance, when rating the design of the website, 74% of those who spoke English as a second language rated this as good or very good, compared with 46% of those who spoke English as their first language.
- Customers with no qualifications or with qualifications below Level 2: for example, 71% of these customers rated the website as good or very good on being easy to find the information they needed, compared with 55% of those with Level 2 qualifications or above, and 48% of those qualified to Level 4 or above.

Prior to the redesign, disabled customers were less satisfied than non-disabled customers with the various aspects. For example, 78% of disabled customers gave a good or very good rating for information being clear and easy to

understand, compared with 86% of non-disabled customers. After the website was redesigned, however, ratings were similar for disabled and non-disabled customers.

5.5 Would customers recommend the National Careers Service?

5.5.1 Face-to-face and telephone customers

Around a quarter of face-to-face or telephone customers said they had already recommended the National Careers Service to someone else (26%). Of the remainder, the majority said that they would recommend the Service (84%). In total, this means that almost nine in ten customers either had recommended the Service or said that they would recommend it (88%). This is in line with previous years.

Customers aged 50 plus were less likely than younger customers to have recommended the National Careers Service or to say that they would recommend it (85%). Unemployed customers were less likely than those in work or learning to say that they had recommended or would recommend it (87% compared with 91%). The proportion that said they had recommended or would recommend the Service was also lower among disabled customers (85%), those who were mandated to the Service (76%) and those with no qualifications or with qualifications below Level 2 (86%).

The proportion of customers that either had recommended or would recommend the Service was higher among those who had engaged most with National Careers Service tools such as the Action Plan and the Skills Health Check (92% and 91% respectively).

Face-to-face customers were less likely than telephone customers to have recommended the Service already (25% compared with 31%), while telephone information customers were most likely to say that they either had recommended or would recommend the Service (92% compared with 87% of both telephone information customers and face-to-face customers).

5.5.2 Online customers

Three-quarters of online customers said they would recommend the National Careers Service website to friends, family or colleagues (76%), while 9% said they would not recommend it and 15% were unsure. As on other issues, there was a substantial change in responses before and after the redesign of the website. Prior to the redesign, 83% of online customers said they would recommend the website, similar to the Year 5 figure. However, this fell to 60% after the redesign, with an increase in those saying they would not recommend it (from 5% to 20%) and in those who were unsure (from 12% to 21%).

Prior to the redesign of the website, a consistently high proportion of customers in different groups said they would recommend the website. However, there were some large differences after the redesign: careers advisers were less likely to say they would recommend the website (36% compared with 67% of general public customers). After the redesign, customers were more likely to say they would recommend the website if they were younger (78% of those aged 19 or under), in learning (78%), with no qualifications or qualifications below Level 2 (72%) or did not speak English as their first language (78%).

5.6 How do customers think the National Careers Service could improve?

5.6.1 Face-to-face and telephone customers

Around three-fifths of face-to-face and telephone customers could not think of any improvements that the National Careers Service needed to make (61%). Suggestions for improvement focused on more tailored help, more follow-up, more publicity and more knowledgeable advisers (Table 5.1).

Younger customers aged 18-19 were most likely to be happy with the service and suggest no improvements (71%). Older customers aged 50 plus were most likely to say that more tailored help was required (11%), while those aged 25 or over were more likely than younger customers to say there should be more publicity for the Service (7%). The 25-49 age group was most likely to want more knowledgeable advisers (7%).

Table 5.1: Main suggested improvements to the face-to-face and telephone service by age

	Overall	Age 18-19	Age 20-24	Age 25-49	Age 50+
Base:	8,821	543	1,332	4,487	2,459
No improvements/fine as it is	61%	71%	64%	59%	62%
More tailored help	9%	6%	8%	9%	11%
More follow up	7%	7%	6%	7%	6%
Publicise it more	6%	2%	4%	7%	7%
More knowledgeable advisers	6%	3%	5%	7%	4%

Customers were more likely to make at least one suggestion for improvement if they spoke English as a second language or if they had Level 4 qualifications or higher. For example, both of these customer groups were more likely than average to suggest more follow-up (11% and 10% respectively). In addition, customers who were mandated to the Service were more likely to request more tailored help (12%), as were those who had either recently experienced or were facing redundancy (11%).

Suggestions for improvement were linked to the service channel the customers used. Telephone information customers were more likely than other customers to feel the service should be publicised more (8% compared with 5% of telephone advice and 6% of face-to-face customers). Telephone customers were more likely than face-to-face customers to suggest more follow up (11% of telephone advice and 9% of telephone information customers, compared with 6% of face-to-face customers) and more knowledgeable advisers (11%, 9% and 5% respectively). While these differences are small, they are statistically significant.

5.6.2 Online customers

Website visitors were asked how the website could be improved. Comments were dominated by issues related to the redesigned website, as outlined below.

- Many customers commented on the design of the new website, which was seen as bland and uninviting compared with the previous version.

"Make it more user-friendly and dynamic by introducing graphics, video clips, etc."

"Please go back to the more colourful website. The aim of this site mainly is to attract young people and get them back into work. They would feel intimidated, as the website looks like something from a serious government department."

"The new website design is very un-engaging. The previous design was bright, engaging and welcoming. Personality wise, the previous website was like someone smiling, saying 'Hi, how can I help you?'. The new design is like someone with a blank expression, saying 'what do you want?'"

"I preferred the website when it was colourful and had images and videos. It felt much more personal and engaging, now it has a very dull almost clinical feel to it. The content is there but it isn't presented in an engaging way. The thing I would change is how the information is presented."

- There were requests for more detailed information, especially in the Job Profiles section.

"In the Job Profiles section, there could be better links to professional organisations and similar careers to the ones being researched."

"Make the Job Profiles longer and more detailed, especially the description of what the job is. As things stand the profiles are not helpful for young people who have no idea what some jobs entail."

"More comprehensive information about jobs and careers, i.e. entry requirements in terms of particular subjects and grades needed at school and college; details on progression routes in different occupations; more comprehensive information on the labour market and labour market trends; information on future types of careers/jobs, research and predictions".

- Some customers focused on technical difficulties they had experienced.

"Every time I click "log in/make an account" it says "URL not found" so this needs to be rectified."

"Every time I lose my skill checks - don't understand it - I have to keep repeating the same tests. It's annoying. Please fix."

6 Customer Progression

Almost all face-to-face and telephone customers (96%) experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months since their call/meeting.

The proportion of customers who achieved any employment progression averaged 54% across the year, in line with Year 5. Face-to-face customers were much more likely to have progressed into new employment (42% compared with 34% of telephone information customers). To a large extent this reflects the differences in their employment status at the time they first had contact with the service.

Learning progression averaged 67% in Year 6, in line with Year 5. It was higher among telephone than among face-to-face customers, related to the reasons why telephone customers contact the National Careers Service in the first place.

Overall 92% of face-to-face and telephone customers indicated that they had gained some form of Personal Added Value since their contact with the National Careers Service. As a whole, young people aged 18-24 were consistently more likely than older people to report any personal development outcomes, in particular young people who were NEET.

Nine in ten (87%) face-to-face and telephone customers reported developing career management skills during the six months since their contact with the National Careers Service. This was highest among 18-24 year olds NEETs and 18-24 year olds generally.

Almost all website visitors (90%) who completed the online progression survey had achieved some form of progression three months after their visit. This was most commonly learning progression (71%) although half (49%) had made progress in employment, either getting or improving a job.

This chapter examines the extent to which National Careers Service customers progressed in the six months since their call or meeting with the adviser, or in the three months since their visit to the website. The chapter considers the three main areas of progression which form part of the National Careers Service's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): employment progression, learning progression, and a measure of Personal Added Value incorporating the development of a range of different skills since their interaction with the National Careers Service, including job-

related skills and 'soft' skills such as team working and social skills. The chapter also examines the extent to which customers attribute any of their progression outcomes to their interaction with the National Careers Service.

When interpreting the following results, it is important to understand that these provide information on changes over time in employment and learning status and do not imply that these were *caused by* interaction with the National Careers Service. On a similar note, as the results only provide a snapshot of the progression of National Careers Service customers six months after their interaction with the service, it is important to bear in mind that some customers might not be seeking learning or employment progression at that point in time, or indeed may achieve this over a longer timeframe.

6.1 Overview of the extent of progression

6.1.1 Defining progression

Three core Key Performance Indicators are used to determine progression levels of National Careers Service customers six months after their intervention with the service:

1. Learning progression – whether customers have undertaken formal or informal learning or training in the six months since the call/meeting.

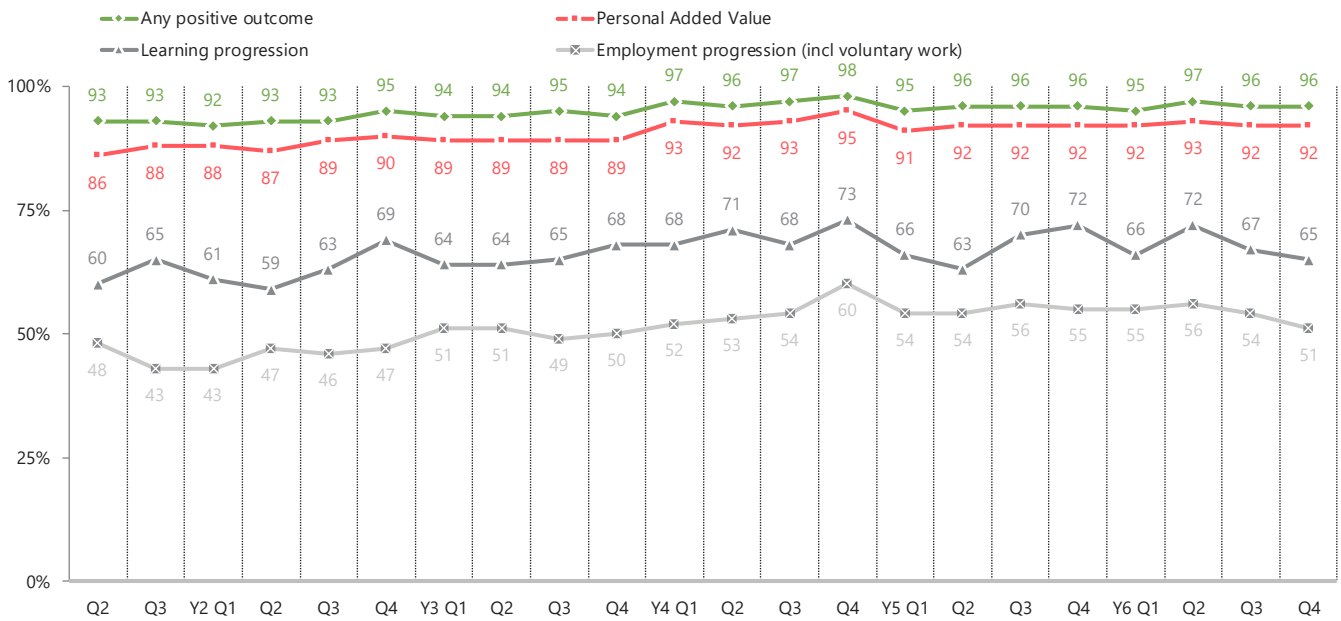
2. Employment progression – examining whether customers have entered new employment, changed career, were promoted or improved their salary, and/or have taken up voluntary work.

3. Personal Added Value – whether customers have achieved one or more of a range of 'softer' outcomes such as improved work-related or more personal skills (IT skills, team working skills etc.), improved their self-confidence, increased ability to make decisions for the future regarding work or learning, increased job satisfaction, or achieving a new and/or higher level qualification.

Customers who report any of the three types of progression are asked about the extent to which advice from the National Careers Service played a role in it.

Almost all face-to-face and telephone customers (96%) experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months since their call/meeting. The various measures are shown in Figure 6.1. In Year 6 there have been fluctuations in learning progression, and the annual average is in line with last year (67% compared with 68%). Employment progression is also in line with last year (54% compared with 55%).

Figure 6.1: Trends in progression among face-to-face and telephone customers, by survey quarter



Base: All face-to-face and telephone customers (see Table 1.1 for base sizes per quarter)

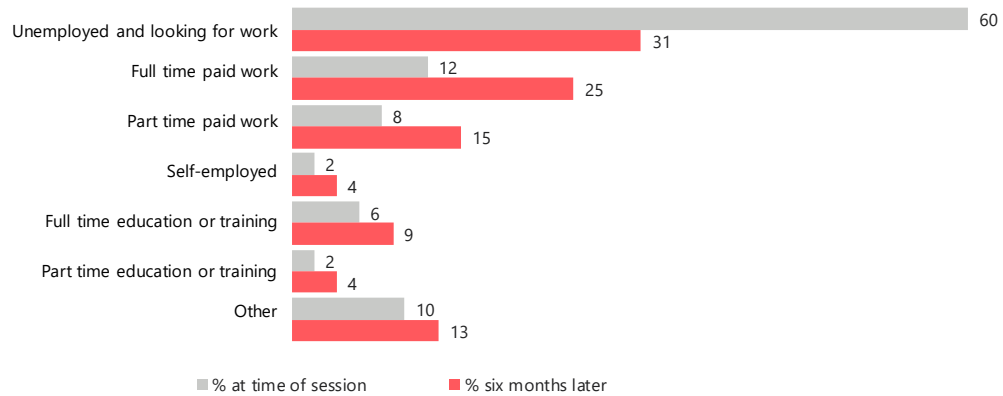
6.2 Employment progression among face-to-face and telephone customers

6.2.1 Change in employment status

The majority of customers interviewed for the progression survey had been unemployed and looking for work at the time of their adviser session six months previously (60%), slightly lower than last year (63%). A little under a quarter (23%) were in work, with the remainder in learning (8%) or doing something else (10%) including those unable to work due to ill health, with home or family responsibilities, or retired.

Figure 6.2 shows that, six months on, there was a large fall in the proportion of customers who were unemployed and seeking work and a large increase in the proportion who were in any form of work. Overall, these changes are similar to Year 5.

Figure 6.2: Employment status at the time of the call/meeting and six months later, among face-to-face and telephone customers



Base: All progression survey customers (6,413)

The largest increases in employment were seen among young people (Table 6.1) in particular those aged 18-19 years old. There was also a positive move into work among those aged 50 plus (increasing by 23 percentage points over the six-month period). Customers with no or low qualifications below Level 2 again showed a positive movement into work.

There were also positive moves into employment (45%) and education (9%) among 18-24 year olds who were NEET at the time of their initial interaction with the service. There is a similar, albeit smaller, increase in employment for people who were mandated to the service by Jobcentre Plus (with 24% into work and 1% into education). Among the latter group, one in five (27%) have now been categorised as unable to work due to ill-health or disability. These are similar findings to last year.

Table 6.1: Changes in employment status among key customer groups

		Status at point of contact with National Careers Service	Status 6 months after contact	Change (ppts) ⁹
18-19 year olds (365)	Unemployed	65%	31%	-34
	In work	10%	40%	+30
	In education	21%	23%	+2
20-24 year olds (954)	Unemployed	53%	25%	-28
	In work	25%	48%	+23
	In education	16%	20%	+4
Aged 50 plus (1,851)	Unemployed	71%	39%	-32
	In work	14%	37%	+23
	In education	2%	5%	+2
Disabled (1,875)	Unemployed	62%	39%	-24
	In work	12%	24%	+12
	In education	4%	8%	+4
Below Level 2 quals (1,858)	Unemployed	70%	42%	-28
	In work	12%	33%	+21
	In education	4%	5%	+2

⁹ Where percentage point changes do not appear to match the given status figures, this is due to the rounding of the two status figures.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the work status of face-to-face and telephone customers at the time of their initial interaction with the National Careers Service was quite different, with face-to-face customers far more likely to be unemployed and seeking work. Nevertheless, both groups show significant movements into employment and learning over the six months since their contact. The key changes are:

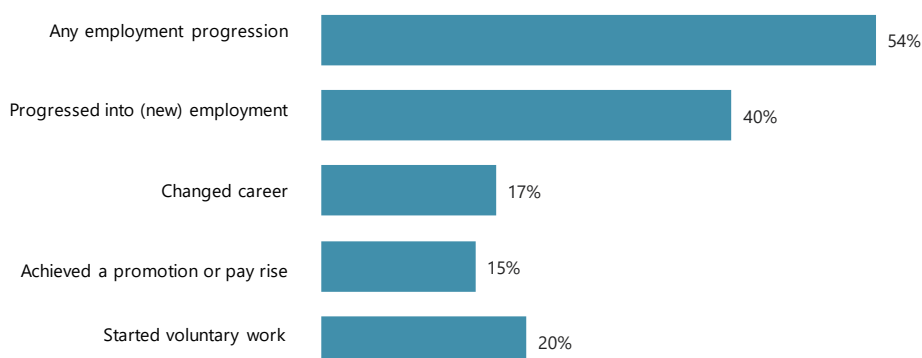
- Among face-to-face customers, the proportion who were unemployed and seeking work halved over the six-month period, from 71% to 37%. There was a corresponding increase in the proportion in work (including self-employment), up from 14% at the time of their session to 41% six months later.
- Telephone information customers were more likely to be in work (53%) or learning (20%) at the time of their first interaction with the National Careers Service, and less likely to be unemployed (21%). Six months on, the proportion in work remained the same (52%), while the proportion who were unemployed had dropped to 9%. By far the biggest change was a large increase in the proportion moving into education or learning, which increased from 20% to 34% across the six-month period.

6.2.2 Changing job role or employer

Customers who were in work at both points (i.e. at the time of the meeting/call and at the time of their progression interview six months later) were asked whether they were still in the same job at the same organisation. Around six in ten (58%) were, whereas two in ten (21%) were doing a different job in a new organisation. Fewer were doing the same type of job with a new employer (13%) or working for the same organisation in a different job (7%). These figures are in line with Year 5.

6.2.3 Employment progression among face-to-face and telephone customers

The proportion of customers who achieved some form of employment progression remained steady across the year. Figure 6.3 shows the types of employment progression achieved. It is important to note that this includes those who got a job and then left it within the six-month period since their interaction with the service. Two in five (40%) of all face-to-face or telephone customers had progressed into new employment in those six months, either from having been out of work, or moving into a new job, in line with last year. Around one in five (17%) had a career change, or taken up voluntary work (20%), while one in seven (15%) had achieved a promotion or pay increase. Again, there has been no change since Year 5.

Figure 6.3: Employment progression among face-to-face and telephone customers

Base: All progression survey customers (6,413)

Customers more likely to have moved into new employment were:

- those with Level 2 or higher qualifications (44%)
- young people aged 18-24 (48%) and in particular those who were NEET (53%)
- people who were unemployed at the point they first had contact with the service (46%) or who had been made redundant or were facing redundancy (57%)
- people without a disability (46%).

By channel, face-to-face customers were more likely to have progressed into new employment than telephone information customers (42% compared with 34%). To a large extent, this reflects the differences in their employment status at the time they first had contact with the service, six months previously, when telephone information customers in particular were more likely to already be in work.

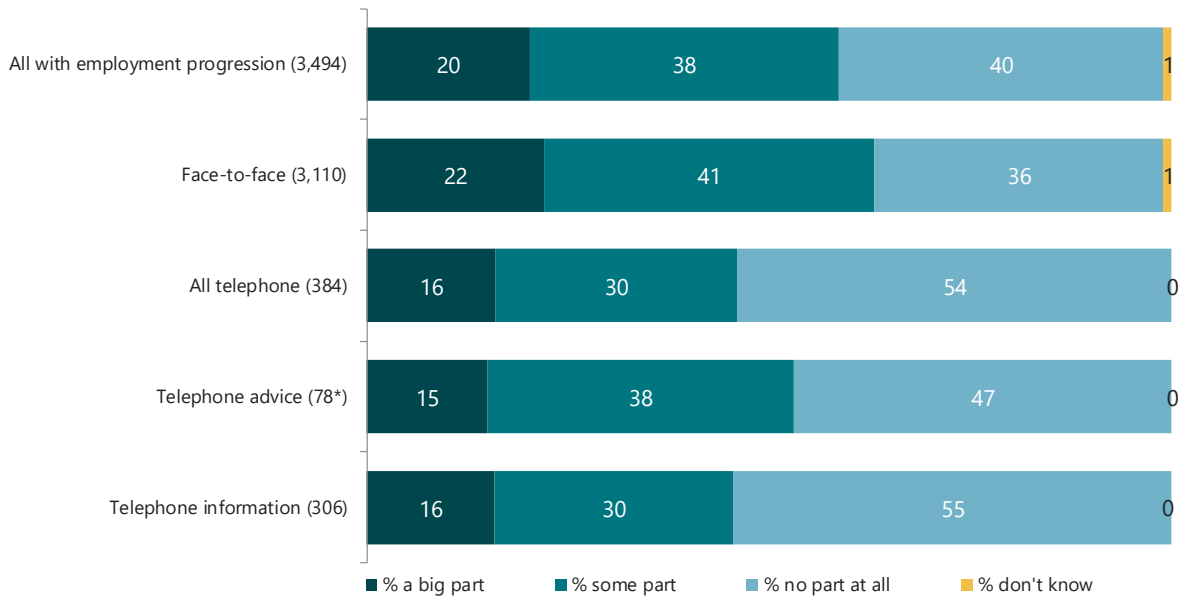
On the other hand, reflecting that telephone information customers were more likely to be in work at the time of their session, they were also more likely to have achieved a promotion or pay rise (20% compared with 13% of face-to-face customers). Other groups more likely to have achieved a promotion or pay rise include those aged 25-34 (22%), and those dealing with redundancy (18%) and customers with Level 2 or higher qualifications (17% compared with 10% of those with qualifications below Level 2).

6.2.4 The perceived role of the National Careers Service in supporting employment progression

Customers who had achieved any employment progression were asked to what extent their interaction with the National Careers Service adviser had contributed to this. Almost three in five of them agreed the adviser had an impact (59% compared with 56% in Year 5). The proportion who said the adviser played 'a big part' in their employment progression remained stable at 20%. Face-to-face customers (62%) were more likely to say their

adviser played some role than telephone information customers (45%), which reflects different levels of adviser input.

Figure 6.4: Whether the National Careers Service adviser played a part in employment progression reported by customers



Bases: Those with employment progression (see chart)

*Small base means that results must be considered indicative only

Those aged 18-19 (74%) and 18-24 year old NEETs (72%) were particularly likely to consider their adviser had played at least some role in their employment progression. Customers speaking English as a second language (25%) and those who were non-white British (23%) – particularly Black or Black British (26%) – were also more likely than average to regard their adviser's support as playing a big role in their employment progression.

Of those who did not achieve any employment progression, the majority of them (82%) thought the adviser could *not* have done anything more to help. In line with last year, 13% thought the adviser could have done more. Customers who had English as a second language (22%), who were non-white British (19%) – particularly Asian or Asian British (23%) – or who were dealing with redundancy (17%) were all significantly more likely to think the adviser could have done more to help them progress in work. Customers in London were particularly likely to think their adviser could have done more to help (22%) – although there is a strong overlap here with people who were non-white British and who spoke English as a second language. It should also be noted that this figure has fallen from 33% in Year 5.

The top five mentions that customers felt the adviser could have done more of to help them progress in work are in line with last year:

- Given more advice/information on jobs (33%).

- Given more advice/information on courses (22%).
- Given more options (20%).
- Been more attentive/given me more time (18%).
- Followed up or called back (13%).

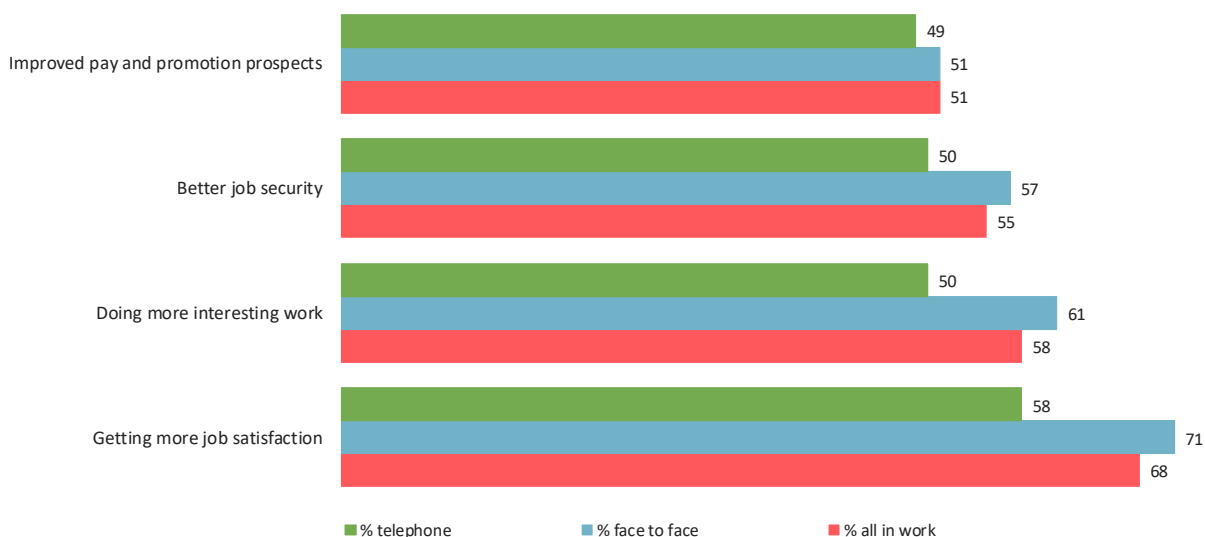
There were few significant differences here other than people aged 25-49 were more likely than others to want more information on courses (27%).

6.2.5 Positive changes at work

Customers who were in work when interviewed were asked about a range of other benefits they may have experienced in their job or career in the six months following their interaction with the National Careers Service. Young people were consistently more likely to cite any of these positive changes at work, in particular those aged 18-19. For example, 86% of 18-19 year olds now said they had more job security, 81% said they were getting more job satisfaction and 72% said they were doing more interesting work. The other group most likely to cite any of the wider job-related benefits were young people aged 18-24 who were NEET.

The results by channel are shown in Figure 6.5 and were similar to Year 5 overall. Face-to-face customers were more likely than telephone customers to cite improved job security and job satisfaction and say that they were doing interesting work.

Figure 6.5: Positive changes at work



Base: All customers in work at time of progression survey (2,736)

Three in five (60%) customers who had benefitted from positive changes at work attributed these at least in part to the information, advice or support they received from the National Careers Service. This was more common among

face-to-face customers (64%) than among telephone customers (47%). Young people aged 18-19 who experienced positive changes at work were more likely than average to say that the adviser played a part (75%). Although they were no more likely to say their adviser had played a part overall, people with qualifications below Level 2 were among the most positive that their adviser had played a big part in their employment progression (23%, compared with 17% overall), as were Black or Black British customers (24%).

6.2.6 Moving into work

Three in ten (29%) of all customers had been unemployed at the time of their interaction with the service but were in work six months later, in line with previous years. Just over half (55%) considered that the information, advice or support from their adviser, and any actions taken directly as a result of their discussion, had played a part in them getting their job, including 20% who felt it had played a big part (the same as Year 5).

6.3 Learning progression among face-to-face and telephone customers

Learning progression is in line with last year at 68%. This follows consecutive increases from 63% in Year 2 to 65% in Year 3 and to 70% in Year 4, before dropping to 68% in Year 5. Certain customer groups were much more likely to have done any learning or training (Table 6.2), in particular, 20-24 year olds, people who already had qualifications at Level 2 or above, and customers who were not white British. Black/Black British customers were often the most likely to have done any forms of learning. Learning was consistently lower among customers who were aged 50 or above, who had a disability, or who had qualifications below Level 2. Arguably, these groups may be most in need of updating their skills and qualifications but equally they are likely to face wider barriers to learning, such as lack of confidence, physical access issues, or insufficient entry qualifications.

Table 6.2: Forms of learning/training undertaken since the call/meeting with National Careers Service, among key customer groups¹⁰

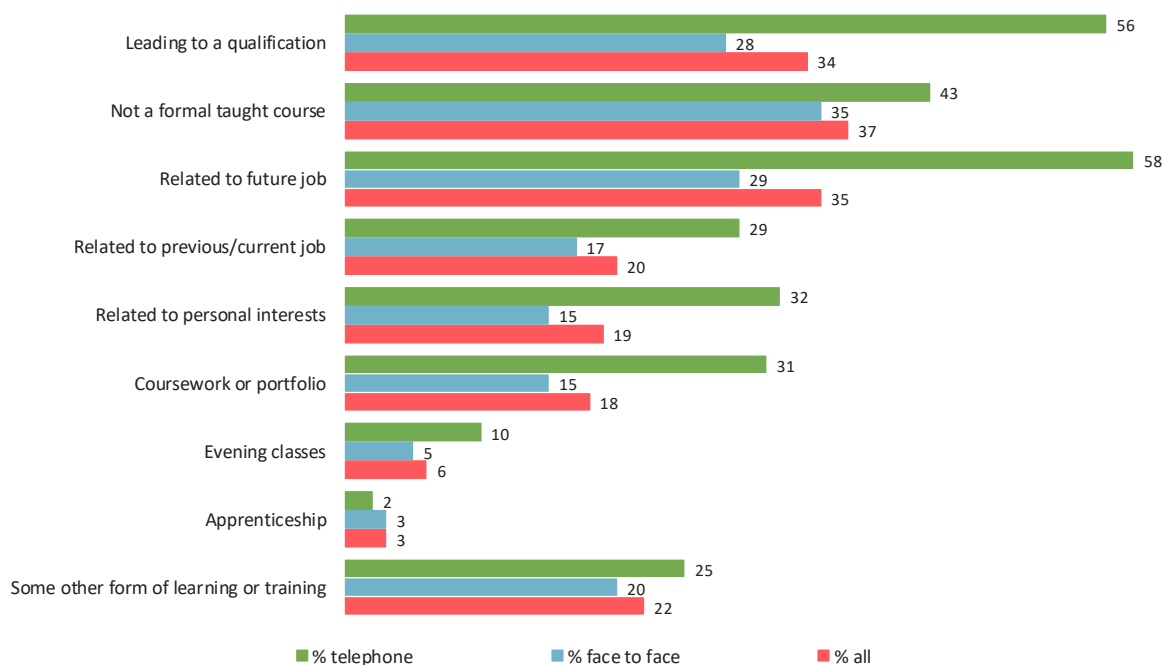
	Base	Leading to a qualification	Related to previous / current job	Related to a future job	Related to personal interests	Course work or portfolio	Evening class	Not a formal taught course	Apprenticeship	Some other form of learning or training
Overall	6,413	34%	20%	35%	19%	18%	6%	37%	3%	22%
18-24 NEET	926	31%	16%	30%	17%	16%	4%	40%	7%	25%
18-19 year olds	365	38%	18%	40%	25%	22%	6%	40%	11%	21%
20-24 year olds	954	38%	18%	40%	19%	20%	6%	41%	4%	25%
25-49 year olds	3,243	36%	23%	38%	20%	20%	7%	37%	2%	22%
Aged 50 plus	1,851	26%	17%	27%	15%	14%	4%	33%	1%	19%
Disabled	1,875	27%	13%	28%	17%	15%	5%	34%	2%	15%
Below Level 2 quals	1,858	26%	13%	25%	11%	11%	3%	25%	2%	14%
Not white British	1,797	38%	22%	41%	23%	23%	8%	41%	3%	22%

Like last year, learning progression was higher among telephone than among face-to-face customers, related to the reasons that telephone customers contact the National Careers Service in the first place (as discussed in Chapter 3). Figure 6.6 shows that telephone customers were more likely to have undertaken each form of learning than face-to-face customers, in particular learning related to a current or future job.

Six in ten (59%) customers who had identified more than one type of learning at this question reported these were all part of the same course or training.

¹⁰ Highlighted figures are statistically significantly different to the average

Figure 6.6: Forms of learning/training undertaken since the call/meeting with National Careers Service



Base: All progression survey customers (6,413)

The main motivations for doing further learning or training were very much job or career-related:

- to progress in a current job or career (92%). This was more common among telephone information customers and among non-white British customers;
- to develop or improve job-related skills (85%). This motivation was stronger than average among 18-24 year old NEETs and customers who were not white British, in particular those who were Black/Black British;
- to get or change a job (83%). This was more common among non-white British customers, in particular those who were Asian/Asian British; and
- to obtain a qualification (74%). This was more common among telephone information customers (85%) than among face-to-face (70%) or telephone advice customers (65%). Those doing learning or whose first language was not English were also more likely than average to be motivated by getting a qualification.

Among customers who had done any learning or training in the intervening six months, two in five (39%) had completed it, while 8% left the course early and 52% were still doing it at the time they were surveyed. The majority (86%) were satisfied with the course they were doing. One in ten (9%) National Careers Service customers now have a higher qualification than the one they started out with, when they last had contact with the service – a similar proportion to last year (10%). Notably, postgraduate level qualifications such as a Master's degree, MBA, or NVQ Level 5 are the most common ones being taken (16%) followed by NVQ Level 2 (11%).

In Year 6, a similar proportion of customers as in previous years considered that their National Careers Service adviser had contributed to their decision to do the learning or training (60%), with one in four saying that the adviser played a big part (24%). Customers with no or low qualifications (68% vs 58% of those with Level 2 or higher qualifications) were also more likely to consider the adviser played a part in their learning progression, as were those who speak English as a second language (67%).

Around one in ten (11%) customers who had not progressed in learning within the past six months thought their adviser could have done more to help them to start a course, especially people with an Asian/Asian British background (19%) and customers with English as a second language (17%). These figures are all lower than last year, suggesting that advisers have been doing more to encourage customers to undertake learning. The main ways that customers felt their adviser could have done more to help were:

- giving the customer more information about courses (30%);
- providing the customer with more general information about learning (24%);
- offering the customer a wider range of options (20%);
- giving the customer more specific careers advice (14%);
- giving more information about funding or financial help (13%); and
- being more encouraging or following up (both 12%).

Clearly National Careers Service advisers may be limited in what specific learning options they can advise, depending on the availability of appropriate courses in the customers' vicinity. But the areas where they could do more to encourage learning are in terms of giving customers more information about specific careers, courses and different options, as well as doing more to encourage them, including following up.

Over half (56%) of customers considered that they were now more likely to participate in any learning in future as a result of the information or advice they got from the National Careers Service. This was more common among:

- 18-24-year-old NEET young people (63%);
- Asian/Asian British customers (63%);
- customers with no or low qualifications below Level 2 (60%); and
- customers who did not speak English as a first language (60%).

6.4 Personal Added Value among face-to-face and telephone customers

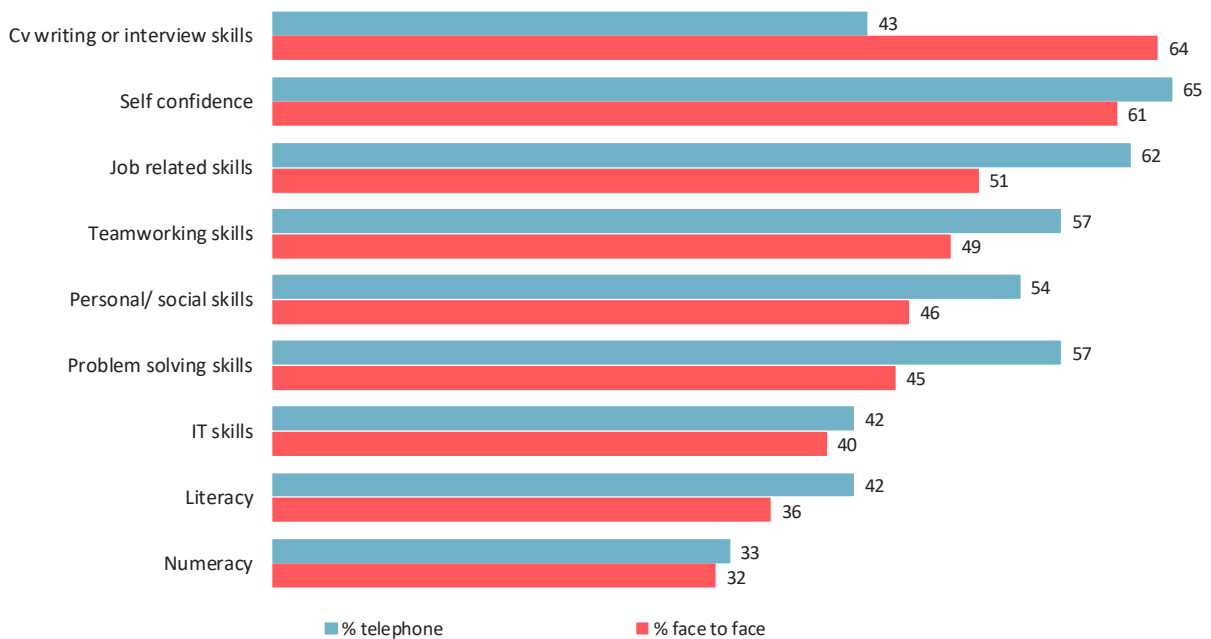
Customers were asked if they had achieved one or more of the range of 'softer' outcomes known as 'Personal Added Value'. Overall 92% of face-to-face and telephone customers indicated that they had gained some form of

Personal Added Value since their contact with the National Careers Service, consistent with last year. The most common additions were increased self-confidence (62%), improvements in CV writing or interview skills (59%), and developing skills related to a current or future job (53%) – all in line with Year 5.

As a whole, young people aged 18-19 and 20-24 years old were consistently more likely than older people to report any personal development outcomes, in particular young people who were NEET. For example, three-quarters of NEET young people reported improved CV writing or interview skills (76%), while seven-in-ten reported increased self-confidence (71%), both higher than among customers overall. Those in learning were also consistently more likely than average to report any personal development outcomes, as were customers who were not white British (in particular those who were Black/Black British or Asian/Asian British). Customers whose first language was not English were more likely than average to consider they had gained self-confidence (74%) or improved their literacy (57%) or numeracy (46%).

Figure 6.7 shows that there were consistent differences between customers who used different channels, with telephone customers more likely to report developing each of the skills listed, other than CV or interview skills. These differences are linked to the differing profiles of face-to-face and telephone service users.

Figure 6.7: Skills and personal development outcomes



Base: All progression survey customers (6,413)

Customers who reported gaining Personal Added Value since their contact with the National Careers Service six months before were far more likely to attribute this at least partly to their adviser than they were for employment or learning progression. Seven in ten (68%) said that the adviser played at least some part in this. Consistent with previous years and with other progression measures, face-to-face customers were more likely than telephone ones to attribute some of this role to their adviser (73% compared with 50%).

6.5 Progression among online customers

Progression is measured somewhat differently among online customers, at three months after they completed the website satisfaction survey. Customers are likely to have had varying levels of interaction with the National Careers Service during that time. For example, among those who completed the progression survey, one in five (22%) had face-to-face contact and one in eight (12%) had telephone contact with an adviser after they had used the website.

Almost all website visitors (95%) who completed the survey had achieved some form of progression three months on from their visit. This was most commonly learning progression (71%) although half (49%) had made progress in employment, either getting or improving a job.

6.5.1 Employment progression among website users

The main types of employment progression among website users were as follows (these figures are not mutually exclusive):

- 23% had progressed into new employment.
- 19% had changed career.
- 10% had achieved a promotion or pay increase.
- 27% had started voluntary work.

These results are similar to Year 5. Half (50%) of the customers who progressed in employment reported that the National Careers Service website had helped them to achieve this, equivalent to 25% of all website customers who took part in the progression survey.

6.5.2 Learning progression among website users

The most common type of learning or training started by online customers since visiting the website remains the same as Year 5; self-teaching to try and improve knowledge or skills without taking part in a formal course (50%). Again as in Year 5, significant minorities had undertaken a course leading to a qualification (28%), course work that they completed in their own time, other than homework (27%), a course, instruction or tuition related to their interests, hobbies or personal development (25%), or some other type of learning or training (41%)¹¹. Overall, five per cent of customers who had visited the website had increased their highest qualification in the three months since they had used the website.

Almost two-thirds (63%) of online customers felt that they were more likely to do learning in the future as a result of their visit to the website, and three-quarters (76%) felt that they would be likely to start learning in the next 12 months, including 46% who felt this was very likely. A third (32%) had opened an account, formerly known as a Lifelong Learning Account, with the National Careers Service since their visit to the website.

¹¹ This sums to more than 100% as customers may have done more than one type of learning and courses can fit into more than one category.

6.5.3 Soft outcomes and Personal Added Value among online customers

Like the telephone and face-to-face customers, website customers were asked if they had achieved one or more of the range of 'softer' outcomes since visiting the National Careers Service website known as 'Personal Added Value'.

Seven in ten online customers (71%) experienced some form of Personal Added Value in the three months following their visit to the website. Six in ten (59%) reported an increase in confidence about making decisions regarding their future or about planning their next career move (58%). Slightly fewer reported feeling more confident about applying for jobs (54%) or courses/training (52%).

Website users were asked about other benefits they may have experienced since their visit to the site three months previously, and for the most part the findings were consistent with Year 5:

- More interested in doing learning (64%).
- More aware of learning opportunities (63%).
- More aware of job and career opportunities (68%).
- More motivated to find work or to change their job (61%).
- Felt that their chances of finding a job had improved (37%).

Most of these customers felt that the National Careers Service website has contributed to their progression in these areas (69%).

6.6 Career management skills

Alongside satisfaction and progression, developing career management skills among its customers is the third key outcome area for the National Careers Service. This is the second year that career management skills have been examined specifically within the progression survey of face-to-face and telephone customers, utilising the existing questionnaire. To this end, the development of career management skills has been defined as follows:

- The customer has re-used the National Careers Service website or other source of advice, *acted on* the suggestion of their adviser, or followed up this advice by contacting another organisation;
- The customer has *activated* their Lifelong Learning Account;
- The customer has done any learning or training *for career-related reasons* – *informed by* discussion with the National Careers Service; or
- The customer has developed any job-related skills, job application/CV skills or confidence – *informed by* discussion with the National Careers Service.

- The customer has improved their ability to make decisions about future careers or learning, has a better idea about where to look for information on jobs or on learning, has increased their motivation to find work or change career, or developed more confidence – *informed by* discussion with the National Careers Service.

6.6.1 Career management skills overall

Altogether, nine in ten (87%) face-to-face and telephone customers reported developing career management skills during the six months since their contact with the National Careers Service. This was consistent across different types of customer, with the following exceptions:

- Telephone information customers (84%) were less likely to report the development of career management skills than face-to-face customers (88%). This may be because they have a lighter-touch intervention but it may also be due to them being more mindful of career-management *before* they called the National Careers Service, as most telephone information customers were seeking advice about doing some job-related learning or training.
- Customers aged 18-19 (94%) and 20-24 (90%) were more likely to report building career management skills than older customers aged 25-49 (87%) or 50 plus (85%).

In the remainder of this section we focus on a selection of the changes reported by customers since their interaction with the National Careers Service relating to improvements in career management skills.

6.6.2 Better awareness of possible work/career and learning opportunities

Three-quarters of face-to-face and telephone customers (75%) reported their awareness of work/career opportunities had increased over the past six months. This includes 40% who felt it had increased a lot. Differences were evident by age, with 31% of those aged 50 plus reporting their awareness of work/career opportunities had not increased at all, compared with just 11% of 18-19 year-olds, 16% of 20-24 year-olds and 22% of those aged 25-49. While the proportion saying their awareness had increased was very similar between service channels, telephone information customers (47%) were more likely than face-to-face (39%) customers to say that it had increased *a lot*.

Around seven in ten (72%) face-to-face and telephone customers reported their awareness of learning or training opportunities had increased over the past six months. Again, older customer aged 50 plus were more likely than others to think this had not increased at all (34%, compared with 15% of those aged 18-19, 20% of those aged 20-24 and 25% of those aged 25 to 49). Again, while the proportion saying their awareness had increased was similar between service channels, telephone information customers (44%) were more likely than face-to-face (36%) customers to say that it had increased *a lot*.

6.6.3 Increased motivation

Three-quarters (73%) of face-to-face and telephone customers reported that their motivation to find work or change career had improved in the past six months. There were no significant differences by service channel. Young people aged 18-19 (55%) and 20-24 (53%) were especially likely to report a *large* increase in motivation, as were those who were NEET at the time of their initial contact with the service (55%). Customers of non-white British origin (53%) or who did not speak English as their first language (53%) were also more likely than average to report

that their motivation had increased a lot in the six months since they contacted the service, especially those of Black/Black British origin (59%).

Customers most likely to report no increase in their motivation over this period were those mandated by Jobcentre Plus (47%) and those aged 50 plus (33%).

6.6.4 More clarity and confidence about making career/learning decisions

Three-quarters (74%) of face-to-face and telephone customers also reported that their ability to make decisions about the future in terms of careers, training or learning had improved over the past six months. One-quarter (24%) felt this had not improved at all. While the proportion saying this had improved was very similar between service channels, telephone information customers (47%) were again more likely than face-to-face (39%) customers to say that it had improved *a lot*. Customers more likely than average to consider their ability to make career decisions had improved 'a lot' tended to be younger (52% of 18-19 year olds and 47% of 20-24 year olds), and were non-white British (47%) or spoke English as a second language (47%).

7 How do key results vary across National Careers Service contracting areas?

Across contracting areas, customers expressed consistently positive views on the service they received. The main distinctions are:

- **Customers in the North East had above average levels of satisfaction overall and in relation to their adviser.**
- **Customers in London expressed lower than average satisfaction levels across the various measures, including overall satisfaction.**
- **In Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Warrington and Staffordshire, satisfaction increased from Year 5 to Year 6 on a number of measures.**

The face-to-face elements of the National Careers Service are delivered through a number of different area-based contractors across the country. This chapter looks at area-based differences in Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and other relevant results, starting by looking at the demographic differences in customer profile across the areas.

7.1 Customer profile in different areas

Table 7.1 shows area-based differences in the key demographics of: age, gender, those with qualifications below Level 2, the proportion who are white British and working status (specifically the proportion in work and the proportion unemployed and looking for work at the time of their contact with an adviser). Results are shown as row percentages.

The areas tend to have a fairly similar demographic profile, with the exception of London. As in previous years, the London profile was distinct, comprising higher than average proportions of: those aged 25-49 (55% compared with 52% on average); and non-white British (30% of London customers were white British, compared with 66% on average). Customers in London were also twice as likely to have English as a second language (34%) than the national average (17%).

Other distinctive demographic characteristics of the areas were as follows:

- The East Midlands had a relatively young customer profile, while other areas had an older age profile, including Central Eastern, North East, South Central and South East.
- Some areas had a relatively high proportion of male customers: North East (66%), East Midlands (61%), Liverpool City Region, Cumbria and Lancashire (60%), Yorkshire and the Humber (60%) and Greater

Manchester, Cheshire, Warrington and Staffordshire (59%). Thames Valley and London had a relatively high proportion of female customers (50% and 48% respectively).

- The proportion with no qualifications or with qualifications below Level 2 was highest in Central Eastern (35%), and lowest in Thames Valley (22%).
- As well as London, the West Midlands and East Midlands had relatively high proportions of non-white customers (63% and 66% respectively were white British).
- Customers in the North East and East Midlands were the most likely to be unemployed and looking for work at the time of their initial interview (73% in each case), while customers in Thames Valley were the most likely to be in work (27%).

Table 7.1: Profile of customers, by area

	All (incl. NCC)	CE	EM	NW -M	NW-L	L	NE	SC	SE	SW	TV	WM	YH
Base:	8821	608	715	535	587	1027	577	582	588	539	533	757	879
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
18-24	22	15	25	22	22	19	20	17	19	20	20	19	20
25-49	52	53	47	49	52	55	45	46	48	50	51	52	51
50+	26	32	28	29	26	26	35	37	33	29	29	29	29
Male	55	56	61	59	60	52	66	58	58	58	50	55	60
<L2 quals	27	35	32	31	30	28	27	31	31	31	22	33	33
White British	66	80	66	76	85	30	96	84	83	86	71	63	76
In work	23	12	14	14	17	13	14	15	22	20	27	17	18
Unemployed	58	69	73	70	66	69	73	69	62	62	53	65	65

7.2 Satisfaction

7.2.1 Overall satisfaction

Overall perceptions of the Service were consistently positive across the contracting areas. There were very few statistically significant differences in relation to overall satisfaction, perceived service quality, or whether customers had recommended or would recommend the Service (Figure 7.1).

Two of the contracting areas exceeded the average satisfaction level of 85%. Satisfaction was significantly higher than average in the North East (88%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (87%). Ratings in London were significantly lower than average on all three measures: quality of service (91%), overall satisfaction (80%) and recommending the service (84%).

The only significant change from Year 5 to Year 6 was an increase in overall satisfaction in the Liverpool City Region, Cumbria and Lancashire (from 81% to 86%).

Figure 7.1: Satisfaction, perceived service quality and willingness to recommend the National Careers Service, by area



Base: All telephone and face-to-face customers (8,821)

7.2.2 Satisfaction with operational aspects

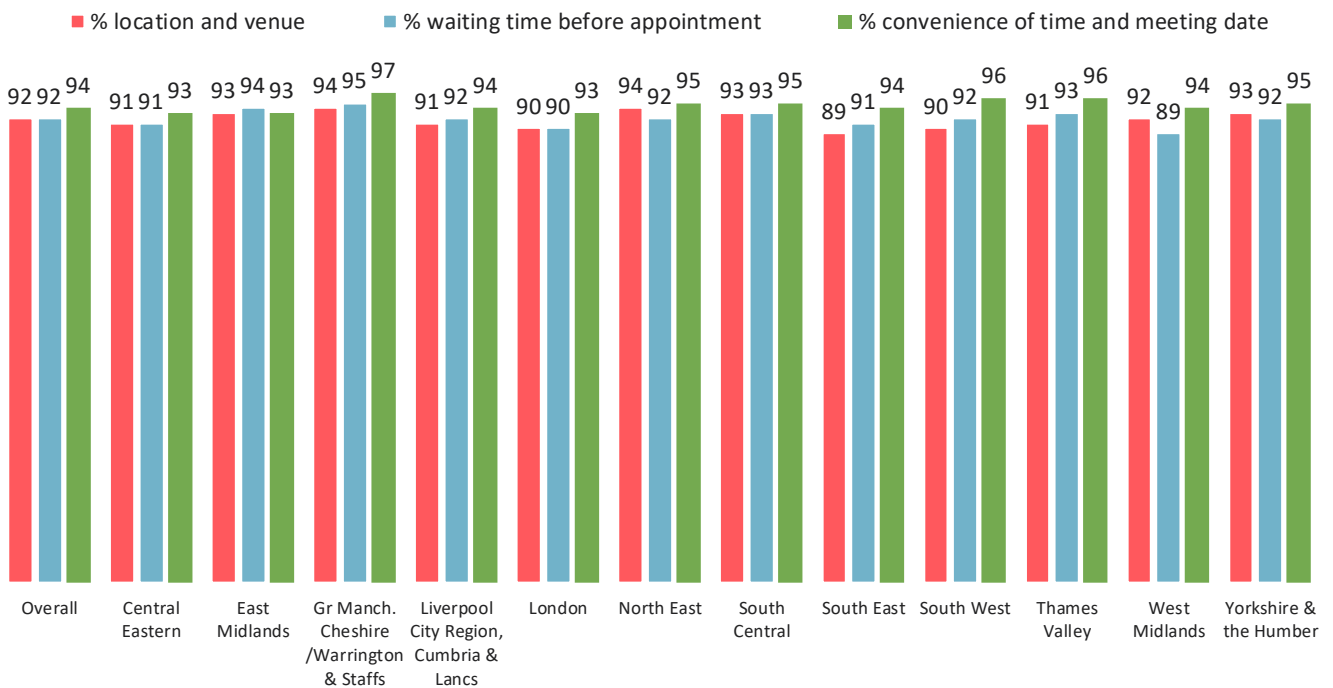
Across all contracting areas, face-to-face customers were consistently positive about the logistical and operational elements of the service. There were only minor variations by area, as highlighted below and in Figure 7.2.

Customers in Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Warrington and Staffordshire had significantly higher levels of satisfaction with the waiting time before their appointment (95%) and the convenience of the date and time of their

meeting (97%). Ratings were below average in London and the West Midlands in relation to waiting times (90% and 89% respectively), and in the East Midlands in relation to convenience of the time and date of the meeting (93%).

In comparison with Year 5, ratings were more positive in Year 6 in Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Warrington and Staffordshire, in relation to waiting times (up from 91% to 95%) and the convenience of the time and date of the meeting (up from 93% to 97%). However, customers were less satisfied in Year 6 than in Year 5 in relation to the location and venue in the South East (down from 93% to 89%) and the South West (down from 94% to 90%).

Figure 7.2: Satisfaction with logistical/operational elements of the service, by area



Base: All face-to-face customers (7,608)

7.2.3 Satisfaction with the adviser

As in last year's survey, customers in the North East expressed significantly higher levels of satisfaction with their adviser, specifically in relation to their knowledge (94%), understanding of their needs (93%) and the length of time they spent with them (94%), as shown in Table 7.2.

By contrast, customers in London expressed significantly lower levels of satisfaction with all elements of the service provided by the adviser. We know that BME customers were significantly less likely to be satisfied with their adviser than white British customers (as discussed in Chapter 5). The higher proportion of BME customers in London could therefore help to explain the lower ratings in this area.

Other areas which saw significant variation from the average were:

- Customers in Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Warrington and Staffordshire were significantly more satisfied than average with the time spent with the adviser (96%). This is a significant increase on the Year 5 figure

(89%), and customer ratings in this area also increased in relation to the helpfulness of the adviser (up from 90% to 94%).

- Ratings in the South Central area were lower than average for the helpfulness of the adviser (91%) and the extent to which the adviser understood their needs (88%).
- Customers in the West Midlands had significantly lower than average satisfaction on time spent with the adviser (90%). However, there was an increase between Year 5 and Year 6 in this area, in relation to the extent to which the adviser understood customers' needs (up from 86% to 90%).
- Customers in the Central Eastern area had significantly lower than average satisfaction with the professionalism of the adviser (93%) and the length of time they spent with them (90%).
- Customers in the East Midlands were significantly more satisfied than average with the knowledge of their adviser (95%).
- The helpfulness of the adviser was rated particularly highly in Thames Valley (95%).

Table 7.2: Satisfaction with the adviser, by area

	All (incl. NCC)	CE	EM	NW - M	NW-L	L	NE	SC	SE	SW	TV	WM	YH
Unweighted base	8821	608	715	535	587	1027	577	582	588	539	533	757	879
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Length of time with adviser	92	90	91	96	93	89	94	90	93	93	92	90	93
Professionalism of adviser	95	93	96	97	94	93	96	94	95	95	96	94	96
Helpfulness of adviser	93	92	94	94	92	91	95	91	93	93	95	92	94
Adviser knowledge	91	90	95	92	93	87	94	90	91	92	92	91	92
Adviser understood needs	91	90	91	93	90	88	93	88	92	90	92	90	92

7.2.4 Satisfaction with the information or advice received

Across contracting areas, customers were consistently positive about the advice and information they received. The only statistically significant differences were as follows:

- Customers in London were significantly less likely to be satisfied with the usefulness of the information, advice and guidance (87%) and the extent to which it allowed them to make an informed decision (81%).

- Customers in the East Midlands were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the usefulness of the information (92%).
- Customers in Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Warrington and Staffordshire were significantly more likely than average to be satisfied with the extent to which the information, advice and guidance allowed them to make an informed decision (88%). In this area, there were significant increases between Year 5 and Year 6 on all three measures.

In addition, there was an increase in the West Midlands between Year 5 and Year 6, in relation to information, advice and guidance being clear and easy to understand (up from 92% to 95%).

Table 7.3: Satisfaction with the advice/information provided, by area

	All (incl. NCC)	CE	EM	NW -M	NW-L	L	NE	SC	SE	SW	TV	WM	YH
Unweighted base	8821	608	715	535	587	1027	577	582	588	539	533	757	879
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
IAG was clear/easy to understand	94	94	95	96	94	93	95	94	93	95	94	95	95
IAG was useful	88	87	92	90	88	87	90	88	88	87	90	87	89
Got IAG to make informed decision	85	86	87	88	85	81	88	86	85	85	87	84	87

7.3 Progression and career management skills

As in Year 5, almost all customers in Year 6 (96%) experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months following their intervention (as discussed in Chapter 6). The main progression Key Performance Indicators are shown in Table 7.4, together with development of career management skills.

Table 7.4: Key progression measures and career management skills, by area¹²

	All (incl. NCC)	CE	EM	NW – GM	NW – LCL	Lon	NE	SC	SE	SW	TV	WM	YH
Unweighted base	6,413	426	471	422	393	729	498	475	423	485	339	587	579
Learning progression	68	61	64	61	62	65	68	62	63	64	65	64	65
Employment progression (excl. voluntary)	41	43	48	44	40	37	40	46	39	44	42	38	42
Personal Added Value	93	92	94	92	91	93	93	90	93	92	93	93	93
Any positive progression (excl. voluntary)	95	95	97	94	95	95	96	94	95	95	95	95	95
Career management skills	87	89	91	87	84	88	90	86	90	90	92	86	90

As in previous years, there is little significant variation across the measures of progression. The main exception was significantly lower than average learning progression in Central Eastern (61%), both North West sub-regions (Greater Manchester 61%, Lancashire and Liverpool 62%) and South Central (62%).

The Thames Valley area stands out as having significantly higher than average progression in career management skills (92%), as do East Midlands (91%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (90%).

¹² Highlighted figures are statistically significantly different to the average

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