Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 518

Evaluation of the trial of Back to Work group sessions

Dr. Sarah Jenkins and Richard Lloyd

A report of research carried out by GHK Consulting on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions
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## Abbreviations

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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>ADF</td>
<td>Adviser Discretionary Fund</td>
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<td>ASM</td>
<td>Adviser Service Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>BIS</td>
<td>Business Information System</td>
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<td>BOC</td>
<td>Better off Calculation</td>
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<td>CETL</td>
<td>Customer Engagement Team Leader</td>
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<td>CV</td>
<td>Curriculum vitae</td>
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<tr>
<td>DASO</td>
<td>Diary Administrative Support Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>DWP</td>
<td>Department for Work and Pensions</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESOL</td>
<td>English for Speakers of Other Languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>FJR</td>
<td>Fortnightly Job Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAG</td>
<td>Information, Adviser and Guidance</td>
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<td>JSA</td>
<td>Jobseeker’s Allowance</td>
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<tr>
<td>LLMRA</td>
<td>Local Labour Market Recruitment Adviser</td>
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<tr>
<td>LMS</td>
<td>Labour Market System</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDYP</td>
<td>New Deal for Young People</td>
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<td>OHP</td>
<td>Overhead projector</td>
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Introduction

This is the final report of the evaluation of the trial of Back to Work group sessions, undertaken between January and April 2008 in one Jobcentre Plus district.

The Back to Work group sessions were proposed in December 2007¹, as part of the revised Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) regime and flexible New Deal, which includes the introduction of personalised support purchased from specialist providers to be responsive to individual needs. The objective of the group session is to set out individuals’ rights and responsibilities and highlight the support available through Jobcentre Plus to help customers move into employment. The group sessions were trialled in six locations in one district. The sessions were voluntary at the trial stage, although they will be mandatory when they are part of the national revised JSA regime. These findings may, therefore, refer to an atypical group of jobseekers as they volunteered to attend.

The main aim of the evaluation was to inform the final design of the group session approach within the revised JSA regime.

Methodology

The methodology included: an initial district visit; observation of group sessions; analysis of evaluation forms that were handed out to customers at the group sessions; and telephone interviews with customers who did attend the group sessions and those who chose not to. The research was then concluded with a follow-up district visit where interviews were conducted with a section of key staff who had been involved in the organisation and delivery of the group sessions. Analysis was undertaken on the evaluation forms, observation sheets and interview findings, in relation to the research objectives.

Organisation of the group sessions

Having a member of staff with a central coordination role was key to the successful set-up and rolling out of the organisation and delivery of group sessions across the district. In addition to finding suitable venues and coordinating activities, this central role was seen to be important for the sharing of lessons learnt and group practice, however, once the central organisation of the group sessions was arranged, the time required by the project manager was minimal.

The organisation and delivery of group sessions was the responsibility of the local Jobcentre Plus office. There was initial concern that the resource required to deliver the group sessions would be a significant demand on adviser time, however, once initial group sessions had been delivered, the demand on adviser time was considered manageable. In fact, advisers indicated that they enjoyed delivering the group sessions as it gave them variety in their workload. Most presenters were joined by a Local Labour Market Recruitment Adviser (LLMRA) to deliver information about the local labour market to customers, thereby ensuring that most presenters were not on their own (Section 3.2).

Choice of venue

In the first instance, Jobcentre Plus premises were sought for the delivery of group sessions. Management felt this would be preferable as staff would have control over use of the venue and customers would be familiar with the location. Where Jobcentre Plus premises was not available, alternatives were sought with cost, accessibility and suitability being taken into consideration.

There was a mixed response amongst staff on whether using Jobcentre Plus premises or an external venue was the most suitable for delivering the group sessions. When using Jobcentre Plus premises, staff felt comfortable in a familiar environment. Staff who have used the community centre for the delivery of group sessions felt that the venue has worked extremely well and that holding the event offsite created a more informal and engaging environment than a Jobcentre Plus office (Section 3.3).

Staff training

Staff delivering the group sessions did not receive any formal presentation skills training, although receiving such training was deemed important by both presenters and managers.

A few staff had the opportunity to observe a group session being delivered before they were due to deliver their own. In these cases, staff found this opportunity invaluable in giving them ideas of examples to share with customers and increased their confidence in delivering their own session. All staff who did not observe another session would have liked the opportunity to do so.

Managers were issued with a checklist of tasks that needed to be undertaken in preparation for delivery of the group sessions. Diary Administrative Support
Officers (DASOs) were also given a checklist of the tasks they needed to undertake to perform the housekeeping on the spreadsheet of customer details and send out invitation letters. It was later identified that the checklist did not include the need to make reminder telephone calls or send out reminder letters. Once this had been realised and actioned, attendance rates, and engagement from customers with Jobcentre Plus if they were unable to attend, did increase.

The delivery of the group sessions involved the use of a laptop, projector and Powerpoint. There was an assumption that presenters would be able to use the associated technology, however, most staff indicated that they had never used it and were, therefore, very nervous about getting it to work. In most cases, a couple of members of staff who had used the technology before were identified and were relied upon to set up the equipment (Section 3.4).

**Inviting customers**

The quality of the invitation letters sent to customers varied across the district. In many cases, the letter was not sent on Jobcentre Plus letter-headed paper and the text made no reference to Jobcentre Plus. In addition, in some cases where local offices had tailored the letter with local information, the original text had not been deleted.

In some cases, customers who did not attend the group session, indicated that they had not received the invitation letter. In other cases, customers had forgotten about the group session as the letter had been sent to them too far in advance and either did not attend the session or were notified only when a member of Jobcentre Plus staff telephoned them (Section 3.5).

**Delivery of group sessions**

**Attendance**

Overall, attendance at the group sessions was lower than district staff anticipated. The main factors influencing customer numbers at the group sessions included: the varying quality of the invitation letter; the number of eligible customers on the spreadsheet; whether reminder telephone calls and letters are issued; and the fact that attendance at the group sessions was not mandatory.

The capacity of the venues used to deliver group sessions varied considerably from eight to 45 customers. In smaller venues, the capacity restricted the number of customers staff could invite to the group sessions in case all turned up on the day. It has taken time for each Jobcentre Plus office to establish the anticipated attendance of customers at their venue and adapt the number invited accordingly (Section 4.2).
Content of the presentation

The content of the presentation included customer rights and responsibilities, a Better Off Calculation (BOC), local labour market information and the support available through Jobcentre Plus to move people into work.

Virtually none of the programmes and initiatives that customers were informed about and that are available through Jobcentre Plus were currently accessible by the majority of JSA customers. In most cases, the customer had to be unemployed for at least six months before New Deal, Programme Centres, Work Trials and Adviser Discretion Fund (ADF) could be accessed. This left very little support available to customers attending the session. Moreover, informing customers about the additional support raised expectations or frustration when a customer later discovered they were unable to access the advertised support.

Customers were most interested in the information on the local labour market. Information about the proportion of jobs that are never advertised instigated discussions about the need for jobsearch outside Jobcentre Plus facilities, including speculative approaches to employers (Section 4.4.1).

Delivery of the presentation

The length of the group session varied considerably. In most cases, the lack of formal presentation skills and nervousness about using the technology was evident in the way in which the presentation was delivered. Staff often read word for word from the screen holding tightly to their script, with little or no additional information or examples provided. With the exception of the section about the local labour market, there was often very little engagement or interaction with customers.

It is important to have staff delivering the group sessions who are knowledgeable about the information being provided for customers. This is particularly important so as not to raise expectations amongst customers who later ask their regular adviser for further information about services which are not open to them. Staff also felt that knowledgeable staff helped make the sessions appear more professional (Section 4.4.2).

Information, advice and guidance provider

Where present, it was widely felt that having an Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) provider at the group session added value. Not only did having another presenter help break up delivery of the session making it more interesting for customers, IAG providers complemented the message of support being delivered by Jobcentre Plus.

Local Jobcentre Plus offices did not experience any difficulty engaging IAG providers to take part in group sessions. In locations where more than one IAG provider existed, they were put on a rota to attend sessions (Section 4.5).
Effect of the group sessions on customers

Overall, around half of the customers participating in the evaluation considered that they had not learnt anything new as a result of attending their session. The most commonly mentioned areas of learning were:

- the range of services available from Jobcentre Plus (and their partners) was greater than they had been aware of previously and that support was available even after they had started work;
- that Jobcentre Plus did not hold all the vacancies in their area and that their approach to jobseeking needed to reflect this; and
- that customers would be better off in a job on the minimum wage than on benefits, although some customers questioned the applicability of the calculations they were shown to their specific circumstances.

While few customers considered that the group sessions had provided new information on conditionality under JSA, analysis showed some positive change in terms of the understanding of conditionality. It may also be that the sessions served to provide a ‘gentle reminder’ of their rights and responsibilities (Section 5.2.1).

The strongest and most significant changes were identified in customers’ views of the likelihood of finding employment in the local area, and that Jobcentre Plus can help them prepare for, and find, a job. While a comparatively small number of customers reported changing their jobsearch behaviour as a result of the sessions, many of the customers considered that they were already doing all they could to find work.

Overall conclusion

The trial of the group sessions showed the challenges of effectively delivering group sessions to customers with different needs and backgrounds.

While it was apparent that for some customers the benefits of the sessions may be limited, others reported extending their understanding of the services Jobcentre Plus and their partners can offer; the need to extend their jobsearch activities beyond the vacancies advertised through Jobcentre Plus; and the fact that they are likely to be better off in work than claiming benefit.

In terms of the organisation and delivery of the sessions, inconsistency of customer contact and the varying quality of engagement with customers is likely to have impacted on attendance rates. To ensure the successful delivery of a quality group session, it is essential to ensure that staff have good presentation and facilitation skills and are able to offer immediate support to customers attending the sessions.
1 Introduction

This is the final report of the evaluation of the trial of Back to Work group sessions, which was undertaken between January and April 2008.

The Back to Work group sessions were proposed in December 2007, as part of the revised JSA regime and flexible New Deal, which includes the introduction of personalised support purchased from specialist providers to be responsive to individual needs.

The revised JSA regime and flexible New Deal will modernise and streamline the existing New Deals to provide greater flexibility and more personalised support for people of all ages seeking employment, including self-employment. The key elements of the approach are:

- Jobcentre Plus to lead jobsearch for the first 12 months;
- entrance into the new Gateway stage after six months, common to everyone and building on the current New Deal gateways, leading to more intense jobsearch activity and skills assessment, with the most disadvantaged people being fast-tracked to this stage from the outset; and
- people still looking for work after 12 months to be referred to a specialist provider.

The revised JSA regime and flexible New Deal will combine the current mandatory New Deals: New Deal 25 Plus and New Deal for Young People (NDYP), Private Sector Lead New Deals and Employment Zones. The New Deal for Musicians and New Deal 50 plus will also be subsumed within it. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) intend to introduce the revised JSA regime/flexible New Deal progressively from April 2009.

The objective of the group session is to set out individuals’ rights and responsibilities and highlight the support available through Jobcentre Plus to help customers move into employment. The concept of group sessions for jobseekers was a

result of concern by Ministers that all jobseekers fully understood their rights and responsibilities under the JSA regime. The sessions were carried out at six weeks as it was important that jobseekers understand the regime as early as possible in their claim. The group sessions were trialled in six locations in one district. The sessions were voluntary at the trial stage, although they will be mandatory when they are part of the national revised JSA regime. These findings may, therefore, refer to an atypical group of jobseekers as they volunteered to attend the group sessions.

The trial of group sessions took place in one Jobcentre Plus district, with no additional resources made available. The group session was introduced to customers in six main Jobcentre Plus offices, who have been claiming JSA for six weeks, with the intention of them attending a session before week eight of their claim. The district had previous experience of organising and delivering group sessions with 13 week JSA customers and lone parents.

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the trial of the Back to Work group sessions and is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 outlines the methodology followed during this evaluation;
- Chapter 3 describes how the group sessions were organised in preparation for delivery;
- Chapter 4 presents the way in which the group sessions were delivered to customers;
- Chapter 5 describes the key customer reactions to the group sessions, the level of understanding achieved and the impact the sessions have had on jobsearch activity; and
- Chapter 6 draws together the conclusions of the evaluation and presents the recommendations for delivery of group sessions in the future.
2 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research objectives of the evaluation of the trial of Back to Work group sessions and the methodology that was followed.

2.2 Research objectives

The main aim of the evaluation was to determine whether the group session approach was an effective means of engaging and informing jobseekers, with the view to informing the final design of the revised JSA regime. The evaluation was, therefore, designed to test the effectiveness of the group sessions in terms of both engaging jobseekers and informing them of:

- their rights and responsibilities under the JSA regime;
- why they would be better off in work;
- opportunities within the local labour market; and
- the support available to them from Jobcentre Plus and its partners.

More specifically, the study intended to explore:

- customer perceptions, opinions and outcomes;
- effectiveness of delivery and appropriateness of content and format;
- accurate and effective communication;
- customer identification and attendance;
- suitability of venues; and
- general management and process efficiency.

During the period of the evaluation, attendance at the group sessions was voluntary, although attendance will be mandatory with national roll-out.
2.3 Methodology

The methodology included a combination of research methodologies involving both Jobcentre Plus staff and customers. The key components of the methodology are described below.

2.3.1 Initial district visit

An initial district visit was conducted in order to establish the way in which the district was planning to organise and deliver the group sessions. Interviews were undertaken with a variety of staff including the project manager, an Adviser Service Manager (ASM), a Customer Engagement Team Leader (CETL) and a presenter, to identify the planning and processes that were being undertaken during the set-up and initial delivery of sessions. This visit also identified any potential issues that may arise in delivering group sessions to JSA customers.

2.3.2 Observation of group sessions

A total of 13 group sessions were observed across the six delivery sites, with at least two sessions being observed at each. The observations included noting the number of attendees and staff present, the ways in which the different sections of the presentation were delivered, the level of customer engagement and interaction with presenters, what issues or questions were raised by customers and any other general observations from the session.

After the sessions had been completed, informal interviews were conducted with the staff who had delivered the session and if applicable, Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) providers, to gather their views on how the session had gone.

2.3.3 Evaluation forms

To explore customers’ experiences of the group sessions, short evaluation forms were developed with two sides; one to be completed at the start and the other side to be filled in at end of each group session. The evaluation forms featured a series of questions about the session, including access to, and appropriateness of, the venue, whether they felt that they had learnt anything new as a result of the session and the extent to which they had understood the information provided to them. The forms also asked customers a series of questions about their understanding of their rights and responsibilities whilst claiming JSA, to try to assess the extent to which attendees’ understanding of conditionality had changed as a result of the session. The data from the evaluation forms was entered into a database for subsequent analysis.

It was intended that the evaluation forms would be handed out at the beginning and the end of the group session, to allow comparisons to be made between customers’ levels of understanding of their rights and responsibilities before and after the group session. However, a few observations identified that the evaluation forms were not always provided to customers to complete at the start and end
of each session, if at all. As we, therefore, cannot be certain of the extent to
which customers were given both sections of the evaluation form to complete at
the end of the session only, our ability to form robust conclusions on customers’
knowledge of rights and responsibilities before and after the sessions was highly
restricted. In addition, with over half of the 207 evaluation forms received, it
was not possible to ascertain which group session the customer had attended,
further hindering analysis. Analysis was undertaken of the database of completed
evaluation forms.

2.3.4 Telephone interviews with customers who attended
group sessions

Twenty telephone interviews were conducted with customers who had attended
the group sessions. Interviews were conducted between two and four weeks after
their attendance, to allow time for reflections to be caught and initial activities as
a result of attendance to have taken place. During the interviews, customers were
also asked a series of questions to test their understanding of their rights and
responsibilities while claiming JSA.

2.3.5 Telephone interviews with customers who did not attend
the group sessions

Twenty telephone interviews were conducted with customers who had not
attended the group session. The purpose of the interview was to establish why
they had chosen not to attend the session, what they thought the session was
about and if anything could have been done to persuade them to attend. During
the interviews, customers were also asked a series of questions to test their
understanding of their rights and responsibilities while claiming JSA.

2.3.6 Follow-up district visit

A follow-up district visit was conducted after the group sessions had been running
for three months. Twelve in-depth interviews were conducted with a variety of staff
who had been involved in the organisation and delivery of the group sessions. This
included the District Manager, project manager, ASMs, presenters and DASOs.
This visit gathered reflective thoughts on the way in which the group sessions
were organised, the success of the sessions that had been delivered and any good
practice that could be shared.

Once the main fieldwork tasks had been completed, a debriefing session took place
for members of the study team and analysis was undertaken of the database of
completed evaluation forms, observation forms and interviews. Key themes were
identified using the research objectives, alongside being open to unanticipated
issues that had arisen through the delivery of the group sessions identified in
discussion with the fieldwork team at the debrief session.
3 Organisation of group sessions

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the way in which the group sessions were organised and prepared for, including resource requirements, selection of venues, staff preparation and training and the processes followed for identifying and inviting customers to the sessions. The chapter also explores staff’s views on the rationale for, and objectives of, the sessions.

The District Manager believed that the group sessions were an important complement to existing processes and had the potential to increase the understanding amongst customers about how Jobcentre Plus can help them to move into employment. By delivering information about the local labour market to customers, it was hoped that they would become better informed jobseekers, enabling them to be realistic about their employment opportunities and move off the register before 13 weeks.

District staff felt that when a customer makes a new claim, Jobcentre Plus did not spend any time talking to them about the local labour market and their job expectations. The first instance where the customer had a one-to-one discussion about their job expectations in relation to the local labour market and receives guidance on their jobsearch, was at the 13-week interview. The District Manager felt that the group sessions were an opportunity to bring this advice and support forward, indicating that ‘this makes them better informed jobseekers’.

There were varying opinions amongst staff about the objectives of the group sessions. Generally, staff felt that the group sessions are primarily about informing customers of the support that was available to them and secondly about ensuring customers were aware of their rights and responsibilities while claiming JSA. District staff felt the group sessions were about ‘making our customers more informed so they are better equipped to move into work’. One ASM believed that the group sessions were ‘for customers to get a clear understanding of their responsibilities...’
and hopefully leave the register’ and a presenter felt that the sessions were about ‘the support we can offer and their responsibilities’.

3.2 Resource

Generally, the amount of resource required to deliver the group sessions had been the same as, or less than, what was anticipated. Initial discussions had highlighted the need for many different staff to be involved throughout the delivery of the sessions. However, once they were running and processes were in place for organising the group sessions within the local Jobcentre Plus office, the additional workload was manageable within staff daily duties.

3.2.1 Central coordination role

Staff considered a dedicated coordination role was central to the successful organisation and delivery of group sessions, particularly during the initial set-up phase.

During the initial set-up phase, the project manager had responsibility for establishing and implementing the organisation of group sessions. This included identifying suitable venues, conducting risk assessments, establishing a DASO checklist for housekeeping the data and inviting customers and establishing an ASM checklist to ensure that the local office were ready for delivery of the group sessions. In order to achieve this, the project manager was in contact with one ASM from each delivery office through which he coordinated and disseminated any information.

The District Manager believed that ‘you need a centre point that can share the lessons learned with others’. Therefore, once the sessions were being delivered, the project manager maintained responsibility for overseeing the group sessions and ensured the sharing of information and best practice across the six local Jobcentre Plus offices.

The demand on the project manager’s time was considered intensive during the set-up phase but once the group sessions were up and running, there were few requirements other than to disseminate information. The district lead felt that the time required to set up and deliver the group sessions was manageable within his other responsibilities. The project manager indicated that ‘at worst, it has taken up 50 per cent of my time’.

3.2.2 Staff resource

Some managers and staff initially felt that delivering the group sessions was going to be a large pull on resources, particularly as existing workloads had not been reduced. However, as the delivery of group sessions evolved, staff realised that less time and resource was needed than had originally been anticipated. At the beginning, some staff were away from their diary for up to half a day to deliver a group session, this later reduced to 1.5 hours. Each session has two members of
staff, plus a Customer Care Officer where the sessions are being held in a non-
customer-facing Jobcentre Plus room.

‘It’s not onerous, it gives staff a bit of variety.’
(Project Manager)

‘At first we were a bit “grrrr”, but as times gone on we have accepted it and I’ve enjoyed it.’
(ASM)

With the exception of one Jobcentre Plus office, all the staff delivering the group
sessions had volunteered to do so. However, in one local office, the ASM felt it was
important for all Fortnightly Job Review (FJR) staff to be involved, so staff were put
on a rota to run sessions. In hindsight, the ASM felt that it was more important
to have good presenters who were delivering the sessions and ‘that it would be
to keep a smaller pool of advisers who are presenting more frequently’.

In most cases, advisers were accompanied by a LLMRA, who delivered the section
of the presentation on the local labour market. In one case, an ASM explained that
as the LLMRA did not have diary commitments, they were able to help, alongside
the DASOs, with the set-up of the room and technology in order that ‘the adviser
simply turns up, delivers the presentation and returns to their desk’.

3.3 Choice of venue

The group sessions were being delivered at a variety of venues including Jobcentre
Plus premises, IAG provider premises and a local community centre. In the first
instance, as assessment was conducted to seek a suitable venue to hold the group
session within the local Jobcentre Plus office. The district lead felt that ‘Holding
them in Jobcentres is ideal, but not all Jobcentres have the room’. The immediate
benefits of using a Jobcentre Plus venue included having control over the use
of the room, no cost implications and customers being familiar with location.
However, customer-facing rooms were only available in two of the six delivery
offices. One local office had a suitable room within the building. However, it
was not a customer-facing room and has, therefore, required the presence of an
additional Customer Care Officer in order to allow the room to be used to deliver
the group sessions. If a Customer Care Officer was unavailable or failed to show
up, the group session had to be cancelled.

When Jobcentre Plus office space was not available, alternative venues were
sought, with cost, accessibility and suitability being taken into consideration.
Two Jobcentre Plus offices used local IAG provider premises based within walking
distance of the local office. In both cases, the provider allowed Jobcentre Plus
to use the venue at no cost, as long as the provider did not require the room
themselves. This sometimes proved problematic, because when the provider has
required use of the room, the group session has been moved to a smaller room
within the venue. This incurs difficulties in planning for numbers of customers attending. In addition, some of the rooms within the provider venue were not considered very attractive or inviting to customers. It was felt that the venue was not conducive to creating the right environment for the customer. One DASO explained that ‘the brickwork has been chipped away. [Provider name] is not nice, the Jobcentre is much nicer’.

One Jobcentre Plus office has procured the use of a local community centre for the delivery of their group sessions. Staff considered the location of the venue to be excellent as it is just on the edge of the town centre, is attached to a newly built supermarket and has ample free parking. Being newly built, the facilities were modern and the building is totally accessible to disabled people. This venue is the only one that incurs a cost; Jobcentre Plus pay £15 or £25 a session depending on the room used.

The capacity of the venues varies greatly and in some cases, staff felt that the room that they were using to deliver the group sessions was too small. Where capacity was low, it was felt that the limiting size of the room impacts on their ability to invite adequate numbers, in case too many turn up.

‘It’s too small, seven to eight people would be more than enough in the room we’ve got.’

(Presenter)

However, as customer attendance has been very low, staff were starting to invite more customers to the sessions.

‘Initially we only invited 16 people in case everyone turned up, however, over the last couple of weeks we have started to invite everyone due to the low numbers we’ve had.’

(DASO)

Some venues had the capacity to hold up to 45 customers. In one of these cases, management were considering reducing the frequency of the group sessions to one every ten days in the hope of boosting the number of customers attending each session to 30.

District staff highlighted that there will be fewer venue options available when considering the roll-out of group sessions to smaller and more rural locations. Venues suitable for large groups may not exist and, therefore, regular smaller group sessions may need to be held. However, it is also possible that, in rural locations, the number of eligible customers may be small and, therefore, large venues may not be required.

3.3.1 Customer response to the venues

Few issues were experienced by customers in terms of finding and getting to the buildings in question. Only 12 of the 207 completed evaluation forms described any difficulties with finding or getting to the venue. However, the evaluation forms
were only completed by those customers who managed to find the venue. Six of the comments referred to one group session venue which was held at an IAG provider premises rather than at the Jobcentre Plus local office and suggested that the provision of a map with the invitation letter would have been helpful.

An overwhelming majority of customers felt that the chosen venue was suitable for delivering the group sessions. Only a few customers made negative comments, these included one customer reporting that the building had ‘too many stairs’ while another had not been given clear guidance on where to wait for their event within the building.

3.3.2 What type of venue is better?

There has been a mixed reaction from staff as to whether it is better to hold the group sessions at Jobcentre Plus local offices or at an external venue.

Staff thought that holding the group session off Jobcentre Plus premises created a more relaxed and informal atmosphere. Staff felt that customers are more likely to engage and interact with staff, one CETL explained:

‘We don’t want customers to be intimidated by having to attend the Jobcentre for a special interview…put them in the Jobcentre and they are immediately on the defensive. Off site they are more relaxed, more likely to ask questions, they are more likely to take it on board.’

In all venues that were not on Jobcentre Plus premises, the staff experienced difficulties with ensuring use of the room which had been risk assessed. If there was a prior booking or the provider requires the room, then the group sessions had to be moved to an alternative room. In the case of the community centre, this was simply due to the fact that the room had a prior booking. However, in planning future events, the staff have now booked the preferred room through to the end of the year. However, with the IAG provider premises, staff still need to remain flexible to the commitments of the provider.

Staff who used IAG provider premises, generally felt that the group sessions would be better held on Jobcentre Plus premises. This was due to the negative feeling associated with the providers’ premises and the continual need to be flexible to the provider’s use of the room. In addition, staff indicated that the provider has a negative reputation amongst some jobseekers and this was felt to impact on customers’ willingness to attend. However, staff using the local community centre believed that there were a lot of benefits to holding the group sessions off Jobcentre Plus premises and felt strongly that they would not want to deliver the group sessions at the Jobcentre Plus office.

Some staff felt that if the group session was held at a venue away from the Jobcentre Plus office, customers were inclined to believe that they did not have to attend. This is an issue to be considered for the future delivery of group sessions while attendance remains voluntary.
The findings from customers attending the group sessions shed little light on any locational preferences they might have. There were no apparent barriers or negative views associated with attending sessions off Jobcentre Plus premises and from the overwhelmingly positive views regarding staff friendliness and approachability, it may even have had a positive influence for some.

3.4 Staff training and preparation

It was generally felt that staff had sufficient time to organise and prepare for the delivery of group sessions across the district. Trial sessions were delivered in one location in order to develop and test checklists and processes before rolling out delivery across the district. However, no formal training was delivered to staff in preparation for delivering the group sessions.

One Jobcentre Plus local office had the responsibility of running three trial sessions prior to delivering them across the district. The trial sessions were held in December 2007, before the period of evaluation, and enabled staff to practise delivery of the session and put processes into place and ensure that instructions and the booking systems for inviting customers were correct. For example, during this time a DASO checklist was developed outlining all the tasks that a DASO had to undertake in order to conduct the housekeeping on the data spreadsheets and send out invitation letters to customers. A checklist was also developed for ASMs to ensure they were aware of all the tasks that needed to be undertaken in preparation for delivery of group sessions from their local office. A copy of both the DASO checklist and ASM checklist can be found in Appendices A and B respectively. After the trial sessions had been completed, a meeting was held with all ASMs to communicate lessons learnt.

Many staff were nervous of delivering the group sessions. This was as a result of one, or a combination of: never having done a presentation before; not having the underlying adviser knowledge of the support on offer to customers; or a lack of knowledge of using the equipment involved in delivery of the presentation. The project manager acknowledged that ‘It is a bigger learning curve than just standing up and speaking to people’.

Staff received no formal presentation skills training before delivering the group sessions. Those staff who were to deliver the group sessions were sent a copy of the presentation via email. District staff expressed the view that, due to the short time leading up to delivery of the sessions, there was not time to send staff on a presentation skills training course. Instead, managers were asked to ensure the staff who were put forward to deliver the sessions had the necessary skills already. However, in one location, a local IAG provider delivered a one-hour presentation skills session to Jobcentre Plus staff in their weekly communications meeting which was felt to be very useful. A few staff were identified as good presenters. However, both presenters and managers felt that most staff lacked the necessary skills and confidence needed to deliver the group sessions and would
benefit from undertaking presentation skills training to ensure delivery of a quality group session.

‘[Staff name] is an experienced presenter and therefore didn’t need very much support, however, that is not the case for everyone, some of my staff would definitely need presentation skills training.’

(CETL)

‘A big worry is that we have not had any presentation or formal training, we read what is on the presentation, there are also issues with equipment training.’

(Presenter)

A few staff across the district were offered the opportunity to observe the trial group sessions and said that they found this very useful in planning the delivery of their own sessions. A few other staff sat in on a colleague’s presentation before delivering their own group session. However, most staff did not observe a session prior to delivering their own and indicated that they would have liked the opportunity to do so. In addition to the observations, staff were encouraged to find the opportunity to practise their presentation prior to delivering their first group session, however, this did not always happen.

‘In the practice sessions, they spent more time practising plugging it in and setting up the laptop then actually going through the presentation.’

(District staff)

Staff who worked part-time expressed experiencing additional difficulty in finding time to meet with colleagues to practise their presentation.

In order to support staff with the delivery of their first sessions, ASMs were encouraged to attend at least the first session being delivered. Presenters described how this improved their confidence, knowing that the ASM would be able to help answer any questions they may not know the answer to.

In addition to presentation skills training, it was felt that the staff would benefit from some advice on how to deal with disruptive customers that may impact on the rest of the customers attending the group session.

3.4.1 Use of technology

The delivery of the group sessions involved use of a laptop, a projector and Powerpoint and there was an assumption that staff would be competent with this technology. There were two main issues that arose with the technology: firstly, many staff had never used a laptop, projector or Powerpoint before; secondly, problems were experienced in gaining and maintaining access to networked laptops.
All staff felt that it was important for the group sessions to look professional and using Powerpoint to deliver the presentation was considered important in achieving this. However, equally as important, are for the staff to have good presentation skills and to be knowledgeable of the support and information being delivered to customers.

‘We should be using Powerpoint and technology as it makes it look so much more professional…but they need more than just presentation skills.’

(District staff)

Not feeling confident using the technology, increased already low confidence levels, particularly amongst those staff who had not delivered presentations before. There were incidences when the technology failed and staff were left to deliver the session without any visual presentation.

‘It is difficult without the Powerpoint, they did everything they could to get it working, you need the Powerpoint, without it, it is hard to explain.’

(Presenter)

The project manager expressed that ‘It is two to three sessions before staff are confident with what to do…it is the IT that gives people the most anxiety’.

In most cases, staff had identified a couple of colleagues who had the knowledge to use the technology and they were heavily relied upon to set up the projector and laptop for the presentation. In many cases this was the LLMRA who had previous experience of delivering presentations. In other cases DASOs learnt how to use the technology in order to be able to set up the room for the advisers, so that they required less time away from their diary.

The laptops used for the group sessions were multi-user laptops that were connected to the Jobcentre Plus network. This presented a number of security issues which created additional problems for staff. In order to be able to access the laptop, all staff needed to apply for a password. Once received, staff needed to log onto the laptop at least once a week in order to keep the password activated or they would need to reapply for a new password. In addition, if a member of staff did not log off the laptop correctly, no other staff members were able to log onto that computer. Managers and presenters expressed that ‘it would be better if they were stand alone laptops’.

‘We are handicapped by the equipment, the laptops are too complicated for our needs. They require smartcards and they won’t allow more than two or three users. It is embarrassing if the equipment doesn’t work…we have requested a cheap laptop that a child could use.’

(ASM)

In order to help staff address the technology training needs, the district team issued staff with a ‘Hints and Tips’ worksheet, including information on how to get a password for the laptops, connect to the network and use the projector.
Having experienced many problems with getting the technology to work or an absence of staff who had access to the laptop, many Jobcentre Plus offices had printed out a copy of the presentation for use on an overhead projector (OHP) as a back up.

‘The laptops on the whole are frustrating, invariably there is some glitch and you need to phone someone. We have also laminated copies of the presentation and have used them. We have also handed out hardcopies so they can see.’

(ASM)

3.5 Inviting jobseekers

When a customer made a new JSA claim, they were given a letter informing them that if they were still claiming JSA at six weeks, they would be invited to an information session with other jobseekers. In hindsight, the District Manager felt that it was also important to ensure that FJR advisers are involved in the process so they can remind customers of the group sessions during the FJR meetings leading up to their expected attendance. It is hoped that staff will start to include attendance at the group sessions in customers’ Jobseekers Agreements. The District Manager explained that ‘this means customers will hear about the group session several times while they are claiming, and they will be expecting the invitation when it turns up’.

The district Performance Team used the Business Information System (BIS) to generate a list of customers who were at week four of their claim. The spreadsheet was sent to each local office for them to undertake the necessary housekeeping before sending out invitation letters to customers. In the early stages, each Jobcentre Plus office was planning to deliver two group sessions a week. However, it soon became evident that there were not enough customers on the weekly claimant count, so this was reduced to one session a week at each of the six locations.

3.5.1 Housekeeping the data

Housekeeping was undertaken by the DASO on the spreadsheet to remove customers in the following categories who were considered unsuitable to attend the group sessions:

- potentially violent;
- under 18 years old;
- those who have recently finished a New Deal option; and
- those who have moved into employment.

This required a DASO to enter the Labour Market System (LMS) record for each customer to check their claim. Depending on the member of staff and the size of the list, the housekeeping could take between 1.5 hours and half a day.
3.5.2 Invitation letters

Invitation letters were automatically generated from the spreadsheet prepared by the DASO and were sent out in the post to customers if they were still claiming JSA after six weeks. They would be invited to a group session being organised between week six and eight of their claim. A small number of customers were of no fixed abode, and their letters were handed out at their next FJR meeting.

The quality of the invitation letter varied by Jobcentre Plus office. None of the letters made reference to Jobcentre Plus, particularly if the group session was to be held at an external venue. In addition, in many cases, the letter was not printed onto Jobcentre Plus letter-headed paper. It is, therefore, anticipated that some customers did not make the connection between the invitation letter and their claim for JSA.

‘The letters are not on letter headed paper, it wouldn’t surprise me if people don’t read it.’

(Presenter)

‘They would not know it was anything to do with the Jobcentre without reading it, then they see [provider name] but might not know what it is.’

(DASO)

On more than one occasion, where the invitation letter had been adapted by the local Jobcentre Plus office, the information on the letter was not always accurate or it was evident that the letter had not been proofread before being sent out. For example, the phone number for the local Jobcentre Plus office was incorrect or sentences were repeated. The standard invitation letter should have been printed automatically from the spreadsheet, so it is unclear how this happened. This is also likely to have had an impact on the customer’s decision to attend the group sessions.

Some Jobcentre Plus offices have decided to try and get the invitation letters into the FJR box to be issued by the adviser at the customer’s next signing. In order for this to be achieved, the spreadsheet needs to be actioned within a few days of receiving it from district, which is considered manageable. By issuing letters through the FJR, staff felt this would eliminate any possibility of letters getting lost in the post.

‘Seeing the customer sign to say that they have received the letter, they have no excuse of not receiving it.’

(Presenter)

This will be of particular importance when attendance at group sessions becomes mandatory.
3.5.3 Reminder telephone calls and letters

Reminder telephone calls were made to customers between one week and one day before the event. In most cases, the DASO was only able to make contact with a few customers and would, therefore, put a reminder letter in the post.

‘If you call them closer to the event then they are more likely to say that they have something else arranged at that time and are unable to turn up, but giving them a week means they can arrange childcare.’

(DASO)

Initially, reminder telephone calls and letters were only being undertaken in some Jobcentre Plus offices, as others had not understood they were expected to do this.

‘If you look on the DASO checklist, there is nothing on there about reminder letters or making phone calls.’

(DASO)

Half way through the evaluation period, the other Jobcentre Plus offices started to undertake reminder telephone calls and send out reminder letters to customers. As a result, attendance rates did increase slightly, and more customers made contact with their local Jobcentre Plus office, if they were unable to attend the group session.

3.5.4 Customer response to invitation

Many customers, who did not attend the group session, did not remember receiving the invitation letter. It is possible that, due to the reasons explained already, customers did not associate the letter with Jobcentre Plus. One customer described, ‘Well it was a photocopy really, rather than a letter, it wasn’t a personal letter’.

In one case, the invitation letter was being sent out to customers two weeks in advance of the group session. When the DASO telephoned the customer to remind them of their expected attendance, the customer had forgotten about it.

3.5.5 Cancellation of group sessions

A number of group sessions were cancelled due to low customer numbers on that week’s schedule. Having less than ten customers on the list of eligible attendees was considered too low to organise a group session on the expectation that only one or two customers would turn up. In these instances, customers would be rolled over to the following week and would then be combined with another list to make up the numbers.

Due to the variation in the claimant count, often reflective of seasonal working, district staff felt that in order to be successful with the delivery of group sessions, local Jobcentre Plus offices need to be flexible to the peaks and troughs of claim
counts. The project manager explained that ‘you might need to deliver two sessions one week, none the next.’

‘Some sheets have had 2-3 people on them, but this week there was 44.’

(DASO)

Due to the timetable by which the local office received the spreadsheet from the district team, staff should be aware of the need to cancel a session two weeks in advance.

It was not anticipated that any sessions should be cancelled at the last minute due to staff illness, as there should be other staff available to step in and deliver the session. However, in the Jobcentre Plus local office that were using a room that was not customer-facing, they required a Customer Care Officer to be present in the room during delivery of the group sessions. The risk assessment indicated that if a Customer Care Officer was not available, the session should be cancelled.

3.6 Timing of the group session

Staff seem to think that holding the group sessions between weeks six and eight of a customer claim is the right time. One presenter felt that, ‘It is an opportunity to revisit...when someone is first unemployed they are more concerned with their money. Six weeks down the line is the right time to hit them again’.

‘Six weeks into the claim is about right, that is when they start to discover that they need our help.’

(Presenter)

However, an ASM felt that ‘I am not sure if week six is correct, it needs to be a robust message from day one’. Other staff feel that the delivery of information on customer rights and responsibilities should be at the start of a customer claim.

‘It could possibly be done before they make their claim.’

(Presenter)

‘I don’t think it is the right time. The responsibilities should be up front at the start so they are aware. If they had to go as part of the new claim process it would be more successful.’

(Presenter)

3.7 Conclusion

Intensive staff resource was required during the initial set-up phase of organising and delivering group sessions, however, the demand on staff time decreased with time as processes and delivery become part of staff day-to-day roles. Those staff delivering group sessions within Jobcentre Plus premises, required limited time
before and after the group session and could then return to their other duties. This was particularly so when supported by DASOs and an LLMRA who would help set up the room. There has been a mixed response to the choices of venues used to deliver the group sessions and it is evident that careful consideration should be given to ensure that capacity, availability, accessibility and suitability are considered alongside cost implications in the future delivery of group sessions.

Staff received no formal presentation skills training before delivering the group sessions or training on how to use the required technology. Although only some staff were offered the opportunity to observe a trial session, most staff were dependent upon getting together as a team within their local office to discuss delivery of the group sessions. Staff experienced numerous problems with gaining and maintaining access to the networked laptops and feel that stand alone laptops would remove many of the problems.

The quality of the invitation letter sent to customers varied significantly across the district. In many cases, the letter made no reference to Jobcentre Plus and contained inaccurate information. The poor quality of the letter was felt, by some staff, to have impacted on a customer’s attendance at the group sessions. Many of the local Jobcentre Plus offices were not initially undertaking reminder telephone calls or issuing reminder letters, however, once they did, attendance did improve, although this may or may not be attributable to the increase in telephone calls.
4 Delivery of group sessions

4.1 Introduction
This chapter outlines the way in which the group sessions were delivered, including assessing the appropriateness of the content of the presentation for the customer group and the impact of an IAG provider at the sessions.

4.2 Attendance
Attendance rates varied across the different Jobcentre Plus offices, however, the overall attendance rate was 25 per cent.\(^3\) Attendance was generally lower than was anticipated, perhaps reflecting the challenge of engaging JSA claimants at six weeks. The main factors influencing customer numbers at the group sessions included:

- the varying quality of the invitation letter;
- the number of eligible customers on the spreadsheet;
- the number of customers invited to the event;
- whether reminder telephone calls were made and letters issued;
- the ability of the DASO to ‘sell’ the event to customers;
- whether the venue of the group session was easily located; and
- the fact that attendance at the group session was not mandatory.

It was expected that attendance levels at the group session would vary due to the natural fluctuation that occurs with customer claimant numbers. For example, there was an anticipated dip in the number of customers eligible for invitation to sessions during mid-February. This was due to it being six weeks after Christmas week when Jobcentre Plus receive low numbers of new claims.

\(^3\) As of 5 March 2008.
As time progressed, the attendance rate for the group sessions improved. This may have been as a result of a couple of factors: follow-up telephone calls and reminder letters had started to be issued by all local offices; or DASOs were becoming more confident with selling the event to customers they reach on the telephone. District staff believed that, ‘Where the sessions are being more tightly managed, it is evident that they are receiving a better attendance’.

Although the group sessions were targeted at customers who had been claiming JSA for six weeks, there were a couple of incidents where customers attended who were in week one or two of their claim. It is unclear how these customers were identified and invited to the group sessions but is something that could be checked by the DASO when undertaking the housekeeping on the data spreadsheet.

Staff indicated that they preferred to deliver sessions to a larger group of customers. Staff felt having a larger group made it more worthwhile considering the effort that had gone into organising the sessions.

‘It is better with more people as there is more interaction, you feel silly with a few.’

(Presenter)

‘It is nicer to have a larger group, otherwise you feel silly presenting to a smaller group.’

(Presenter)

Customers were offered reimbursement of any travel or childcare expenses they had incurred in order to attend the group sessions. In order to claim their expenses, customers were required to fill in a form provided by Jobcentre Plus staff on the day. Customers had to provide evidence of their expense by providing the train or bus ticket when attending the group session. However, there were only a handful of customers who had taken up this offer.

4.3 Why customers did not attend the group session

There were a variety of reasons given by customers for not attending the group sessions. Reasons included: not knowing about it; a dislike of participating in any group situations; a belief that the information would not be relevant to them; or they had found a job.

Some customers indicated that they did not receive the letter inviting them to the group session, nor a follow-up phone call or letter. However, they indicated that if they had known about it, they would have been interested in attending. Ensuring that customers receive their invitation letter will be critical when attendance at group sessions becomes mandatory. However, this could be overcome if all Jobcentre Plus offices issued the letter through the customer FJR signing.
After discussing what the group session was about, some customers indicated that they felt a group session could be useful, ‘you are all together and you can talk to people’. Customers described that meeting others in a similar situation often boosted their confidence as they were able to share experiences and learn ways of solving issues. Other customers agreed that a group session may be a useful way of delivering general information but that there should be the opportunity for individual discussions afterwards where personal situations can be addressed. However, a few customers indicated that they had chosen not to attend the group session as they believed that it would not be relevant to them or be able to help them to get a job.

‘At the end of the day, its about getting a job, there’s jobs out there, it’s about having the right CV and being good in interviews, a seminar doesn’t achieve anything for me.’

(Customer)

One customer had previously worked in management and felt that the type of jobs that she was looking for would not be discussed at the group session.

‘These types of events tend to be for unskilled people. I’m looking for a job as a sales manager.’

(Customer)

A couple of customers remembered being invited to the group session but did not attend because they had found a job and were no longer looking for work. All customers indicated that if the sessions were compulsory, they would definitely have attended.

4.4 The presentation

The presentation was designed and put together by the district team and issued to staff to deliver at the group sessions across all six delivery sites.

4.4.1 Content of the presentation

Rights and responsibilities

The presentation started by reminding customers of their rights and responsibilities when they are claiming JSA. Staff described this initial section as ‘the nasty bit’ and described how they felt uncomfortable delivering this message to customers. One ASM described that ‘the first part of the presentation is the horrible part’. Some staff expressed concern that by delivering the rights and responsibility section at the start of the presentation, customers became defensive and stopped listening before they delivered the information on the support that was available to them.
Better Off Calculation

The presentation included a BOC for a customer who had family responsibilities. Many staff felt that the BOC did not reflect the majority of customers who were attending group sessions and sometimes caused upset amongst those customers who did not have families when they see the additional support available to others. Staff, therefore, suggested that another BOC should be made available for customers who are young and single, reflecting the variety of customers who attend the group sessions.

Jobcentre Plus support

In addition to informing customers of their rights and responsibilities, the presentation covered some of the programmes and initiatives that were available through Jobcentre Plus to support customers into work. The presentation included information on New Deal, Work Trials, Programme Centres, access to a Disability Adviser, Travel to Interview initiative and the ADF. Customers seemed to be keen to hear about these programmes and initiatives, as for many, they were not aware that such support existed.

‘I didn’t know that there was so much available that I didn’t know about.’

(Customer)

However, much of the support that customers were informed about was not available to the majority of this group. With few exceptions, New Deal, Work Trials, ADF and Programme Centres are only available to customers who have been unemployed for six or 18 months, not the six weeks the group sessions were targeted at. Informing customers about support that was not available to them has made many staff feel uncomfortable about delivering the presentation for fear that would raise customer expectations about the support they could access. One presenter described that the guidance for ADF indicates that it should not be promoted to customers ‘yet it is in the presentation. We don’t feel as if we should tell them’.

‘That is the main issue that we feel uncomfortable with, that they are not eligible.’

(Presenter)

The district had a target for the number of customers that they needed to have a bank account. The presentation, therefore, tells customers that they must have a bank account to be able to take up employment. The inclusion of this element would, therefore, have to be carefully considered when being delivered more widely.

Local labour market information

The information about the local labour market was deemed to be the most useful for the customer in getting them to consider their jobsearch activity. Staff felt that by providing the customer with some information on the local labour market, they
were able to think about their employment expectations and ensure that they were achievable. The District Manager explained that ‘Some customers do not realise that some industries are simply no longer available’.

The presentation contained a pie chart showing customers where jobs were usually advertised. This slide indicated that 51 per cent of jobs were never advertised, which often generated a reaction from customers who did not realise that this was the case. Staff felt that this information forced customers to think about their jobsearch activity outside the Jobcentre. Staff were impressed by the message that the chart delivers, and in some offices all FJR advisers now have a copy of the chart laminated on their desk to use at other opportunities with customers.

During this section of the presentation, staff were more likely to encourage interaction from customers. This was partly because the information being given was more informal and encouraged examples and the sharing of experiences. However, it was also partly because usually the LLMRA had more experience of presenting than FJR advisers and was, therefore, more confident with their delivery. During this section, customers sometimes made comments about building or regeneration work they had noticed in the local area and asked what jobs were likely to be created as a result.

In one local Jobcentre Plus office, prior to the group session, the LLMRA would look at the Jobseekers Agreement of those customers who were due to attend the session to identify the type of jobs they were looking for, for example, retail, construction or factory work. The LLMRA would then produce a list of the number of jobs that had been available during the time the customer had been signing. Staff described that this generated a positive reaction from customers who were often surprised at the number of vacancies Jobcentre Plus had had available, reinforced by the previous message that not all vacancies are advertised.

While trying to encourage customers to make speculative approaches to employers, presenters frequently faced customers expressing disillusionment with employers who did not respond to applications. As a result, many customers expressed that they were unwilling to approach an employer unless there was a vacancy advertised. Some customers also raised the issue that many of the jobs advertised on the Jobpoints were no longer available when they attempted to apply for them. One customer described that ‘all the ads they have are weeks and weeks out of date, the jobs are always already taken’. Another customer explained that ‘the Jobcentre advertise the jobs for agencies and they are not reliable’. This discourages many customers from using and applying for jobs from the Jobpoint.

When considering the delivery of group sessions in smaller and more rural locations, staff were conscious that there may be a lack of jobs in the immediate area and searches may need to be done on the travel to work areas.
4.4.2 Customer response to the delivery of the presentation

The majority of customers were happy with the delivery of the presentation in terms of the pace it was delivered at, with only a few customers expressing a preference for the delivery to be slower. All customers indicated that they had found the Jobcentre Plus staff at the group session to be friendly and approachable.

Follow-up telephone interviews, with customers two weeks after they had attended a group session, allowed the quality and appropriateness of the presentation and the quality of the presenters, to be explored in more detail. Half of customers described the quality of the presenter neutrally, using vocabulary such as ‘fine’, ‘alright I suppose’ and ‘OK’. One customer, who described the presenter as ‘fine’, also added that the presenter ‘knew what she was doing, and followed her laptop instructions well’, although she stressed that the presenter did attempt to engage with the audience, rather than simply ‘using the presentation as an autocue’.

Some customers were positive about their presenters and described that they felt the presenters had delivered the group sessions well.

‘Good, they were lively, enthusiastic and took time to make sure everyone understood, including going over points, allowing and responding to questions, etc.’

(Customer)

‘Very confident and clear, paced delivery well, lots of opportunities and handled a potentially rough group well.’

(Customer)

‘Very good, absolutely excellent, very very good. They respected us and answered the questions. They did try their very best to do everything for you, they kindly greeted me when I went into the jobcentre, it’s very good, if I had a problem I could say.’

(Customer)

Other customers felt that their presenters did not deliver the group session well and were more negative with their comments. One customer described the presenter as ‘going through the motions’ and not interacting with the audience, another felt that the presenter was, ‘okay, but I’m not sure they understood what they were talking about’ and that the presenter ‘read out their presentations without any passion, and made me feel like they didn’t care if we got jobs or not’. However, once the presentation was completed, this customer described how the Jobcentre Plus staff had engaged more positively with customers at the end of the session.

Customers made fewer comments on the content of the presentation, although it was apparent that for some the content held little information they perceived as being new or relevant to their specific circumstances. While the effect of the presentation and the sessions more broadly on customers’ understanding of
Conditionality and the support available to them is described in Chapter 5, it is worth noting that several attendees made implicit or explicit reference to finding the presentation condescending. This most commonly referred to the conditionality element of the presentation, which was often considered to be straightforward and obvious, but also to some of the more simplistic elements of jobsearch. The challenges of delivering information to groups with widely diverging needs, experiences and aspirations were recognised by the customers interviewed. In several cases, customers described that the presentation and the session more widely ‘may be helpful for some, but not for me’ either because they considered they were fully informed on conditionality or were already doing all they could to find work. This is also likely to be reflective of the fact that attendance at the group sessions was voluntary, therefore, possibly attracting those customers who are already proactive in their jobsearch.

4.4.3 Improvements to content of the group session

Staff felt that Jobcentre Plus could do more to support those customers who do not know how to undertake jobsearch. One DASO explained that ‘We are telling people about their responsibilities, we are not showing them how to do it’.

Many customers, particularly those who have been in employment for many years, will be out of practice and need to be shown how to undertake jobsearch. This includes putting together a curriculum vitae (CV), knowing where to search for jobs, which day jobs are advertised in the local paper and how to make speculative approaches to employers. One DASO suggested the sessions could be more practical and used to show customers the facilities that were available throughout the Jobcentre Plus office for them to access.

‘Customers can have a tour of the Jobcentre, shown how to use the Jobpoints, where the phones for calling Jobseekers Direct are, where they can use the internet.’

(DASO)

‘It would be more useful to use the sessions to teach people how to undertake jobsearch. I think that would be much better.’

(Presenter)

This desire for Jobcentre Plus to teach customers how to jobsearch was echoed by customers. One customer described that:

‘In the Jobcentre, all you do is sign on and have a quick chat but they don’t actually help you get a job, you’re left to your own devices…a chat doesn’t get you a job.’

(Customer)
'I do think they could provide a better service. They should have proper careers guidance people there who you can sit down and have a talk with, I find it very frustrating going to sign on, they’re not interested in helping you.’

(Customer)

Another customer who did not attend the group session recognised the importance of the internet in looking for jobs and expressed that if there had been ‘training on computers, emails’ that would help him to search and apply for jobs then he would have attended the session.

4.4.4 Delivery of the presentation

Although a guidance of 1.5 hours was given for the length of the group sessions, they varied in length from 15 minutes to one hour 15 minutes.

‘We want sessions to be short and sharp.’

(Project Manager)

Many staff were nervous of delivering the group session and this was evident in the delivery of their presentation. Staff often read word for word from the screen holding tightly to their script, with little or no additional information or examples provided. With the exception of the section about the local labour market, there was often very little engagement or interaction with customers.

‘I sat in on one session last week and it was awful. It was a dingy room, not the room we were supposed to have…the presenter just read from the screen.’

(DASO)

‘Some give the sessions word for word and would fall apart if they were questioned...there needs to be a knowledgeable adviser.’

(LLMRA)

After delivering their first session, many presenters felt that they would be more confident next time. However, in some instances, the presenter would not be delivering another session for a few weeks and it was felt they would have lost their confidence by then.

‘Advisers who don’t present would benefit from doing it two weeks running...many people think they could do their presentation better after, but don’t get the chance to do it again.’

(LLMRA)

The District Manager believed that it was important to have existing customer-facing staff delivering the presentations because the customers would be familiar with some of the staff, therefore, making it more inviting upon arrival. Moreover, these staff would be more familiar and knowledgeable about the products on offer.
to support customers move into work. Staff also indicated that it was important to have a knowledgeable adviser delivering the group sessions in order that they were able to answer questions from the customer. It was felt that failure to be able to do this would make the sessions appear less professional.

Staff described that in many instances, at least one customer stayed behind after the session to discuss either their personal situation or to ask for more information on something in the presentation.

### 4.4.5 Improvements to delivery of group session

In most presentations, there was little engagement with customers throughout the presentation. As discussed, if any engagement was encouraged from customers it was almost always while delivering information on the local labour market. However, in some cases, staff had collectively agreed that they would not encourage questions for customers through the presentation, rather asking them if they have any questions at the end of the session. In other sessions, customers were not offered the opportunity to ask any questions. One presenter felt that ‘The presentation is not designed to engage with clients’.

If group sessions are going to be delivered as part of the daily routine of an adviser, it is crucial that they develop the necessary skills. Although confidence will come with experience, it is important that staff are given the training required to deliver the group sessions, including presentation skills and use of the required technology. Staff will also need to develop facilitation skills if they are going to encourage group discussions. In sessions where no IAG provider is present, staff should be able to explain the services they offer and signpost customers.

### 4.5 Information, Advice and Guidance providers

It was widely felt that having an IAG provider at the group session added value to the session and complemented the message of support delivered by Jobcentre Plus. The District Manager explained that:

‘The group sessions need to hand out the hard message of responsibility, but they also need to provide added value on what else the Jobcentre can offer...this is a tangible resource, added value, and provides a more rounded session.’

‘[The IAG provider] add another dimension to the presentation and it demonstrates that we are trying to support our customers...customers like to hear what is on offer.’

(Adviser)

The District Manager explained that it was important for the Jobcentre Plus staff to understand the skills the customer has and be able to match them to the local labour market. Staff felt that IAG providers were able to undertake a skills assessment and work with the customer in a way that they are not able to. Many
staff would like to see the role of the provider at the group sessions expand, and the District Manager was keen to have them conduct CV clinics with all customers who attend. In some cases, the IAG provider offered customers the opportunity to make an appointment for a CV clinic or a skills assessment at their offices. Where this has occurred, customers have shown interest.

‘It is excellent, we don’t have time to do a CV, and she can offer one-to-ones to do CVs with clients.’

(ASM)

‘This reinforces the message that it isn’t all about going into work, it’s about making the steps towards the labour market.’

(ASM)

In addition to supporting and enhancing the information delivered by Jobcentre Plus, it was felt that having an IAG provider deliver part of the session helped to make the session more interesting for the customer.

‘I think it breaks it down a bit having someone else come to it.’

(Presenter)

‘It is useful for the customers to see someone else.’

(Presenter)

Jobcentre Plus local offices did not experience any difficulties in engaging local IAG providers to take part in the group sessions. In many cases there was more than one IAG provider in the area and so they were put onto a rota to attend sessions. However, some staff expressed reservations about inviting IAG providers to group sessions, particularly if low numbers of customers were anticipated or sessions were likely to be cancelled. It was felt that having a low turnout would not be viewed positively by the provider, and would impact on the long-term relationship. On the contrary, district staff believed that ‘cancelling sessions should not be a problem because Jobcentre Plus are the single largest referral to their services, they rely on us’.

4.5.1 Customer response to the IAG provider

Only six of the 20 customers interviewed after attending a group session described an IAG or other partner also attending the session, although in these cases the customers were not always clear on the difference between the IAG and Jobcentre Plus presenters. The IAG representatives attending the group sessions were from colleges in two cases and private providers in four, with one session being attended by two private providers.

Customers were evenly split between those who were already aware of the provider attending their event and those who had not heard of them before. The
college provider was already known to the two customers at the session they attended, one of whom had been referred to them by Jobcentre Plus as part of a previous JSA claim. The private providers were more likely to be new to customers, although one described being aware of their provider in another capacity, although they ‘did not know that they did this sort of thing’.

In one location, two IAG providers were present at every group session. Customers attending these sessions described that while they found their input useful, they were confused about the difference in their services and as a result have not contacted either since attending the event. One customer felt that while the provider representatives were trying to be helpful, they appeared to be competing to ‘recruit’ individuals at the event. This customer felt that:

‘It was “come and join us” and this and that – it was wrong. They were all competing, trying to be helpful but making money.’

While most of the customers described speaking to the IAG adviser at the end of their group session, none had yet successfully followed-up their initial contact with the provider.

In one case, a customer described having to wait four weeks for an appointment with an IAG provider, having been told the provider he met at the session only worked one day a week and was still awaiting an appointment at the time of interview. While this is understood to have referred to the time that the provider held office hours at the particular Jobcentre Plus office, the individual was not clear about this and would have welcomed the opportunity for an earlier appointment elsewhere.

Customers gave mixed responses as to whether they intended to contact the IAG provider following the group session. Those customers who indicated that they intended to contact the IAG provider were interested in the support the provider was able to give them with writing their CV, undertaking jobsearch and helping them to prepare for interviews. One customer described the IAG provider as:

‘Helpful, gave me some, like, advice and they can help me make a CV and help me get a job and see the employer and go to job interviews.’

(Customer)

However, no customers had yet made contact with the provider but indicated that they would ‘give them a ring in the next few weeks’.

Some customers, however, described not being interested in further contact with the IAG provider, mainly because they felt that there was nothing specific they would be able to offer them. One customer explained that they had previously engaged with the college as part of a previous claim to help him develop his CV. While this had been useful, the customer could not see what more the college could do for him. Another customer described that the IAG provider had focused on gaining access to training for entering low skilled occupations. The customer was not interested in this as they were seeking professional opportunities. Finally,
one customer described that they were unclear how the provider would be able to support them in their job search. The customer explained that,

‘They didn’t tell me anything new. I’ve tried what they said; ringing, sending CVs, looking on the website, I don’t know what else I can do.’

4.6 Other issues

4.6.1 Language

A few customers who attended the group sessions presented language barriers. This not only impacted on their ability to fully understand the presentation delivered at the group session, but also on their ability to undertake particular employment. Jobcentre Plus provide English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) support through external providers, therefore, the IAG provider is invaluable in helping these customers to address their needs.

4.6.2 Basic skills

Staff indicated that approximately two customers attending each group session would have basic skills needs, such as literacy or numeracy. This was primarily identified when customers were asked to complete the evaluation form at the group session, highlighting a skills need that may impact on the type of employment they would be able to accept.

4.6.3 Children

At a couple of group sessions, customers arrived with young children, which proved to be disruptive to the presentation. The invitation letter informs the customer that they will be able to claim children expenses while they attend the session but it does not indicate that children should not be brought along. This is something that should be considered when delivering the group sessions more widely.

4.7 What makes a successful group session?

Although there is no immediate tangible outcome from the group sessions, staff felt that the success could be determined through the amount of engagement from customers. This may be through delivery of the presentation or the amount of questions asked at the end. Staff also felt the number of customers who stayed behind at the end of the sessions to talk to staff or the IAG provider, indicated their commitment to getting a job and, therefore, interest in the help and support that was available.

‘A success is when you deliver it smoothly, you’ve got people at the end who say thank you, and a provider there who three people book an appointment with.’

(ASM)
‘Generally they don’t want to get out the door at the end... they want to engage you... that shows they have understood something.’

(Presenter)

4.8 Follow-up

There was no formal follow-up from the group session. For those customers who attended, staff put a note on their LMS record to indicate that they attended.

One presenter noted that on a few occasions customers had asked about specific information. In order to ensure the momentum of interest was continued, she took their contact details and followed this up once she returned to the office.

4.9 Conclusion

Attendance at the group sessions was lower than anticipated. The variance in attendance across the district was due to a combination of: the quality of the invitation letter; the number of eligible customers to invite; the number of customers actually invited; whether reminder telephone calls were made and letters issued; the ability of the DASO to sell the event to the customer; and whether the venue could be easily located by customers. Some customers who did not attend the group session explained that they had not received the letter or a telephone call inviting them to attend. Other customers felt that a group session would not be relevant to them, as they were actively searching for jobs themselves.

Although one of the key objectives for the group sessions was to ensure that JSA customers were aware of the conditionality of the JSA regime, many staff were uncomfortable with delivering the rights and responsibilities section of the presentation, particularly at the beginning of the group session when staff felt customers would stop listening. The content of the presentation was not always deemed appropriate to the majority of customers, with information being shared on programmes and initiatives that they were unable to access until they had been unemployed for at least six months. However, the information provided on the local labour market was of interest to customers and often generated the most engagement and discussion, with customers sharing experiences. Where present, an IAG provider was felt to add value to the group session both by breaking up the delivery and reinforcing the message being delivered by Jobcentre Plus.

A lack of confidence and experience of delivering presentations was evident in most sessions as staff read word for word from the slides. With the exception of the section on the local labour market, little or no engagement was invited from customers. Many staff had never delivered presentations before, and had never received training on key presentation skills. Staff and managers believed that formal presentation skills training and knowledge of how to use the technology were, therefore, essential in ensuring delivery of a quality group session.
5 Effect of group sessions on customers

5.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the customer response to the group sessions, including what they considered to have been the key learning points from their session, their level of understanding of the information delivered and the effect this may have had on their jobsearch. The chapter is based on the findings from 207 completed evaluation forms and follow-up telephone interviews conducted with 20 customers who attended sessions. The telephone interviews were conducted between two and four weeks after they attended an event, to allow time for reflection and to capture any initial impact.

5.2 Understanding of the key messages of the group sessions

5.2.1 Key areas of learning

Customers attending group sessions were asked whether they had learnt anything new at their individual sessions. Approximately half of customers indicated that they had learnt something new as a result of attending the group sessions. The key areas in which customers indicated learning were:

- The range of support available to help customers return to work that they were previously not aware of, including:
  - the variety of Jobcentre Plus products and services that were available to help customers find work – such as early entry to the New Deal, Work Trials, Travel to Interview Scheme;
  - the availability of other financial support, such as Working Tax Credit, to ensure they were better off in work;
– that support is also available from other partner agencies – for example, training through local colleges, Learn Direct, IAG providers; and

– that support may continue to be available even after starting work.

Examples of customer comments included:

‘There is more help available than I thought – I could get tax credits for example.’

‘Learning I will be eligible for New Deal even if I haven’t been signing on for 18 months.’

‘I was surprised to find out how much help was available to me.’

‘Funding should be available for short courses if I want it.’

‘I can get help even after getting a new job.’

• That they may be better off in work than on benefits – through the application of the BOC. One customer explained, ‘I didn’t know about having job trials or the BOC’.

• That Jobcentre Plus does not hold all available vacancies in the area and that wider jobsearch strategies will be required.

‘I wasn’t aware of the low per cent of jobs offered through the Jobcentre… need to be more hands on in my approach to seeking work.’

‘I found how important it is to follow as many job leads as possible because most vacancies are unadvertised.’

‘There are job opportunities out there, you just have to keep your eyes peeled and look in the right places.’

The customers rarely mentioned learning anything new about their rights and responsibilities under the JSA regime, with most considering that conditionality was ‘common sense’ of which they did not need to be reminded. As one customer described ‘…being told I needed to sign on or my benefits might be stopped was not particularly helpful, surely everyone knows this anyway?’.

5.2.2 Customers’ understanding of the key messages

In addition to identifying what customers considered they had learnt from their sessions, their understanding of the key messages of the sessions was also tested. Customers were asked to state on their evaluation forms whether they agreed with a series of statements before and after attending their sessions and were asked again in the follow-up telephone interviews. The statements aimed to explore their understanding of their rights and responsibilities under JSA, the financial benefits of employment compared to remaining on benefit and the role that Jobcentre Plus could play in helping them secure work.

As described in Chapter 2, a series of implementation issues influenced the extent to which comparisons between the pre- and post-session evaluation forms could
be drawn. However, assuming that individuals completing both sections at the same time would either try to provide an accurate recollection of their views or provide identical pre- and post-session responses, the responses were analysed and tested for statistical significance at the 95 per cent confidence level.

**Understanding of rights and responsibilities**

The following statements were used to explore customers’ understandings of JSA conditionality:

- I am expected to evidence what I have done to look for work or my JSA might be stopped; and
- I can wait a few weeks after claiming JSA before looking for work.

The tables below indicate the responses from customers to the two statements both before and after attending the group session.

**Table 5.1  Responses to evidence statement on evaluation form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement: I am expected to evidence what I have done to look for work or my JSA might be stopped</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vast majority of customers provided the correct answer to this statement in their pre-session forms, rising slightly in the post-event forms. While more customers agreed with the statement (and fewer provided ‘don’t know’ or ‘disagree’ responses), none of the changes were statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level.

**Table 5.2  Responses to when to look for work statement on the evaluation form**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement: I can wait a few weeks after claiming JSA before looking for work</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While none of the changes highlighted in the table above before and after the event were statistically significant, the fall in the number of ‘don’t know’ responses from 31 to 20 was statistically significant at the 95 per cent level.
Understanding of the financial benefit of employment

Here, customers were asked whether they considered that they were better off if they stayed on benefit compared to getting a job at the National Minimum Wage.

Table 5.3 Responses to evidence statement on evaluation form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement: I am better off if I stay on benefit than if I get a job at the National Minimum Wage</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The decrease in the ‘don’t know’ responses was statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level.

Understanding of the likelihood of finding employment and the help Jobcentre Plus can offer

Customers were asked if they considered that:

- they were likely to find several jobs to apply for in the local area; and
- Jobcentre Plus can help them prepare for, and find, a job.

As would be expected from the main areas of learning described above, these statements showed the greatest change in response between the pre- and post-forms. The responses to these statements can be found in Tables 5.4 and 5.5:

Table 5.4 Responses to evidence statement on evaluation form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement: I am likely to find several jobs to apply for in the local area</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.5 Responses to evidence statement on evaluation form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement: Jobcentre Plus can help me prepare for and find a job</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 152 customers agreed that they were likely to find several jobs to apply for in the local area after their session compared to 135 before it, representing a statistically significant change at the 95 per cent level; and
179 agreed that Jobcentre Plus can help them prepare and find work after their session, compared to 155 before it, representing a statistically significant change. The reduction in the number of customers responding ‘don’t know’ to this statement from 33 to 16 was also statistically significant.

While all but two of the customers completing evaluation forms described understanding most or all of the information provided to them, the findings above show that a considerable share either provided inaccurate responses or were unsure of the correct response to the statements in their post-session evaluation forms. While overall the change in customer responses was positive, and statistically significant in some cases, a considerable number of customers provided inaccurate answers or remained unclear about a number of specific areas.

The follow-up telephone interviews with 20 customers attending the sessions allowed the extent to which they had understood the messages from the sessions to be assessed in more detail. Overall, there was little change in the responses provided in these interviews to those offered in the individual interviewees’ evaluation forms, suggesting that the information communicated had been retained. However, several of the interviews identified that some of the statements had proved to be difficult for respondents to answer, for example:

- The statement ‘I am better off if I stay on benefit than if I get a job at the National Minimum Wage’, where three customers questioned the accuracy of this statement when applied to their individual circumstances.
- The statement ‘I am likely to find several jobs to apply for in the local area’, here a couple of customers questioned their ability to find the type of work they were looking for locally, with a third stating that this would depend ‘on how fussy you are’.

The interviews also explored the understanding of conditionality in more detail, with customers being asked to state whether a series of additional statements were true or false. The responses suggested that the overwhelming majority had a good understanding of their rights and responsibilities, as described below:

- ‘You must do at least three things each week to look for work’, all 20 customers agreed.
- ‘I don’t have to do anything, Jobcentre Plus will pay me anyway’, 19 customers disagreed and one was not sure.
- ‘You must attend any job interviews that Jobcentre Plus arrange for you and accept any reasonable job offers of work’, 19 agreed and one disagreed, qualifying this by stating ‘I could say half yes and half no, I can go to interviews but I won’t do a cleaners job’.
- ‘You must attend the Jobcentre at the time and dates that they tell you’, 19 agreed and one not sure.
• ‘If you do not attend one of your appointments at the Jobcentre without good reason, your claim to Jobseeker’s Allowance will end’, 19 agreed and one was not sure, stating ‘not sure what happens if I miss an appointment for no reason, can the claim be delayed rather than ended?’

• ‘If you refuse a suitable job, or leave a job you already have you may lose your benefit for up to 26 weeks’ – 17 agreed and three were not sure, one of whom described being unsure if benefit was lost for 26 weeks.

Although the responses highlighted above indicate a general understanding of the JSA regime, a number of customers were unsure or misunderstood their rights and responsibilities. This demonstrates a selection of customers for whom the group sessions had not clarified the requirements on them to continue receiving JSA.

The customer interviews also confirmed that the focus of learning was on the support available to help the return to work, although they also identified examples where customer expectations had been raised incorrectly. As described in Chapter 4, several of the Jobcentre Plus services described in the presentation were not available to customers who have been claiming JSA for less than six months. In one case, a customer described following up what he considered to be an offer of being fast-tracked into construction training under the New Deal. However, on enquiring at the Jobcentre the customer reported being told that the fast track training only applied to ‘basic skills and CV preparation stuff – nothing like I was looking for’.

5.3 Impact of the group sessions – influences on jobsearch behaviour

As the follow-up interviews took place between two and four weeks after the customers attended their sessions, the ability of the study to identify influences on jobsearch behaviour in the medium- to long-term were limited. However, the follow-up interviews offered the opportunity for any immediate/short-term changes in customers’ jobsearch behaviour resulting from attendance at a session, to be identified.

The customers were asked about what they had done to look for work since attending their sessions, with a range of approaches being described. Two customers reported finding work shortly after their sessions, however, both were as a result of contacts established and applications submitted prior to attending the group session, and several others reported recently attending interviews and being optimistic about the outcome. A few customers reported following different approaches to those they had used previously, most commonly this included reading the local and national press, utilising formal and informal contacts, using the internet (including the Jobcentre Plus website and other recruitment sites) and visiting the Jobcentre.
As would be expected, the search strategies followed varied in accordance with the type of job being sought. Amongst the customers with a professional background, networks of contacts, the internet, national and specialist press and recruitment agencies were commonly referred to. This group were also the most job ready of the individuals interviewed and the most likely to consider that Jobcentre Plus (and Jobseeker Direct) were less likely to have vacancies of interest to them. At the other extreme one customer looking for low skilled retail work described his jobsearch activities as ‘routinely going around the shops and supermarkets and all that’ and felt that his lack of qualifications meant that there were few opportunities for him in the local area.

Few of the customers interviewed had made, or planned to make, any changes to their jobsearch approach. For the most part, the customers considered that they were already doing all they could to find work and that the session had not provided them with any new ideas, as illustrated in the box below.

Customer A, who was claiming unemployment benefits for the first time, described how he had learnt little from the session he attended and considered that he was already doing all that he could to find work. Customer A stated ‘I send my CV, ring companies, and everyday I go on the Jobcentre Plus website. Yesterday I looked in the Yellow Pages and cold called four or five companies, and I emailed them my CV’. As a result of attending the group session, Customer A had not changed his jobsearch behaviour, and described how he was ‘...already doing what they said, calling, sending emails, knocking on doors, but it is common sense to be doing it. They were suggested but I’d been doing them anyway’.

Customer B described being ‘desperate to find work’ and considered that she had learnt little from her session that would change her approach to finding a job. ‘You name it, I have done it. Newspapers, internet, jobcentre, I do applications and write letters’. However, Customer B reported considering different types of job from the retail work she had previously focused on, after finding out at the session that she could work for longer than she first thought without affecting other benefits.

Customer C described undertaking a range of activities to find a professional position. ‘I look in newspapers, registered with websites and look on the Jobcentre Plus website, I have even done a leaflet drop, and am in the process of registering with another agency’. Customer C questioned whether the type of specialist IT post that he was looking for was available in the area and considered that he may need to look further afield.

However, some customers reported making changes to their jobsearch approach as a result of the session, including:
• One customer described expanding their jobsearch activities from an admittedly low base. He is now looking for jobs which are advertised, rather than relying on family contacts as he had been doing previously. The customer now also uses the internet and Jobseeker Direct, a service he was not aware of prior to attending his session.

• One customer reported using the internet more following the session, in addition to his normal search of the local and national press, Jobpoints and informal contacts with former colleagues and ‘friends down the pub’.

• One customer described updating their CV following their session, where the importance of a good CV was stressed, and described an interest in finding out more about Work Trials.

• One customer had signed up with a number of local recruitment agencies following their session. This was done partly in response to a suggestion in the presentation and partly to extend the type and number of jobs the customer was aware of.

• One customer described trying to use Jobseeker Direct following a suggestion at the session they attended. However, the customer reported problems getting through to the service, including being kept on hold for 20 minutes and ‘not being able to get through six or seven times yesterday’.

Two customers described how attending the sessions had motivated them to increase their level of jobsearch activity:

• One young customer described how the session ‘motivated and engaged me’, as he was having ‘a bit of a down week, and the session made me wake up’. He felt that he already knew about his rights and responsibilities and different jobsearch approaches prior to the session and that the main benefit of attendance had been motivational.

• One more mature customer felt that the session had ‘gee’d her up’ in terms of jobsearch activity, rather than passing on any new information per se. The customer was keen to stress that for others the sessions could be a vital source of information and guidance on how to find work but wondered if it would be more effective if more information was provided at the start of a claim.

5.4 Conclusion

While around half of the customers considered that they had learnt nothing new from attending their session, the remainder reported finding out that: the range of services available from Jobcentre Plus (and their partners) was wider than expected; the Jobcentre did not hold all the vacancies in their area and so jobsearch activities need to reflect this; and that they would be better off in a job on the minimum wage than on benefits.
While few made reference to extending their understanding of their rights and responsibilities under the JSA regime, the analysis of the evaluation forms submitted showed some positive change in terms of the understanding of conditionality. It may also be that the sessions provided a ‘gentle reminder’ of the importance of complying with the requirements of JSA, although this could not be tested within the timeframe for the evaluation.

However, the strongest, and statistically significant, changes were identified in customers’ views of the likelihood of finding employment in the local area and that Jobcentre Plus can help them prepare for, and find, a job. The interviews with customers identified that while several individuals changed their jobsearch behaviour following their sessions (including following new approaches to finding work, using the internet and Jobseeker Direct more and registering with local recruitment agencies), the majority were yet to do so, with many considering that they are already doing all they can to find work. A small number of customers also benefited from the sessions in different ways, including following up specific vacancies mentioned at the sessions and being motivated to make renewed efforts to find work.
6 Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together the conclusions of the evaluation and presents recommendations that should be considered for the future delivery of group sessions.

6.2 Organisation of the group sessions

6.2.1 Resource

Staff considered the central coordination role as key to the successful set-up and rolling out of the organisation and delivery of group sessions across the district. The project manager took responsibility for identifying suitable venues to conduct the group sessions and undertaking the associated risk assessments. Once this was completed, one ASM was identified as the main contact within each Jobcentre Plus local office through which information was disseminated. This central role was seen to be important for the sharing of lessons learnt and group practice, however, once the central organisation of the group sessions was arranged, the time required by the project manager was minimal.

The organisation and delivery of group sessions was the responsibility of the local Jobcentre Plus office. There was initial concern that the resource required to deliver the group sessions would be a significant demand on adviser time, however, once initial group sessions had been delivered, the demand on adviser time was considered manageable. In fact, advisers indicated that they enjoyed delivering the group sessions as it gave them variety in their workload. Most presenters were joined by an LLMRA to deliver information about the local labour market to customers, thereby ensuring that most presenters were not on their own.
6.2.2 Choice of venue

In the first instance, Jobcentre Plus premises were sought for the delivery of group sessions. It was deemed that this would be preferable as staff would have control over use of the venue and customers would be familiar with the location. Where Jobcentre Plus premises were not available, alternatives were sought with cost, accessibility and suitability being taken into consideration.

Half of the Jobcentre Plus offices used external premises, two at an IAG provider premises, one at a local community centre. In all cases, problems were experienced with gaining access to the room that was preferred. However, in the case of the community centre, this was due to prior booking of the room, something that has been dealt with as the room has now been booked through to the end of the year. However, when using provider premises, Jobcentre Plus staff must remain flexible around the providers’ requirements for use of the room.

There has been a mixed response amongst staff as to whether using Jobcentre Plus premises or an external venue is the most suitable for delivering the group sessions. When using Jobcentre Plus premises, staff felt comfortable in a familiar environment and were able to have more control over the number of customers to invite to a session. In some instances, the group sessions at external venues had been moved to alternative rooms that have a smaller capacity than originally prepared for. Where sessions have been held at provider premises, issues have been raised in relation to customers questioning whether they need to attend the session, an issue that will be more important when attendance becomes mandatory. Staff who have used the community centre for the delivery of group sessions felt that the venue has worked extremely well and that holding the event offsite creates a more informal and engaging environment than a Jobcentre Plus office.

Customers reported few issues with the location of the venues for their sessions or with the venues themselves, although where sessions were held away from Jobcentre Plus premises, a small number reported that having a map showing how to find the location would have been helpful.

6.2.3 Staff training

Staff delivering the group sessions did not receive any formal presentation skills training, although receiving such training was something that was deemed important by both presenters and managers.

Managers were issued with a checklist of tasks that needed to be undertaken in preparation for delivery of the group sessions. DASOs were also given a checklist of the tasks they needed to undertake to perform the housekeeping on the spreadsheet of customer details and send out invitation letters. It was later identified that the checklist did not include the need to make reminder telephone calls or send out reminder letters, resulting in some local offices not reminding customers of their expected attendance during early sessions. Once this had been
realised, attendance rates, and engagement from customers with Jobcentre Plus if they were unable to attend, did increase.

A few staff had the opportunity to observe a group session being delivered before they were due to deliver own. In these cases, staff found this opportunity invaluable in giving them ideas of examples to share with customers, and increased their confidence in delivering their own session. All staff who did not observe another session would have liked the opportunity to do so.

The delivery of the group sessions involves the use of a laptop, projector and Powerpoint. There was an assumption that presenters would be able to use the associated technology, however, most staff indicated that they had never used it and were, therefore, very nervous of getting it to work. In most cases, a couple of members of staff who had used the technology before were identified, and were relied upon to set up the equipment. In order to address the training need, the district issued staff with a ‘Hints and Tips’ worksheet on how to use the technology, however, almost all staff indicated they would have preferred formal training on using the technology involved.

6.2.4 Inviting customers

The quality of the invitation letters sent to customers varied across the district. In many cases, the letter was not sent on Jobcentre Plus letter-headed paper and the text made no reference to Jobcentre Plus, particularly when the group session was held at an external venue. In addition, in some cases where local offices had tailored the letter with local information, the original text had not been deleted.

In some cases, customers, who did not attend the group session, indicated that they had not received the invitation letter. In other cases, customers had forgotten about the group session as the letter had been sent to them too far in advance and either did not attend the session or were notified only when a member of Jobcentre Plus staff telephoned them. In order to address this, some local Jobcentre Plus offices are considering issuing the letters through FJR interviews. This is an issue that will need to be addressed when attendance at the group session is mandatory.

6.2.5 Recommendations for organising group sessions

- Ensure a central resource is made available to oversee organisation of the group sessions and share good practice amongst local Jobcentre Plus offices.
- Consideration should be given to the choice of venue to deliver the group session. The chosen venue should have suitable capacity, be a location familiar to the customer, be accessible and suitable for delivery of the group sessions including having facilities for the required technology.
- If external premises are being used, staff should be aware of any need to secure the room booking in the long-term. This should prevent being moved to different rooms in the venue if other bookings are made.
• Consideration should be given to allowing staff the opportunity to observe a group session prior to delivery of their first group session. This could be organised either across the district or within each local office.

• Ensure that all staff are familiar with the technology involved in delivering the group sessions including use of laptops, projectors and Powerpoint.

• Staff should ensure that the invitation letter sent to customers contains the correct local information and is printed on Jobcentre Plus letter-headed paper. This will ensure that customers associate the group session with their claim for JSA. Consideration should also be given to including a map and local travel information if the group session is not held on Jobcentre Plus premises.

• Consideration should be given to whether children should be allowed to accompany their parents to the group session. If children are not to be allowed to attend the group session, this should be made clear in the invitation letter given to customers.

6.3 Delivery of group sessions

6.3.1 Attendance

Although attendance rate varied by Jobcentre Plus office, the overall, attendance rate for the group sessions was 25 per cent\(^4\), lower than anticipated. The main factors influencing customer numbers at the group sessions include the varying quality of the invitation letter, the number of eligible customers on the spreadsheet, the number of customers invited to the event, whether reminder telephone calls and letters are issued, the ability of the DASO to sell the event to the customer and whether the venue of the group session was easily located. Some of these factors may no longer be appropriate when attendance at group sessions becomes mandatory.

The capacity of the venues used to deliver group sessions varied considerably from eight to 45 customers. In smaller venues, the capacity restricted the ability of staff to invite too many customers to the group sessions in case all turned up on the day. It has taken time for each Jobcentre Plus office to establish the anticipated attendance of customers at their venue and adapt the number invited accordingly.

6.3.2 Content of the presentation

The content of the presentation included customer rights and responsibilities, a BOC, local labour market information and the support available through Jobcentre Plus to move people into work. Generally, staff were uncomfortable delivering the rights and responsibilities information. Some staff were particularly concerned about delivering these messages at the beginning of the presentation, believing

\(^4\) As of 5 March 2008.
that in some cases customers would stop listening before information on the support available to help customers move into employment is delivered.

In many cases, the BOC generated a negative response from customers who considered that the sample calculation was not applicable to their specific circumstances. Staff felt that the example BOC for a family with two children was not representative of the typical customer who attends the sessions.

Virtually none of the programmes and initiatives that customers were informed about and that are available through Jobcentre Plus were accessible by the majority of JSA customers. In most cases, the customer has to be unemployed for at least six months before New Deal, Programme Centres, Work Trials and ADF can be accessed. This left very little support available to customers attending the session. Moreover, informing customers about the additional support raised expectations, or frustration when a customer later discovered they were unable to access the advertised support.

The information on the local labour market was seen to generate the most interest with customers. Information about the proportion of jobs that are never advertised instigated discussions about the need for jobsearch outside Jobcentre Plus facilities, including speculative approaches to employers. Customers expressed their frustration at a lack of response from employers and, therefore, a lack of willingness to approach employers if there was no vacancy advertised.

Overall, customers were happy with the pace at which the sessions were delivered and reported finding Jobcentre Plus staff delivering them to be friendly and approachable. Customers broadly considered that the quality of the presentation and its delivery to be adequate, with some being particularly positive and a small number offering more negative comments. These negative comments related to the presenter’s apparent lack of engagement with their audience during their presentation. However, in many cases customers considered that the presenter engaged more effectively during the discussion and question-and-answer sessions following their presentation. In a small number of cases customers described the content of the presentation as condescending, mainly in relation to the messages on conditionality which were considered obvious. While recognising that the content would be of more benefit to some than to others, many of the customers interviewed considered that they were already doing all they could to find work.

Both Jobcentre Plus staff and customers highlighted the fact that Jobcentre Plus customers are expected to undertake jobsearch without anyone showing them how to do it. It was suggested that the group sessions could be used as an opportunity to provide a practical workshop informing customers of how to look for employment including writing a CV, signposting different places to look for employment, advising which day the local paper advertises jobs, explaining how to use the Jobpoints and on-line facilities.
6.3.3 Delivery of the presentation

The length of the group session varied from 15 minutes to one hour 15 minutes. In most cases, the lack of formal presentation skills and nervousness about using the technology was evident in the way in which the presentation was delivered. Staff often read word for word from the screen, holding tightly to their script, with little or no additional information or examples provided. With the exception of the section about the local labour market, there was often very little engagement or interaction with customers.

It is important to have staff delivering the group sessions that are knowledgeable about the information being provided for customers. This is particularly important so as not to raise expectations amongst customers who later ask their regular adviser for further information about services which are not open to them. Staff also felt that knowledgeable staff helped make the sessions appear more professional.

6.3.4 IAG provider

Where present, it was widely felt that having an IAG provider at the group session added value. Not only did having another presenter help break up delivery of the session, making it more interesting for customers, IAG providers complemented the message of support being delivered by Jobcentre Plus.

In some cases, the IAG provider offered customers the opportunity to make an appointment to get help with their CV or undertake a skills assessment. Where this did occur, customers were interested in the support on offer.

Local Jobcentre Plus offices did not experience any difficulty engaging IAG providers to take part in group sessions. In locations where more than one IAG provider existed, they were put on a rota to attend sessions. Where an IAG provider had not been invited, staff expressed concern that if customer numbers were low, this would be seen negatively by the provider and impact on the relationship with Jobcentre Plus. However, other staff were keen to point out that IAG providers rely heavily on Jobcentre Plus for referrals and were keen to get involved.

6.3.5 Recommendations for delivering group sessions

- Review the content of the presentation to ensure it is applicable to customers who have been claiming JSA for no more than ten weeks, including ensuring the BOC is relevant to customers and the support available is accessible. Caution should be taken in informing customers of support they are unable to access until they have been employed at least six months.

- Ensure all staff have access to presentation skills training, including information on how to deal with disruptive customers.

- Encourage presenters to engage and interact with customers during the group session. This could be done through inviting questions, asking questions of the customers or asking customers to share experiences. However, care will need to be taken to ensure staff have skills to facilitate group discussions.
• Consideration should be given to ways in which Jobcentre Plus can teach those customers who require the skills on how to undertake jobsearch, including writing CVs, where to look for jobs and making speculative approaches to employers.

• Where possible, Jobcentre Plus should work with local IAG providers to engage them in the delivery of group sessions to customers.

6.4 Effect of the group sessions on customers

The timing of the evaluation meant that limited information could be collected on the effects of the sessions on customers’ jobsearch behaviour. However, customers’ understanding of the key messages of the sessions were tested and some early examples of changing behaviour were identified.

Overall, around half of the customers participating in the evaluation considered that they had not learnt anything new as a result of attending their session. The most commonly mentioned areas of learning were:

• the range of services available from Jobcentre Plus (and their partners) was greater than they had been aware of previously and that support was available even after they had started work;

• that Jobcentre Plus does not hold all the vacancies in their area and that their approach to jobseeking needed to reflect this; and

• that customers will be better off in a job on the minimum wage than on benefits, although some customers questioned the applicability of the calculations they were shown to their specific circumstances.

While few customers considered that the group sessions had provided new information on conditionality under JSA, the analysis of the evaluation forms showed some positive change in terms of the understanding of conditionality. It may also be that the sessions served to provide a ‘gentle reminder’ of their rights and responsibilities, although this could not be tested within the timeframe for the evaluation.

The strongest and most significant changes were identified in customers’ views of the likelihood of finding employment in the local area and that Jobcentre Plus can help them prepare for, and find, a job. While a comparatively small number of customers reported changing their jobsearch behaviour as a result of the sessions, the short time between the sessions and the follow-up interviews offered little time for any change in approach to be implemented. Many of the customers considered that they were already doing all they could to find work.

Additional benefits of attending the session were also identified, including direct applications for vacancies introduced at the sessions and individuals being motivated to make renewed efforts to find work.
6.4.1 Effectiveness of a group session

There has been a mixed reaction as to whether the group session is the most effective method to communicate with jobseekers. The District Manager feels strongly that by delivering through a group setting, you are allowing the customer to listen to the information, as opposed to being on the defensive during a one-to-one and thinking about their response before the adviser has finished talking. In contrast, other staff feel that the group session allows less interaction from the customers as they are often unwilling to discuss their personal situation with a room full of strangers.

6.5 Overall conclusion

The trial of the group sessions showed the challenges of effectively delivering group sessions to customers with different needs and backgrounds. While it is apparent that for some customers the benefits of the sessions may be limited, others reported extending their understanding of:

- the services Jobcentre Plus and their partners can offer, although care needs to be taken not to raise expectations regarding when such services may be available;
- the need to extend their jobsearch activities beyond the vacancies advertised through Jobcentre Plus; and
- the fact that they are likely to be better off in work than claiming benefit.

In terms of the organisation and delivery of the sessions, inconsistency and the varying quality of engagement with customers is likely to have impacted on attendance rates. However, it is likely that many of the issues will be removed when attendance at group sessions becomes mandatory. To ensure the delivery of a quality group session, it is essential to ensure that staff have good presentation and facilitation skills, and are able to offer immediate support to customers attending the sessions. Jobcentre Plus staff should then aim to build on the motivation and momentum created through the delivery of group sessions to JSA customers.
Appendix A
Diary Administrative Support Officer checklist

Ensure you have a shared folder set up as ‘Work4U’. You will need to save your spreadsheet into it each week. [These will be needed later for evaluation purposes]

1. Save the spreadsheet sent by District into the shared documents folder ‘Work4U’.
2. Print off spreadsheet.
3. Check LMS and cross through all dormant records.
4. For all live records on LMS check for PV markers. These customers must not be called in to the information sessions. Cross through customers details on printed scan.
5. Cross through all under 18 year olds as they must not be called in to the sessions.
6. All customers that are on a New Deal option should be crossed off the list as they will not be required to attend the session.
7. Check conversation on each customer record. If the conversation states that customer is about to start work or on holiday cross them off printed scan.
8. Check that the address shown on the scan is correct. Check JSAPs for current address including correspondence address note scan and update original spreadsheet accordingly.
9. Record in conversations on LMS the date and time of the seminar that the customer will be invited to.
10. Update spreadsheet. Amend addresses and enter a Y for those you want a letter sent or N for those you do not want a letter sent. Ensure the correct date, time and venue is detailed on the letter. [click on ‘Letter’ tab to reveal]

11. Print and post letters.

12. After Information session update attended box for each customer on spreadsheet.
Appendix B
Adviser Service Manager checklist

Are you ready?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checklist</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have you booked your venue up to end of March?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are all the risk assessment ins place [Host, Generic Business Process, staff checklist]?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you started issuing the notification to customers [6 weeks prior to your first session]?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have DASO resource in place?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do they understand their role [sending invite letters, reminder call action, spreadsheet update/maintenance]?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have a shared folder set up to save the weekly spreadsheets?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have your staff had chance to practice delivering the presentation if front of other staff?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you arranged to attend the first sessions to support staff?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do your LLMRAs understand their role in the delivery of these sessions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do they have up to date Labour Market information to share at the sessions?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you updated the presentation for your site?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you arranged for a lap top and projector to be available?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do your staff know how to use the lap top and projector?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you considered inviting any partners to attend [LearnDirect, other community learning providers]? [not mandatory]</td>
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Appendix C
Follow-up visit staff topic guides

Follow up district visit

Interview with District Manager

Introduction
1. Overall, how do you feel that the Back to Work Group Sessions have gone?
2. Please describe the involvement you have had in the initial set up, the running and/or the monitoring of the group sessions.

Resources
3. Can you give an indication of the amount of resource that it has taken to deliver the group sessions?
4. How has that resource been distributed? Probe: management, adviser and administration resource.
5. Has it taken more or less resource/time that you anticipated to deliver the sessions?
6. Have you had to move any resource away from other provision to work on the group sessions? If so, what impact has this had?
7. If the group sessions were a permanent deliverable, do you feel that the level of resource in setting up and running the group sessions is sustainable in the long term?
8. In what ways are the Back to Work group sessions different from the group sessions you were already delivering with lone parents?
9. How does the scale compare?
Training and guidance
10. How long before delivering the first session were staff told about the Back to Work group sessions? Do you feel that this was long enough, would they have benefited from more time?

11. What information and guidance were all staff given about the Back to Work group sessions?

12. How was information shared with staff about the group sessions and what would be required of them? Note if face-to-face meetings or if information was disseminated electronically. Note if meetings were held with all staff or locally within each office.

13. Have you had enough staff to deliver the sessions or have you had to recruit more?

14. What training was provided for those staff who are delivering the group sessions? Note if this training was provided internally or by an external provider.

15. Were any particular training needs identified?

16. Were you able to address these needs?

Issues
17. What effects have the cancellation of the sessions had?

18. What were the reasons for the cancellation of sessions?

19. What other issues/barriers have you faced along the way in trying to set up and run the group sessions?

20. Were any of these issues anticipated?

21. Have you managed to resolve all the issues? What issues are still outstanding?

22. What support or guidance have you needed in order to address the issues?

Involvement of external partners
23. What types of external partners have been involved in delivering the group sessions? Note: IAG providers, employers, etc.

24. What are the advantages and disadvantages in having external partners involved in the group sessions?

25. Did you need to coerce external partners to take part, or were they willing? What do you think they get out of taking part in the group sessions?

Objectives
26. What do you see as the main objectives of the group sessions?

27. Do you think the sessions have achieved these objectives?
28. Have you been monitoring the group sessions in any way? Note: any management information on resources, numbers invited, numbers turning up, customers signing up with IAG providers, movement off the register.

If so, who collates this information?

How regularly is this information looked at?

29. Have you noticed any difference in the success of the group sessions in different locations?

30. Some of the sessions are taking place in Jobcentre Plus offices others are taking place at external locations, do you think that the location has an impact on the number of people who turn up, or the success of the group session?

Conclusion

31. Is there anything that you would like to change about the way in which the group sessions have been delivered?

32. If the group sessions were to be rolled out nationally, are there any lessons you have learnt that should be shared?

Thank you very much for your time today
Follow up district visit

Interview with Adviser Service Manager leading the Back to Work group sessions

Introduction
1. Overall, how do you feel that the Work First Group Sessions have gone? Note: any general positive or negative feelings
2. Please describe the involvement you have had in the initial set up, the running and/or the monitoring of the group sessions.

Note: when first joined the project, role and responsibilities

Resources
3. Can you give an indication of the amount of your time that is spent on overseeing the organisation of the group sessions?
4. Can you describe any additional resources that it has taken to deliver the group sessions? Who else has played a major involvement in setting up and delivering the group sessions?
5. How has that resource been distributed? Probe: management, adviser and administration resource.
6. Has it taken more or less resource that you anticipated to deliver the sessions?
7. If the Group Sessions were a permanent deliverable, do you feel that the level of resource in setting up and running the group sessions is sustainable in the long term?

Training and guidance
8. What information and guidance were you given when you started work on the group sessions? Did you feel this was enough/clear guidance?
9. What information and guidance were other Jobcentre Plus staff given before delivering the group sessions?
10. What questions and issues were raised by staff?
11. What training was provided for those staff who are delivering the group sessions? Note if this training was provided internally or by an external provider.
12. Were any particular training needs identified?
13. Were you able to address these needs?
14. Have you changed any of the guidance as a result of early feedback from initial group sessions? Have you changed any processes since the Group Session started?
15. Has the way in which you identify and invite customers to the group sessions changed since the start? If so, how has it changed, and what instigated the change?

16. Has the content of the presentation changed at all since the first sessions?

Issues

17. What were the reasons for the cancellation of sessions?

18. What effects have the cancellation of the sessions had?

19. What other issues/barriers have you faced along the way in trying to set up and run the group sessions?

20. Were any of these issues anticipated?

21. Have you managed to resolve all the issues? What issues are still outstanding? How do you plan to move these issues forward?

22. What support or guidance have you needed in order to address the issues?

Location of venues

23. The location of the group sessions varies for each office. You have previously described how the venues were chosen, so can you let me know how they have worked out?

24. Have there been any issues with any of the venues? If so, what are they? Have you managed to resolve any issues?

25. Do you plan to continue with all the venues that you are currently using, or are you seeking alternatives?

26. Have the different venues had differing successes? Note: numbers of customers turning up, involvement of venue provider, customer engagement.

Involvement of external partners

27. What types of external partners have been involved in delivering the group sessions? Note: IAG providers, employers etc.

28. For how many different external partners are you coordinating involvement with the group sessions? Does this consume a lot of your time?

29. What advantages and disadvantages do you feel that there is in having external partners involved in the group sessions? Do you feel it enhances customer engagement?

30. Did you need to coerce external partners to take part, or were they willing? What do you think they get out of taking part in the group sessions?

31. Has anyone refused to take part in the group sessions? What were their reasons for this?
32. Is there anyone else you would like to get involved in the group sessions? Note: employers, training colleges. What benefit do you feel that this would provide?

**Objectives**

33. What do you see as the main objectives of the group sessions?

34. Do you think the sessions have achieved these objectives?

35. Have you been monitoring the group sessions in any way? Note: any management information on resources, numbers invited, numbers turning up, customers signing up with IAG providers, movement off the register.

If so, who collates this information?

How regularly is this information looked at?

36. Have you noticed any difference in the success of the group sessions in different locations?

37. Some of the sessions are taking place in Jobcentre Plus offices others are taking place at external locations, do you think that the location has an impact on the number of people who turn up, or the success of the group session?

**Conclusion**

38. Is there anything that you would like to change about the way in which the group sessions have been delivered?

39. If the group sessions were to be rolled out nationally, are there any lessons you have learnt that should be shared?

   **Thank you very much for your time today**
Follow up district visit

Interviews with Adviser Service Managers

Introduction
1. Can you tell me how many sessions you have run so far, and where they are held?

2. Overall, how do you feel that the Work First Group Sessions have gone? Note: any general positive or negative feelings.

3. Please describe the involvement you have had in the set up, the running and/or the monitoring of the group sessions.

Note: when first joined the project, role and responsibilities

The process
4. Can you describe the process that you undertake from receiving the schedules to running an event? Note how customers are identified, any housekeeping that is done on the data, printing out of letters, identifying the presenter, liaisons with the venue etc. Note involvement of different staff.

5. Do you telephone customers before the session to remind them and confirm their attendance?

6. Can you give an indication of the amount of your time that is spent on overseeing the organisation of the group sessions?

7. Can you give an indication of the amount of time dedicated by your staff in an average week to organise and deliver the sessions? Probe: management, adviser and administration resource.

8. Has it taken more or less resource that you anticipated to deliver the sessions?

9. If the Group Sessions were a permanent deliverable, do you feel that the level of resource in setting up and running the group sessions is sustainable in the long term?

Running the sessions
10. Do you think that the sessions that you have run thus far have been successful?

11. What do you consider a success, what is considered an outcome from the session?

12. A large number of sessions have been cancelled, can you tell me what factors influence your decision to cancel a session?
13. Have you had an IAG provider at your sessions? If so, what impact has this had on the session? If not, have you considered it?

14. Have you changed anything about the session since you started running them? If so, what has changed? What impact has this had?

The venue
15. Do you think that the venue works for the group session?

16. Do you think that the choice of venue influences the number of people who attend the session?

17. Is there anything that you would change about the venue?

Training and guidance
18. What guidance and training were you given in order to be able to set up and deliver the group sessions?

Establish which, and how many staff received specific training.

19. When did you receive the training and guidance? Do you feel that this was enough time to prepare for delivering your first sessions?

20. Do you feel that the guidance was clear? Did you have any questions or concerns about the group sessions?

21. Tell me about the training that was delivered to staff prior to running the group sessions. Who attended it? Who delivered it? How long was the training?

22. Do you feel that the training was adequate to prepare presenters to deliver the sessions? What concerns or questions have presenters raised with you?

23. Are there any improvements you would make to the guidance or training if the group sessions were to be delivered by other districts?

Issues
24. What issues/barriers have you faced along the way in trying to set up and run the group sessions?

25. Were any of these issues anticipated?

26. Have you managed to resolve all the issues? What issues are still outstanding? How do you plan to move these issues forward?

27. What support or guidance have you needed in order to address the issues?

Objectives
28. What do you see as the main objectives of the group sessions?

29. Do you think the sessions have achieved these objectives?
30. Have you noticed any impact of the Work First Group Sessions on those customers who have attended the sessions? Note: any increase in engagement from customers, increase in jobsearch activity, movements off the register (anecdotal evidence), asking questions about information they have been given at the session, customers signing up with IAG providers.

31. Do customers refer to the group sessions in FJRs following their attendance at an event?

32. Do you think that the sessions are having the anticipated impact on customers claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance? If not, why not?

Reflection

33. What are the key factors/parts of the process that contribute to the successful delivery of the Work First Group Sessions?

34. Is there any good practise to be identified that could be shared with other districts if these group sessions were to be more widely available?

Thank you very much for your time today.
Follow up district visit

**Interview with staff who have been delivering the Back to Work group sessions**

*Introduction*
1. Can you tell me how many sessions you have run so far, and where they were held?
2. Overall, how do you feel that the Work First Group Sessions have gone? Note: any general positive or negative feelings.
3. How did you get involved in presenting the sessions, did you volunteer?
4. Have you had any experience of presenting group sessions previously?
5. Please describe any additional involvement you have had in the set up and/or the monitoring of the group sessions.

*Training and guidance*
6. What guidance and training were you given in order to be able to set up and deliver the group sessions?
7. When did you receive the training and guidance? Do you feel that this was enough time to prepare for delivering your first sessions?
8. Do you feel that the guidance was clear? Did you have any questions or concerns about the group sessions?
9. Tell me about the training that you received prior to running the group sessions. Who delivered it? How long was the training?
10. Do you feel that the training was adequate to prepare you to deliver the sessions?
11. Are there any improvements you would make to the guidance or training if the group sessions were to be delivered by other districts?

*Running the sessions*
12. Do you think that the sessions that you have run thus far have been successful?
13. What do you consider a success, what is considered an outcome from the session?
14. A large number of sessions have been cancelled, can you tell me what factors influence your decision to cancel a session?
15. Have you had an IAG provider at your sessions? If so, what impact has this had on the session? If not, have you considered it?
16. Have you changed anything about the session since you started running them? If so, what has changed? What impact has this had?
The venue
17. Do you think that the venue works for the group session?
18. Do you think that the choice of venue influences the number of people who attend the session?
19. Is there anything that you would change about the venue?

Issues
20. What questions or issues have customers presented you with in the group sessions?
21. What issues/barriers have you faced along the way in trying to run the group sessions?
22. Were any of these issues anticipated?
23. Have you managed to resolve all the issues? What issues are still outstanding? How do you plan to move these issues forward?
24. What support or guidance have you needed in order to address the issues?

Objectives
25. What do you see as the main objectives of the group sessions?
26. Do you think the sessions have achieved these objectives?
27. Have you noticed any impact of the Work First Group Sessions on those customers who have attended the sessions? Note: any increase in engagement from customers, increase in jobsearch activity, movements off the register (anecdotal evidence), asking questions about information they have been given at the session, customers signing up with IAG providers.
28. Do customers refer to the group sessions in FJR’s following their attendance at an event?
29. Do you think that the sessions are having the anticipated impact on customers claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance? If not, why not?

Reflection
30. What are the key factors/parts of the process that contribute to the successful delivery of the Work First Group Sessions?
31. Is there any good practice to be identified that could be shared with other districts if these group sessions were to be more widely available?

Thank you very much for your time today
Appendix D
Group session observation template

Observation template

Logistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of group session</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date and time of group session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total duration of event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Jobcentre Plus staff attending</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of customers attending session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of customers failing to attend session</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rights and responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How long did this session last?</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many presenters involved in this session?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the customers appear to understand what they were being told?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were customers engaging in the presentation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note if asking any questions/making comments etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did customers ask any questions? If so, note issues raised.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Getting a job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How long did this session last?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many presenters involved in this session?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the customers appear to understand what they were being told?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were customers engaging in the presentation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note if asking any questions/making comments etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did customers ask any questions? If so, note issues raised.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Jobcentre Plus support (New Deals, Work Trials etc.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How long did this session last?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many presenters were involved in this session?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the customers appear to understand what they were being told?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were customers engaging with this session?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note if asking any questions/making comments etc.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did customers ask any questions? If so, note issues raised.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Provider presentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Was a training provider present at the session?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who was the provider?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long did they talk for?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summarise what they covered in their presentation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did the customers appear to be engaged with the provider?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did customers ask any questions? If so, note issues raised.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Summary and close

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the presenter summarise what has been covered?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the presenter outline clear ‘next steps’?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are customers offered the opportunity to make appointments with advisers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did customers ask any questions? If so, note issues raised.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do any customers stay behind to talk with staff?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If so, note numbers and whether talking to JC+ staff or provider</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there any additional staff available to speak with Jobseekers after the group session? If so, how many?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observers comments
To include: whether common presentation used, compliance with DDA, any difficulties experienced by participants and wider views on success of presentation, ability to address customer questions and impressions of effectiveness of session in achieving its objectives.

Complete additional sheets as necessary
Appendix E
Customer telephone interview topic guides

Topic guide: Telephone follow-up interview with group session attendees

I am calling from a company called GHK who have been commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions to undertake an evaluation of the group sessions being held for customers claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance. You recently attended a group session, and kindly offered your contact details for us to give you a call and talk to you about the session. Is now a good time to talk with you?

Your conversation with me is confidential and will not impact on your benefits in any way. Any information that we report back to the Department for Work and Pensions will be anonymous and they will not be able to trace what you said.

The venue
Can you tell me where the event that you attended was held?

On the questionnaire you said you had the following problems attending the event (insert)

Explore how or whether these issues were resolved.

Information
What did you think of the group session that you attended?

Which parts were most useful? Why?

Which parts were less useful? Why?

Did you understand all the information that you were told at the event? If not, what was unclear?
Were there any areas that were less clear, and you would have liked more information on?

Was any of the information new to you? If so, what?

Is there any other information about claiming JSA which you would like included in the group session?

What did you think of the Jobcentre Plus presenter?

What did you think of (use name of Information, Advice and Guidance IAG provider)?

Have you heard of the IAG provider before?

Did you speak to the IAG adviser one-to-one at the event, or have you seen them since? If so, what was the outcome?

Did the IAG provider undertake a skills assessment with you? If so, what was they outcome?

How does the information given by the IAG provider fit with your job goals?

How did the information given by the IAG provider fit with the work-related activities outlined in your JSAg/Action Plan?

How did the information given by the IAG provider fit with your understanding of what you have to do to keep claiming JSA?

**Understanding**

Do you know what you have to do in order to continue receiving Jobseeker’s Allowance?

Can you please tell me which of the following statements you think are true?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am expected to provide evidence of what I have done to look for work. If I don’t my Jobseeker’s Allowance might be stopped</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am better off if I stay on benefit than if I get a job at the National Minimum Wage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre Plus can help me prepare for and find a job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can wait a few weeks after starting to claim Jobseeker’s Allowance before starting to look for work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to find several jobs to apply for in the local area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can you please tell me which of the following statements you think are true or false about what you are expected to do in order to receive Jobseeker’s Allowance.
Can you please tell me which of the following statements you think are true or false, if you do not meet the responsibilities required for you to receive Jobseeker’s Allowance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>True</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You must do at least three things each week to look for work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have to do anything, the Jobcentre will pay me anyway</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You must attend any job interviews that Jobcentre Plus arrange for you and accept any reasonable job offers of work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You must attend the Jobcentre at the time and dates that they tell you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since attending the session

Can you please tell me what you do to look for work?

Have you done anything differently as a result of attending the group session? If so, what?

Were these activities suggested to you at the group session? If so, do you think you would have done them anyway?

Have you followed up any of the advice/information suggested by (insert name of IAG provider)?

Do you plan to follow up any of the information that the IAG provider gave? If so, how?

Have you done anything differently as a result of the presentation on Information, Advice and Guidance?

Have you undertaken a skills assessment? If so what was the outcome? What do you plan to do next?

Have you booked or attended any training activities?
Reflections

Looking back at the group session:

Would you recommend the group session to friends?

Is there anything that you would change about the group session?

Thank you for your time today
Topic Guide: Telephone interview with Jobseekers not attending the group session

To be read at the beginning of each interview:

I am calling from a company called GHK who have been commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions to evaluate the group sessions for people claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance. You were recently offered the opportunity to attend a group session, but did not attend. Do you mind if I talk to you about this? Your conversation with me is confidential and will not impact on your benefits in any way. Any information that we report back to the Department for Work and Pensions will be anonymous and they will not be able to trace what you said.

Awareness of group session

Do you remember receiving a letter informing you about the group session?

Reasons for non-attendance

Can you explain why you didn’t attend the session?

Was the time or date of the session inconvenient?

Did you contact the Jobcentre to arrange another date or time?

Were there any practical issues with attending?

Prompt if necessary:
- Transport
- Childcare

Did you contact the Jobcentre about these issues? Did they offer you any support?

Were there any other reasons for not attending?

Prompt if necessary:
- About to start job
- About to start training
- Don’t consider I need help with finding work

Future

Do you think that attending a group session would help you to find employment? If so, how?

Is there anything that could be done to encourage you to attend a session in the future?
If the session became compulsory and not attending might affect your benefit, would you have attended?

**Awareness of rights and responsibilities**

Do you know what you have to do in order to continue receiving Jobseeker’s Allowance?

Can you please tell me which of the following statements you think are true:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>True</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am expected to attend an interview with an Adviser. If I don’t my Jobseeker’s Allowance might be stopped.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am better off if I stay on benefit than if I get a job at National Minimum Wage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre Plus can help me prepare for and find a job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can wait a few months after starting to claim Jobseeker’s Allowance before starting to look for work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to find several jobs to apply for in the local area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can you please tell me which of the following statements you think are true or false about what you are expected to do in order to receive Jobseeker’s Allowance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>True</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You must do at least three things each week to look for work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have to do anything, the Jobcentre will pay me anyway</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You must attend any job interviews that Jobcentre Plus arrange for you and accept any reasonable job offers of work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You must attend the Jobcentre at the time and dates that they tell you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Can you please tell me which of the following statements you think are true or false, if you do not meet the responsibilities required for you to receive Jobseeker’s Allowance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>True</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>False</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you do not attend one of your appointments at the Jobcentre without good reason, your claim to Jobseeker’s Allowance will end</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you refuse a suitable job, or leave a job you already have you may lose your benefit for up to 26 weeks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Monitoring information

Can you please tell me the following information about you:

Have you claimed Jobseeker’s Allowance before?
– If so, when was your last claim?
– How long were you claiming JSA for?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>18 – 24 years</td>
<td>25 – 49 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic group</td>
<td>White British</td>
<td>White Other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you very much for your time today
Appendix F
Evaluation form
Appendices – Evaluation form

GHK

EVALUATION FORM

GHK, an independent company, have been asked by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to find out what you think of the session. This will help DWP plan future sessions. The form is anonymous and individuals will not be identified in any way.

The questions on this page need to be answered before the session starts. These questions are about your understanding before this session of what you need to do to find work while you are claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance. The questions are also about how well you understand what Jobcentre Plus can do to help you find a job while you are claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance.

G1 Please indicate which of the following statements you think are true. Please tick in each row:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am expected to provide evidence of what I have done to look for work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I don’t my Jobseeker’s Allowance might be stopped.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am better off if I stay on benefit then if I get a job at the National</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Wage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre Plus can help me prepare for and find a job.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can wait a few weeks after starting to claim Jobseeker’s Allowance before</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>starting to look for work.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to find several jobs to apply for in the local area.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G2 Please state if you have had any problems with:

Finding and getting to the building: _______________________________________

The building itself: ________________________________________________________

Details about you

In order to monitor who is attending the group sessions, please let us know the following information about you.

G3 Are you: Male □ Female □

G4 Which age group do you fall in?

18 - 24 years □ 25 - 45 years □ 50 years and over □

G5 Have you ever claimed Jobseeker’s Allowance before?

Yes □ No □ Don’t Know □

G6 Are you: White British □ Asian or Asian British □ Chinese □

White Other □ Black or Black British □ Other Ethnic Group □
After the group session, please answer the following questions

G7 Thinking about the information that you have been given today, please indicate which of the following statements you agree with. Please tick in each row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am expected to provide evidence of what I have done to look for work. If I don\’t my Jobseeker\’s Allowance might be stopped</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am better off if I stay on benefit than if I get a job at the National Minimum Wage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre Plus can help me prepare for and find a job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can wait a few weeks after starting to claim Jobseeker\’s Allowance before starting to look for work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am likely to find several jobs to apply for in the local area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G8 Have you learnt anything new in this session that you did not know before?

Yes □ No □

G9 If yes, please tell us what you have learnt:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

G10 Please answer the questions below to let us know how useful you have found the session today. Please put a tick in each row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I understood all or most of the information given to me during the session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff were friendly and approachable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt I could ask questions if I wanted to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would have preferred the session to be delivered slower</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

G11 Do you have any special requirements such as a hearing impairment, mobility or language issues? If so, were your needs met today?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Further research

You will not be identified in any way when we look at the responses, however GHK would like to be able to speak to you more about the group session you have attended today. This would involve a short telephone call. If you are happy for us to call you in the next couple of weeks, please provide your contact details below.

Name: _________________________________________________________________

Phone number - home: ___________________________________________________

Phone number - mobile: _________________________________________________

Thank you for completing the form today.
Please hand this form back to one of the staff members.