Qualitative evaluation of the Telephone Intervention Pilot

Richard Lloyd and Dr. Sarah Jenkins

A report of research carried out by GHK Consulting Limited on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions
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We would like to acknowledge the time and assistance of the members of the client team at the Department for Work and Pensions, the managers and staff at the Contact Centre, and the managers and staff at the Jobcentre Plus offices visited as part of this study.
The Authors

Richard Lloyd is a Principal Consultant with GHK, with over 15 years of consultancy experience with a particular focus on the evaluation of public sector projects, programmes and policies.

Dr. Sarah Jenkins is a Senior Consultant at GHK. She has worked extensively on a wide range of labour market issues both within academia and as an adviser in the Cabinet Office specialising in gender and labour market policy.
Summary

Introduction and context

GHK Consulting Ltd were commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to undertake the qualitative evaluation of the JSA Telephone Intervention Pilot (TIP). The pilot aimed to test whether introducing additional telephone contacts with customers between their Fortnightly Job Reviews (FJRs) has a positive impact on the rate at which they leave the register, and whether the operational costs are outweighed by reductions in expenditure. The pilot was implemented in 26 jobcentre offices in two Districts, the Black Country and the Marches, between July 2006 and May 2007.

The qualitative evaluation was intended to complement a more quantitative assessment of the impact of the pilot on the rate at which customers leave the register, which was undertaken centrally. Its aim was to explore the operation of the pilot in practice, identify examples of good practice to inform the potential continuation of the approach and examine a series of more specific issues regarding compliance and fitness for purpose. The methodology followed comprised a series of qualitative interviews with:

- Contact Centre staff – managers and TIP team members, and including the observation of calls to pilot customers;
- staff in the two participating District Offices;
- Jobcentre Plus staff – in eight pilot offices, including adviser managers, FJR officers and other staff involved in the pilot. FJRs with pilot customers were also observed in five of the jobcentres visited;
- customers participating in the pilot – undertaken on an opportunistic basis after customers had attended their fortnightly FJRs.

The Telephone Intervention Pilot

The pilot involved contacting customers by telephone, in the week between their FJRs, and between the sixth and thirteenth weeks of their claims. The contacts
were made by the Contact Centre in Clydebank, following a schedule of customers shared with the District and individual Jobcentre Plus offices. In summary, the key features of the process included:

- the production and distribution of schedules of customers to be involved in the pilot to the Contact Centre, District Offices and pilot jobcentres;
- the introduction of the pilot to customers at the appropriate FJR, with a letter being issued and its receipt recorded on the LMS;
- when customers reach the seventh week of their claim, Contact Centre advisers checked the LMS to ensure the claim was still live and attempting to contact customers;
- three attempts to contact each customer were made, the outcomes of which were recorded on the LMS and as a workflow as appropriate. Customers can request a jobsearch be undertaken on their behalf and, if fraud or availability issues were suspected, a workflow was produced backed up by a conversation on LMS;
- in the following week an FJR would take place as normal, with any relevant points raised in the Contact Centre conversation being followed-up;
- this process was repeated at weeks 9, 11 and 13 of each claim, with the Contact Centre staff also reviewing LMS to identify any areas for follow-up;
- the customer returned to the jobcentre’s normal signing pattern following week 13, when their involvement in the pilot ended.

Monitoring information provided by the Contact Centre Directorate suggested that 69 per cent of contacts were achieved within three calls. Of the remainder, 49 per cent were not contacted within three attempts, 34 per cent were not attempted as the LMS indicated that their claim had ended and 17 per cent were not attempted due to missing or incomplete telephone numbers or other reasons. Of the successful calls, jobsearch was undertaken in just over one in five, while job submissions took place in almost one in seven.

Experiences of implementation

The pilot was found, by all involved in it, to be simple and straightforward to implement, with few significant barriers or challenges emerging. The experiences of the different actors are summarised below.

Contact Centre

The most significant procedural developments took place at the Contact Centre, including establishing and training a team of advisers, and establishing procedures

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1 Workflows are email communications issued by the Contact Centre to the pilot jobcentres highlighting issues identified in their contacts with customers which require further investigation.
to review and allocate customers from the schedules received. The TIP advisers formed a discrete team at the Contact Centre, and were able to draw upon each other’s previous jobcentre and jobsearch experience. The team comprised 17 individuals (15 full-time equivalents) at the time of the study, although additional staff had been trained to cover sickness and holiday periods.

Contact time with customers lasted an average of approximately five minutes, although this varied from a reported two to 15 minutes, and each full-time equivalent adviser had a workload of between 150 and 160 customers to contact each week. Their work was scheduled so that first, second and third call attempts are grouped and the team worked closely, sharing work if necessary to ensure the weekly workload was completed. Calls are often completed by Friday afternoon, when time was spent cleaning the schedule for the next week and collecting local labour market information.

The Contact Centre experienced few issues in implementing the pilot, with the main ones including:

- the early production of schedules – initially the schedules were produced some way in advance of their use, including customers no longer on the register. Later in the pilot they were delivered closer to the time of use, and accuracy improved;

- the variable level and quality of LMS information – the Contact Centre relied on jobcentre staff to update customer details on LMS, and had to highlight any issues in LMS conversations as they cannot update the system themselves. Particular issues included:
  - customers appearing on schedules when no longer on the register – although to a degree inevitable due to the timing of schedule production, this was felt to be exacerbated by poor housekeeping by some FJR staff;
  - information gaps – such as customers appearing on the schedules without telephone numbers or information on languages spoken, requiring staff to make their own investigations such as reviewing old LMS conversations;
  - the issuing of letters not always being recorded – meaning that TIP advisers did not know if the customer had been introduced to the pilot.

Interviews with staff and the observation of a series of TIP calls suggested that advisers were following the correct procedures in their contacts with customers. Although a script developed for the pilot was no longer used as TIP staff had become familiar with the topic areas covered, all contacts featured security questions to confirm the customer’s identity before enquiring about progress with jobsearch activities and what they had been doing to look for work. If further support was requested or considered to be needed, advisers offered to undertake a jobsearch or referred the customer to other products and services. In each of the observations, advisers checked the LMS in advance, followed up on specific topics and left conversations on completion – for example, describing the jobsearch or other advice provided. Although issues with customers with limited spoken English
were expected at the outset of the pilot, this did not proved to be the case, with
advisers preferring to identify a friend or family member to act as a translator. The
main issues experienced in the contacts included:

- customers requiring different levels of support – such as young people and
  those some way from being job ready, where advisers did not always have a
  complete knowledge of the training and support available to them;

- not knowing if the customer was claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) or
  National Insurance (NI) Credits;

- difficulties in motivating customers who are approaching retirement age.

- working with customers with hearing difficulties (due to the absence of text
  phone facilities) and with mental health issues – which are not always identified
  on LMS and who may not be suitable for the pilot approach.

**District Office**

The District Offices played a limited role in the pilot, after attending briefing and
training sessions at the Contact Centre and being involved in meetings and telekits
during the early stages of implementation. Their roles during implementation were
to receive the schedules from EDS (private IT contractor), divide them between
Districts and jobcentres, and forward them on as appropriate.

The time dedicated to the pilot was consequently extremely limited – estimated by
one interviewee as between four and five days at the outset, and being measured
in minutes on a weekly basis. There were no formal steering arrangements in
place at the District level, although they were not considered necessary due to the
pilot’s straightforward nature.

**Jobcentre Plus offices**

Little preparation was required for the pilot at jobcentre level, and commonly
consisted of a briefing for advisers and FJR officers, establishing procedures
for introducing the pilot to customers and managing their allocation from the
schedules, and developing procedures to deal with workflows. No more ‘formal’
staff training was considered necessary.

At the jobcentre level, the key pilot tasks were:

- receiving the weekly schedules from the District Office – which were then
  cleaned to remove excluded customers, and allocating introductory letters to
  pilot customers’ hardcopy records;

- introducing the pilot at the next FJR – including issuing the introductory letter
  and recording their receipt on customers’ hardcopy records – although none of
  the jobcentres appeared to inform customers that participation was voluntary;

- once engaged with the pilot, LMS conversations were reviewed in advance of
each subsequent FJR and updated following them;
• dealing with the workflows generated by the Contact Centre – including their review and referral for action to an adviser or for discussion at the next FJR.

It appeared that across the jobcentres, customers on the pilot were treated no differently than others, although a few FJR officers described spending a little more time with pilot customers where issues were raised in LMS conversations. Minimal operational changes were required to implement the pilot, with the additional time required to operate the pilot ranging from around two hours to half a day each week.

Few issues were experienced with implementation, but areas where efficiencies could be improved were identified around the allocation and cleaning of the schedules – which had to be manually marked-up with customer signing days, and cleaned to remove excluded customers and those no longer claiming. The jobcentres also described customers reporting being called by the Contact Centre before the pilot had been introduced to them. Although this did not appear to unduly bother the customers, one example was cited where an individual who would otherwise have been excluded was contacted in advance.

The interviews and observations of FJRs with pilot customers found that, in the majority of cases, compliance with the pilot procedures was high. Most, but not all, staff routinely reviewed the LMS before each FJR and left a conversation after, although time pressures influenced compliance as they did in the FJR regime more widely. From the FJR officer perspective, time constraints and the suitability of previous conversations for follow-up influenced the extent to which TIP-related issues were raised in each FJR.

The main impact on workloads for most of the jobcentres visited concerned responding to the additional workflows generated, the volume of which had been greater than initially expected. Here responses were often divided between advisers and FJR officers, depending on the nature of the issue and local resources.

Overall, contact between the Contact Centre, Districts and pilot jobcentres was limited to LMS conversations and workflows during the implementation period, although this was not considered to be an issue as no additional contact was required.

Perceptions of the pilot

The straightforward nature of the pilot, its fit with existing procedures and practice, and the limited additional resources needed to implement it outside of the Contact Centre were considered to be strengths by all the individuals interviewed.

The pilot was viewed particularly positively by the Contact Centre staff, who enjoyed working on it as it provided them with the opportunity to proactively contact and support customers, and be flexible with the time they spent with them. District staff also viewed the pilot approach positively, as it could offer extra support but required minimal additional resources locally.
At the jobcentre level, views on the pilot were more mixed, and while positive overall, FJR officers were less likely to be enthusiastic than more senior staff. While both groups welcomed the straightforward nature of the pilot, and many had high expectations of its impact in terms of progression to work and jobsearch behaviour, evidence of impact was limited and confined to anecdotal and individual examples. The FJR officers welcomed the pilot as it allowed services to be offered that were no longer possible in five minute FJRs, although some saw the pilot as a potential threat to their jobs and others were concerned that the pilot may suggest they are not fulfilling their roles properly.

The absence of the requirement at Contact Centre and jobcentre levels to collect monitoring information on the performance of the pilot, while reducing the burden of implementation, meant that little information was available on its performance. It appeared that the pilot staff were not aware of the quantitative evaluation approach followed, or of the time required to evaluate impact in terms of customers leaving the register. There was considerable interest in the performance of the pilot amongst the staff interviewed, and in some cases a suggestion that the absence of feedback could negatively influence morale.

Participating customers were found to have neutral or positive views of the pilot, with few requesting to be removed from or not to participate in it. The interviews with customers, undertaken as part of the study, found that awareness of the pilot was variable, with half remembering its introduction and none expressing negative reactions. While recollections were variable on the content of the Contact Centre calls, over half the customers reported finding them useful – citing help with jobsearch, keeping up to date with vacancies and gentle reminders of expectations of jobsearch activity. Some, however, found the calls less useful, largely when they considered they had not received or been offered anything ‘extra’ by the pilot.

**Conclusions**

- The pilot was being implemented as intended in the Contact Centre, Districts and jobcentre offices visited. As no other pilots or labour market changes, which were likely to influence TIP effects, were identified, the pilot provides a robust basis for evaluation.

- The key strengths of the pilot were its straightforward nature, ease of implementation, fit with existing procedures and ability to offer additional support to customers while also reinforcing the requirement to undertake jobsearch.

- Pilot customers were not treated any differently from non-pilot customers. Similarly, customers claiming JSA were not treated differently to those claiming National Insurance credits, although Contact Centre staff were not always aware of their status.
• Few implementation issues were identified, and often related to the activities that would not be replicated if the pilot was to be mainstreamed. However, the importance of keeping the LMS up to date was emphasised.

• In addition to its straightforward nature, key success factors included:
  – the positioning of the Contact Centre to customer relationship – with one of the strengths of the TIP team being their independence from the customer’s ‘home’ jobcentre;
  – presenting the pilot ‘offer’ (to customers and jobcentre staff) as providing additional support to find work – rather than emphasising the conditionality element;
  – the Contact Centre calls being able to offer a different opinion or advice to that available from the jobcentre.

• Little information was available locally on the impact of the pilot, comprising mainly anecdotal and individual examples of influence of jobsearch behaviour. Views of both actual and potential impacts varied between Contact Centre, District and jobcentre staff, and while benefits were expected there was little evidence on the extent to which these had been achieved. The pilot’s role in identifying potential fraud was often considered to be its most visible effect.
1 Introduction

GHK Consulting Ltd were commissioned by the DWP to undertake the qualitative evaluation of the JSA TIP in November 2006. This report presents the findings of the study, which should be considered alongside the analysis of customers leaving the register being undertaken centrally to provide an overall assessment of the effectiveness of the pilot and its potential for future roll-out.

The TIP was implemented in 26 jobcentres in two Districts from July 2006, and involved contacting customers by telephone, in the weeks between their FJRs, between the sixth and thirteenth weeks of their claims. The contacts were made by the Clydebank Contact Centre, following a schedule of appropriate customers shared with the District and individual Jobcentre Plus offices. The pilot aimed to test the extent to which the additional telephone contacts influenced the rate at which customers left the register, while also reinforcing the conditionality message. The pilot, and the processes that underpinned it, are described in more detail in Chapter 2.

1.1 Evaluation aims and objectives

The evaluation of the TIP comprises two elements:

- **A quantitative component** – which used data from the Joint Unemployment and Vacancy Operating System (JUVOS) to compare the rate at which pilot customers left the register, and the time spent on benefits, between the pilot and control groups in each District. This part of the evaluation was undertaken by DWP statisticians.

- **A qualitative component** – to which this report refers, and which aimed to investigate the way in which the pilot operated in practice and identify good practice examples to inform any future roll-out.

The qualitative component also examined a series of more specific issues with staff in the Contact Centre, District Office and a sample of participating Jobcentre Plus offices, including:
the adequacy, timeliness and fitness for purpose of the scans in allowing effective customer contact to take place;

• compliance with the pilot process at Contact Centre and jobcentre office levels;

• staff attitudes to the pilot – at the Contact Centre and Jobcentre Plus offices;

• customer attitudes to the pilot and being contacted by telephone;

• the extent to which conversations at the FJR or telephone contacts were routinely followed up in the next FJR or telephone contact;

• the nature of the relationships between the Contact Centre and the pilot jobcentres, the effectiveness of communications between them and the extent to which Contact Centre staff were aware of the labour markets in the pilot areas;

• the impacts of the pilot in terms of increased numbers of jobsearches, job submissions and customer behaviour more widely, and potential fraud identified.

1.2 Methodology

The study consisted of a series of qualitative interviews with the following individuals:

• staff in the Contact Centre in Clydebank – including managers and advisers responsible for making the TIP telephone contacts, and a final focus group with all available advisers to triangulate the interview findings;

• staff in the two participating District Offices – including District Performance Managers and others responsible for the management and delivery of the pilot;

• staff in a sample of eight Jobcentre Plus offices across the two participating Districts – including adviser managers and other staff with management responsibility for the pilot, and advisers undertaking FJRs with the pilot group;

• customers participating in the pilot – undertaken on an opportunistic basis after customers had attended their fortnightly FJRs.

A sample of calls at the Contact Centre and FJR interviews with pilot customers in five of the jobcentres were also observed, to assess compliance with the pilot process. The fieldwork took place in January and February 2007, and included interviews with over 60 staff and 23 customers participating in the pilot, as summarised in Table 1.1.
Table 1.1 Composition of the sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contact Centre, Clydebank</td>
<td>Director of Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TIP adviser manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Six TIP advisers – individually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A final focus group with all available TIP advisers (20) and the adviser manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Centre Directorate</td>
<td>Representative of the Operational Development Team.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Office Staff</td>
<td>The Marches – District Performance and Compliance Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Black Country – Lead District Performance Team member on the pilot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre – The Marches</td>
<td>FJR team leader, adviser manager, four FJR officers and three customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office 1.1</td>
<td>FJR team leader, adviser manager, two FJR officers and one customer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office 1.2</td>
<td>adviser manager, FJR team leader and four FJR officers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office 1.3</td>
<td>adviser manager, FJR team leader, Administrative Officer and three FJR officers and three customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office 1.4</td>
<td>Office 1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jobcentre – Black Country</td>
<td>FJR team leader, Personal adviser, Vacancy Service Team members, five FJR officers and four customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office 2.1</td>
<td>adviser manager, five FJR officers and four customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office 2.2</td>
<td>adviser manager, four FJR officers and seven customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office 2.3</td>
<td>Customer Services Manager, adviser manager, six FJR officers and three customers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3 Report structure

The remains of this report are structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 provides an overview of the aims, objectives and model followed in the TIP pilot;
- Chapters 3, 4 and 5 explore the experiences and perceptions of the pilot from the Contact Centre, District and Jobcentre Plus office levels respectively;
- Chapter 6 describes customers’ experience of the pilot, based on the customer interviews undertaken;
- Chapter 7 presents the conclusions of the study.

The report also contains an Appendix, which features the topic guides used throughout the study.
2 The Telephone Intervention Pilot

This chapter provides an overview of the aims, objectives and implementation model followed under TIP, before reviewing the ‘activity level’ monitoring data produced by the Contact Centre Directorate.

The pilot was implemented in 26 jobcentres across two Districts – the Marches and the Black Country. The pilot ‘went live’ on 24 July 2006, for an initial period of 42 weeks to complete in May 2007. The aims and specific objectives of the pilot are described below.

2.1 Telephone Intervention Pilot aims and objectives

The aim of the pilot was to test whether introducing additional telephone contact with customers between their FJRIs had a positive impact on the rate at which they left the register, and whether the operational costs are outweighed by reductions in expenditure. Consequently, the pilot, and its subsequent quantitative and qualitative evaluation, sought to identify:

- whether the TIP process had any measurable effect on the jobseeker count, and any change in the rate at which customers are sanctioned for non-compliance with their Jobseeker’s Agreement;
- the number of calls resulting in contact with the customer, and the number of calls that involve Contact Centre staff undertaking jobsearch for the customer;
- the average length of calls, and the time Contact Centre staff are not occupied on calls and follow-up;
- whether there are sufficient numbers of vacancies to offer customers – and if not, what actions should be taken by the National Sales Force and other vacancy takers;
- the accuracy of the assumptions on which the potential costs for roll-out were based – for example the numbers of calls required to make contact with customers and so the number of staff required.
2.2 The Pilot Implementation Model

The pilot featured telephone contacts with customers in the 7th, 9th, 11th and 13th weeks of their claims, scheduled on alternative weeks to their FJR. The key steps in the TIP process model are summarised in Figure 2.1, followed by a description of its key components.

**Figure 2.1 Summary schematic of TIP process**
Key features of the process include:

1 The weekly production of a schedule of current customers by EDS from the LMS, including: Jobcentre Plus office name/mnemonic, and customer details (name, telephone number, date of birth, postcode, client/NI numbers, date of claim and claim cycle, and Potentially Violent (PV) indicator). The schedules featured customers whose date of claim was four weeks previously – 40 per cent of which form an ‘active’ list (i.e. customers to be contacted) and 60 per cent to act as a control group.

2 The lists were sent to the two Jobcentre Plus District contacts and the Contact Centre. The District then forwarded the schedules to the appropriate individuals in each jobcentre (in one case deleting customers appearing on previous lists, as this information was only required at the Contact Centre).

3 Once the schedules have been received at the Jobcentre offices a letter, introducing the pilot, was placed on the hardcopy files of customers in the ‘active’ list, to be given to the customer at their next FJR.

4 When customers appearing on the ‘active’ list reached week seven of their claim, the Contact Centre advisers checked the LMS to ensure that the claim remained live. If so, up to three attempts were made to contact the customer by telephone on different days in the week. Once contacted, customers could request that a jobsearch was undertaken on their behalf, and a record of the discussion recorded as a conversation on LMS. If the customer reported finding work, or there was the suspicion of the customer being in breach of JSA conditionality, this was recorded in the LMS conversation and as a separate workflow (TIP staff were not able to update the LMS, so relied on responses to conversations and workflows). If the customer was not successfully contacted in three calls, this was also recorded.

5 The next week’s FJR took place as normal, with any relevant points raised in the Contact Centre conversation being identified for follow-up from the review of the LMS before the interview.

6 This process was repeated at weeks 9, 11 and 13 of each claim, with the Contact Centre staff reviewing LMS to identify any areas for follow-up from the previous FJR.

7 The customer returned to the jobcentre’s normal signing pattern following week 13, when their involvement in the pilot ended.

2.3 Pilot monitoring processes and performance to date

The pilot jobcentres and Districts were not required to collect any local monitoring information as part of the pilot – a factor that was considered a strength amongst

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2 Workflows are email communications issued by the Contact Centre to the pilot jobcentres highlighting issues identified in their contacts with customers which require further investigation.
the individuals interviewed – although this influenced the extent to which the interviewees were aware of, and able to comment on, the impacts of the pilot.

Monitoring information was, however, collected at the activity level including: the number of successful calls (and if they were at the first, second and third attempts); whether difficulties were experienced in terms of languages spoken and hearing difficulties; the number of unsuccessful calls (e.g. no answer at third call, answering machine or third party reached, etc.) and instances where calls were not attempted. In addition to information on contacts attempted and achieved, information was also collected on the number of jobsearches and job submissions from the Contact Centre, and the number of cases of potential fraud and incidents of significant concern to be followed up by jobcentre staff.

The latest available monitoring information at the time of writing was for the week commencing 26 February 2007, which showed that:

- a total of **24,624 contacts had successfully been made in the two Districts** – 14,348 in the Black Country and 10,276 in the Marches. Of these:
  - **the majority were achieved at the first attempt** – 15,273 (62 per cent) at the first call, 5,974 (24 per cent) at the second and 2,658 (11 per cent) at the third;
  - the remaining three per cent of achieved calls included 494 (two per cent) customers indicating they were no longer claiming, 48 calls (0.2 per cent) which were ‘ineffective’ (27 due to language difficulties and 21 due to customers having impaired hearing), and 177 (0.8 per cent) who refused to participate in the pilot;
  - the distribution of achieved calls by the variables above showed **little variation between the two Districts**;

- **overall, 69 per cent of the contacts were successful in reaching the intended customers within three calls.** Of the remaining 31 per cent:
  - 49 per cent were not contacted within three attempts;
  - 34 per cent were not attempted as the LMS indicated that the claim had ended;
  - 14 per cent were not attempted due to missing or incomplete telephone numbers;
  - three per cent were not attempted due to customers being potentially violent, having sensitive records, or coded as ‘ran out of time’;\(^3\)
  - again, there was little difference in the distribution of the failed calls between the Districts;

\(^3\) NB – the coding ‘ran out of time’ is potentially misleading as it had been used to capture outcomes for which other codings were not available – see Section 3.2
• some **5,478 job searches were undertaken** during the monitoring period across the two Districts, and **3,613 job submissions**;

• **fraud referrals were made in 101 cases**, and concerns were raised over **availability for work in 1,634 instances**. In addition, ten individuals admitted to being abroad when contacted.

The performance information shows that the majority of contacts attempted were achieved within three calls, 62 per cent of these at the first call. It also suggests that the level of difficulty experienced with customers no longer claiming JSA, having language or hearing issues or refusing to take part, was less than perhaps might have been expected.

The level of job search and job submission activity suggested that job searches were undertaken in just over one in five of all contacts made (22 per cent), and job submissions in almost one in seven (15 per cent). Fraud referrals were made in just over 100 cases, although concerns were raised over the availability for work in a significantly larger 1,634 cases.
3 Experiences of implementation – Contact Centre

This chapter describes the experiences of the Contact Centre managers and the TIP team in preparing and implementing the pilot, the key issues encountered, and their views of the pilot approach more widely.

3.1 Preparation for implementation

The pilot was implemented in a relatively short period of time, with the most significant procedural developments taking place at the Contact Centre level. These included:

- establishing a team of advisers, and an adviser manager, to undertake the telephone contacts with customers;
- providing training for the TIP advisers, and briefings on the key labour market characteristics of the two pilot Districts – including developing an initial script for the telephone interviews;
- establishing procedures to receive, review and allocate customers to TIP advisers from the schedules.

A team of advisers was assembled to work specifically on the pilot, which at the time of study numbered 17 individuals (equating to 15 full-time employees (FTEs)). The team was recruited on a voluntary basis, having worked previously for Jobseeker Direct and Employer Direct, and so had experience of undertaking jobsearch. Importantly, the Team Leader (and a couple of advisers) had previous experience of the JSA regime, which was considered important in providing an understanding of the JSA processes from both a jobcentre and customer perspective.

The TIP staff formed a discrete team with their own work area within the Contact Centre. The team was initially divided to work solely on one of the two pilot Districts, although they preferred the variety of working across Districts so switched
between them on a weekly basis. Each full-time equivalent adviser had an average of between 150 and 160 customers to contact each week.

The team was given three days’ initial training, which was widely considered to be excellent, as summarised below.

**TIP team training**

The TIP training focused on: familiarisation with the LMS and Excel, interviewing and listening skills (including how to ask open and closed questions and role play in dealing with objections from customers) and undertaking practice calls. It also included presentations and the supply of labour market information (LMI) from the pilot Districts, and the development of an initial interview script.

The training was very well regarded by the attendees, and was considered to have helped to make the team gel from the outset. In addition, two FJR advisers from one District also attended, which was considered to be ‘the best thing we could have done’ and invaluable in developing understandings of the latest jobcentre practices as well as providing information on the Districts’ labour markets. The jobcentre staff were also helpful in identifying customers for practice calls before the pilots went live.

Since the start of the pilot, other Contact Centre staff had shown an interest in working on it, so a group of additional staff had been trained to provide sickness or holiday cover as appropriate.

### 3.2 The Contact Centre process

The process followed in the Contact Centre was as follows:

1. **Schedules of customers arrived from EDS at least one week in advance of use.** The Team Leader then allocated the customers between TIP team members, in proportion to the number of hours worked by each.

2. **Calls to customers were grouped with first calls taking place on Monday and Tuesday, second calls on Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday and third calls on Thursday and Friday.**

3. **When customers were contacted, a conversation was recorded on LMS for referral by the FJR officers in subsequent contacts.**

4. **The TIP adviser could undertake a jobsearch for a customer if requested, as well as directing them to other services such as Jobseeker Direct and other sources of vacancies.**

5. **If customers could not be contacted within three attempts, this was included in the LMS conversation. If this happened for two successive weeks, a workflow was generated. Workflows were always backed up by LMS conversations, as workflows could be deleted from the system but conversations could not.**
Examples of potential fraud identified also generated workflows (and reference in LMS conversations), depending on their nature (e.g. suspected work with a named employer triggered the submission of a QB21).

Customers claiming JSA and NI Credits were treated exactly the same by the Contact Centre – indeed, TIP advisers had no way of differentiating between them and so all received the same service.

Although the TIP team does not have formal targets for the number of contacts achieved, the aim was to clear the week’s schedule so a new one could start on the following Monday. The sequencing of the calls meant that where first calls to customers are completed early, staff could help colleagues to clear their calls rather than starting on their second or third calls.

Each successful contact was reported to take on average, around five minutes by the TIP staff interviewed, supported by data from the Contact Centre Directorate showing an average duration of 4 minutes 51 seconds. This comprised an average of 1 minute 27 seconds preparation time, 1 minute 37 seconds for the call itself and 1 minute 47 seconds for wrap-up (including entering a conversation on LMS). However, the advisers also reported that calls varied considerably in duration, from around two to as long as 15 minutes depending on the needs of the particular customer. Initial calls, and those involving young people, tended to last longer than average, with the emphasis being on offering customers an appropriate and high level of service rather than being influenced by caseload pressures.

Overall, Contact Centre workloads under the pilot appeared to be manageable – it was reported that they are normally able to clear their contacts by Friday lunchtime, with the remaining time being used positively to update knowledge of the pilot labour markets and to help ‘clean’ the following week’s schedule for customers who are no longer claiming. This was supported by data from the Contact Centre Directorate, which suggests that just 213 contacts had been classified as missed due to ‘running out of time’. This coding was, however, used where the outcome of a contact did not fit with any category on the schedule, in the absence of an ‘other’ option. For example, one TIP adviser described using the ‘ran out of time’ option when customers reported being ill and so unable to do jobsearch. The ‘running out of time’ coding therefore appears to be misleading.

3.3 Implementation issues

Few difficulties had been experienced in implementing the pilot from the Contact Centre perspective. Initial concerns centred on the timely delivery of the schedules and contact with individuals with limited spoken English – both of which had failed to be realised. The key issues for implementation, experienced to varying degrees during the pilot, appear to have been:
initially, the schedules were produced by EDS some way in advance of their use, which meant that they were often out of date when they came to be used. This was addressed and resulted in increased accuracy and fewer contacts with individuals no longer claiming JSA. Otherwise the schedules were found to always arrive on time;

- the variable level and quality of LMS information – with the Contact Centre being unable to make changes to the system and relying on conversations from FJR staff to make the necessary updates. Particular issues included:
  - customers appearing on schedules when no longer on the register – and felt to be due to poor housekeeping by FJR staff in the jobcentres. The removal of the link between customers leaving the register and jobcentre performance points was felt to have contributed to this, with updating LMS becoming less of a priority. However, the extent to which receiving the schedules a week in advance also contributed to this issue was unclear;
  - customers appearing on the schedules without telephone numbers – which required staff to go back through previous LMS conversations to find suitable numbers. Similarly, customers’ mother tongues were not always recorded, so not always identifying the need for translation services in advance;
  - variable practice in recording when introductory letters had been provided to customers – and meaning that the TIP advisers are unable to confirm if a letter had been issued or not. It was commonly reported that customers claimed not to have received a letter on contact, and in such cases the pilot had to be introduced to them again;

- the different holiday periods in Scotland and the rest of the UK – which led to some customers being contacted on English Bank Holidays – and a debate over whether customers should be ‘excused’ contact over the Christmas holiday period, as they are under the rest of the JSA regime.

3.4 Coverage of the Telephone Intervention Pilot contacts

The script initially developed for the TIP interviews was no longer followed strictly, as individual advisers became more comfortable with the topic areas covered. The coverage of the contacts remained the same, however, with a series of security questions confirming the customer’s identity before enquiring generally about progress with jobsearch activities and more specifically what they had done to look for work. If further support was considered to be needed, or jobsearch activity appeared limited, advisers offered to undertake a jobsearch or referred the customer to other products and services.

As part of the study a series of TIP contacts were observed at the Contact Centre to assess the degree of compliance with topic coverage and other TIP procedures (e.g. reviewing previous and leaving new LMS conversations). The findings from these observations are summarised opposite.
**Observation of TIP contacts**

A total of 17 completed TIP contacts were observed during the visit to the Contact Centre. The observations took place on a Monday and a Tuesday, when the TIP advisers were making their first contact with customers appearing on their schedules for that week.

In the contacts observed it appeared that:

- the TIP advisers always checked the LMS for previous conversations and workflows as part of preparing to contact customers;

- when contact was made, a series of security questions were always asked to ensure the correct person had been contacted. These included the customer’s regular day and time of signing, the types of job they were looking for (to check against their Jobseeker’s Agreement), and in one case the last job they had applied for. In each of the completed calls observed, the security questions were answered correctly;

- customers were asked what they had been doing to look for work in the previous 14 days, including following up on information recorded from their previous FJR. TIP advisers appeared to follow-up specific topics (such as named job applications or interviews) during the calls;

- the extent to which jobsearches were offered to customers varied. Where recent jobsearch activities appeared to have been limited a jobsearch was offered, although some of the advisers appeared to make this offer in every contact. In other cases, where customers reported recent jobsearch activity, advisers waited for them to request a jobsearch in response to the ‘Is there anything else I can help you with today?’ prompt. In a few cases TIP staff had undertaken a jobsearch for the customer before contacting them to see if there was anything suitable – with one individual appearing to be particularly proactive in this regard. Whenever a customer was submitted to a job, the details were printed and posted immediately, and a conversation left on LMS;

- the advisers also suggested alternative approaches to jobsearch activities, such as registering with agencies and taking their CVs to potential local employers. Other sources of support recommended by TIP staff during the observations included Learn Direct, Next Step, Jobseekers Direct and Connexions;

- on three occasions customers requested additional support or training. In these cases they were referred to their jobcentre, with a conversation being left for follow-up. Requests identified during the contacts observed included help with CV preparation to how to get a HGV licence;
in each of the completed contacts a conversation was left on LMS, which varied in length/coverage based on the content of the call. The duration of the call element of the completed contacts observed ranged from 30 seconds to 15 minutes, with an average of approximately two minutes. Contacts, including a jobsearch, were understandably longer than this average figure;

- customers appeared to have a neutral or positive attitude towards being contacted, and were most positive where they had been submitted for jobs. Only one expressed annoyance at being contacted, as she had previously reported that she was looking for work and felt she was being checked up on unnecessarily;

- a few of the customers were not expecting a call, although this did not appear to be a concern for them. In these cases the TIP adviser would check the LMS for confirmation that a letter had been issued, although this, or the fact that a letter had not been issued, had not always been recorded by the jobcentre;

- the TIP advisers followed their individual style in the interviews observed, and in each case covered the topics which featured on the initial pilot script. Most adopted an open, friendly and supportive manner in their customer contacts. There were no differences in treatment for JSA or National Insurance credit customers in the contacts observed.

While the emphasis of the observation work was on completed contacts, a number of incomplete contacts were also observed. These were always recorded as a conversation on LMS, and (reportedly) failure to make contact after three attempts would lead to both a conversation on LMS and a workflow being sent to the jobcentre.

Where individuals other than the customer took the call, the TIP advisers said they would call back or if pressed stated that they were the individual’s personal adviser. None of the incomplete contacts observed made any reference to the call being from Jobcentre Plus.

Overall, the observations suggested that the TIP advisers were following the correct procedures in their contacts with customers, notably in terms of referring to and recording actions through conversations on LMS.

Although the observations could be limited by the consultant’s incomplete knowledge of the background and context for individual calls, a series of issues were identified and probed during the individual and group interviews. The key additional issues for the staff undertaking contact with customers included:
contacts with customers who were not job ready, or young people with no qualifications or previous work experience, and who were at different points on the ‘journey to work’ and needed different degrees of support. While the pilot allowed the time spent per customer to vary, some advisers felt that they did not always have a complete understanding of the additional support or training available locally;

- the TIP team had no way of knowing in advance which customers were claiming National Insurance credits or JSA – which could lead to difficult conversations when they were contacted. This appeared to be due to different expectations on behalf of the different customer groups, with National Insurance credit customers being less likely to expect to be asked about their jobsearch behaviour;

- a degree of frustration amongst the TIP staff with the absence of appropriate advice, support and means of motivating customers approaching retirement age, who may be less keen on finding work or feel that no one is going to recruit them at their age.

Language issues were not experienced in any of the telephone contacts observed, and more broadly, language did not appear to have been as big an issue as was initially expected. It was reported that while the Big Word facility\(^1\) was used approximately twice a week, it was sometimes difficult to identify which language was necessary unless recorded on the LMS. The TIP advisers commonly reported preferring to identify if there was a friend or family member available to act as a translator, an approach which was found to work effectively.

Customers with hearing difficulties also posed challenges, and there was little the advisers could do in the absence of text phone facilities. In a couple of instances the TIP advisers referred to individuals with mental health issues being contacted, where it was considered obvious by the Contact Centre staff that they should not have been included in the pilot. Overall it was considered that the jobcentre staff could be doing more to identify such issues and informing the TIP team.

Finally, it was not clear from the observations whether advisers’ local labour market knowledge was adequate to support their discussions with customers. Free time after the completion of the weekly schedules was spent updating individual and collective labour market knowledge, to inform contacts for the subsequent week.

3.5 Perceptions of the pilot

Staff and members of the TIP team interviewed in the Contact Centre were particularly positive about the pilot. They appeared to uniformly enjoy their work and the opportunity to proactively contact customers, rather than reacting

\(^1\) The Big Word is the DWP’s telephone interpreting service, which can be called upon for use with customers with limiting English language skills.
responsively to incoming calls as in many of their previous roles. The fact that individuals were recruited on a voluntary basis was also a strength, with staff commonly describing joining as an opportunity to ‘help folk out’ and for enhanced job satisfaction.

The staff felt that they were supporting positive steps to help customers into work, and worked as a close and mutually supportive team, members of which willingly shared workloads when colleagues were struggling to contact customers. They also recognised that they were currently in the luxurious position of being able to clear their schedules on time, and so could be flexible in the duration of individual contacts as well as spending time familiarising themselves with the pilot labour markets.

The positive aspects of the pilot for the staff included:

- the positive reactions of customers to the pilot – once the idea of offering extra support had been introduced;
- the ability to make proactive contacts and to have a sense of ‘helping’ the customers;
- the straightforward and well-organised nature of the pilot – with a well managed team having a variety of strengths;
- the ability to be flexible over the time spent with customers – with the ability to dedicate extra time to customers when considered appropriate.

The TIP team did, however, consider that the absence of feedback on the performance of the pilot was a weakness and risked being demoralising. In addition, they had little, if any, contact with the jobcentres over workflows and conversations sent through, which although on-going contact was not felt to be needed would also have helped to evidence any positive effects. In some cases, members of the team had undertaken their own ‘tracking’ of customers to identify if actions suggested had been acted upon.
4 Experience of implementation – District Offices

The District level interviewees described having a minimal role in the pilot once implementation began, which, as such, had a negligible impact on their current workload. Expectations of the benefits of the pilot were positive, with one representative stating ‘the more you touch people, the more quickly they move off benefit’.

The District interviewees also reported that, to their knowledge, there were no other pilot activities taking place in the pilot offices that were likely to have an influence on the TIP. Similarly, they were not aware of any significant changes in their labour markets that could influence pilot performance.

4.1 Preparation for implementation

The District representatives, along with staff from the pilot jobcentres, were introduced to the pilot through a presentation at DWP, where materials were provided to share with jobcentre staff on a ‘trickle down’ basis. No training was considered necessary at the District or jobcentre levels due to the straightforward nature of the pilot. However, two advisers from one pilot District attended the Contact Centre training, which was considered to be helpful both to the Contact Centre team and to the advisers themselves.

The Districts had few concerns prior to the start of the pilot, the main one being over the potential number of workflows received and whether the jobcentres would be able to deal with them. In the Black Country concerns were also raised over the number of customers with English as a second language or with limiting language skills, although this had not proved to be as significant an issue as expected.
4.2 Implementation and implementation issues

The role of the Districts in the implementation of the pilot comprised receiving the schedules, dividing them up between the pilot jobcentres in their areas, and forwarding them on to the jobcentres. Although there had been a series of meetings and telekits during the first few weeks of the pilot, these had not continued so District inputs were minimal.

Neither of the Districts reported having formal steering arrangements for the pilot, although in the Black Country the pilot was discussed as an agenda item at District FJR Network meetings held on a two-monthly basis. This exchange was felt to be sufficient for what was considered a very straightforward pilot.

The time requirements for the Districts in both preparing for and implementing the pilot were consequently minimal. One District lead estimated their total time input to prepare for the pilot (including visits to Glasgow, initial briefing and telekits) at between four and five days, with the time needed to prepare the schedules on a weekly basis being measured in minutes.

The District interviewees also considered that the additional time requirements for delivering the pilot for the jobcentres were minimal, with tasks such as reviewing and updating the LMS as part of each FJR being part of what jobcentre staff should be doing anyway. The additional time required to manage the resulting workflows from the Contact Centre, however, was acknowledged as more of an issue – although this was also considered to be part of the core jobcentre function.

Both of the District contacts had experienced few issues and no significant challenges in their implementation roles. They were aware, however, of some of the challenges facing the jobcentres, which included:

- an increase in the number of customers reporting no longer having a telephone – although this was understood to be an issue not solely confined to pilot customers;

- needing to adapt the pilot model to fit local circumstances – for example around ensuring consistency in the coverage of conversations sent from the jobcentres to the Contact Centre, and the routing of workflows to and within the jobcentres;

- dealing with the increased volume of workflows – the numbers of which exceeded expectation, and could not always be acted upon due to staff resources. Here, the Districts and jobcentres had developed procedures for routing and managing the workflows, and ‘thresholds’ for when adviser intervention is required. For example, although reviewed by adviser level staff, they did not necessarily act on each workflow but could refer them for discussion at the next FJR.

Like their jobcentre and Contact Centre colleagues, the District staff reported that little information was available on the pilot’s success or otherwise during
implementation, and considered that this could be damaging for morale. In addition, they also reported that this also risked the fraud/conditionality elements of the pilot being unduly emphasised, as these aspects were most easily visible on a day-to-day basis.

4.3 Communications and relationships with the Contact Centre

Apart from the initial developmental activities and meetings/telekits in the first few weeks of implementation, contact with the Contact Centre throughout the process was minimal. This was not a concern for the Districts, however, as they considered that there were few reasons to contact the Centre as part of the normal operation of the pilot.

The Districts also reported having limited contact with the pilot jobcentres during implementation, but that again there were few reasons for contact due to the nature of the pilot. In the Black Country, where the pilot was an agenda item at FJR Network meetings, it was rarely raised other than to report implementation was progressing smoothly.

One District wondered, however, whether the contact between the jobcentre and Contact Centre staff around local LMI could usefully have been continued. The other District also wondered if visits from the Contact Centre team to the pilot jobcentres themselves would have been useful, as a means of broadening their knowledge and establishing relationships with FJR staff and advisers.

4.4 Perceptions of the pilot

The pilot was viewed positively by the District staff, in part due to the minimal resources required to support its implementation but also its ability to support additional Jobsearch activities, although they were less able to comment on its success in terms of influencing customer behaviour or impacting on customers leaving the register.

In the District’s view, the pilot was also viewed positively by the participating jobcentres, largely due to its fit with, and minimal impact on, existing processes and procedures.
5 Experiences of implementation – pilot jobcentres

This chapter describes the experiences of the pilot across the eight jobcentres visited as part of the study. It explores the preparation and implementation stages, and highlights the key issues and challenges experienced.

The jobcentres confirmed that they were not involved in any other pilot activities which could influence the delivery or performance of the pilot, and that there had been no significant changes in their labour market conditions during the pilot period. Overall, the pilot appeared to have been implemented largely as intended in the jobcentres visited, and although some variations in practice were identified, these were inevitable given their different circumstances and local operating models.

5.1 Preparation for implementation

Little preparation was required for the pilot at the individual jobcentre level, which commonly consisted of briefings for adviser and FJR staff, establishing procedures for introducing the pilot to customers and allocating introductory letters, and establishing approaches to dealing with the workflows generated.

Expectations of the pilot at the outset were positive, with few concerns being raised due to the straightforward nature of the pilot and its fit with existing jobcentre practice. The only concerns related to the jobcentre’s ability to deal with the volume of additional workflows generated, although in a couple of cases concerns were also raised on the quality of information they would receive from the Contact Centre. Expectations of impact were also positive, with the additional telephone contacts being expected to provide the additional stimulus for some customers to undertake more frequent and effective jobsearch.

The jobcentre staff were commonly introduced to the pilot through presentations in their team meetings, which were, in some cases, accompanied by copies of
Experiences of implementation – pilot jobcentres

handouts and aide-memoires. More formal training was not considered necessary, not least as the main pilot tasks of reviewing and leaving LMS conversations are part of the existing JSA regime.

5.2 Experience of implementation

The jobcentres visited were found to be complying with the pilot model, although they had introduced slightly different approaches to fit with their individual circumstances and resource constraints.

The key pilot tasks in each of the jobcentres included:

- receiving the weekly schedules from District Office – which were then ‘cleaned’ to identify any customers to be excluded, before the introductory letters were printed and allocated to customers’ hardcopy records;

- introducing the pilot to customers at their next FJR – and issuing and recording the receipt of the letters on the LMS. In some offices, customers’ records were also colour-coded to help identify pilot participants. Interestingly, none of the case study offices described informing customers that pilot participation was voluntary;

- reviewing previous LMS conversations in advance of each pilot customer FJR, raising any issues recorded by the Contact Centre as appropriate, and leaving a conversation as normal;

- handling the workflows produced by the Contact Centre – including reviewing those received and referring them to advisers for action or for discussion in a subsequent FJR.

Once customers reached their 13th claim week, they re-entered the normal JSA regime and were called in for their 13-week interviews. Throughout the pilot, and on their return after it, participating customers were treated no differently from non-pilot customers, although one jobcentre described prioritising 13-week interviews with pilot customers in order to build on any positive developments resulting from the additional contacts.

For the most part, the case study jobcentres reported having to make minimal changes to their operating procedures, with those that were made having limited impacts on staff and time resources. The main areas where change was required included:

- **Allocating schedules, preparing introductory letters and placing them on customer hardcopy records.** These tasks represented the main additional workload in delivering the pilot, and were resourced differently depending on individual circumstances. Most commonly these tasks were allocated to a single member of staff, usually an FJR adviser, although other examples included involvement of administration teams or in one case members of the Vacancy Service team.
• Checking the schedules for unsuitable customers and for accuracy. This task included checking that customers were still on the register, and that there was no reason for them to be excluded from the pilot. Conditions for exclusion varied between jobcentres, but commonly included New Deal and PV customers and those with ‘sensitive’ case histories. Elsewhere, customers with limited English language were excluded, as were those reluctant to participate in one office (including an individual who considered the pilot infringed their human rights).

• Reviewing and actioning Contact Centre workflows. In all but one office, the volume of additional workflows generated had been greater than expected. This required some of the case study jobcentres to amend their processes, commonly by allocating responsibility for reviewing the workflows to a single adviser or Customer Engagement Team Leader. The scale of workflows received also meant they could not all be dealt with at adviser level, thresholds were set for adviser action or follow-up in the next FJR as appropriate, and as shown in the example below.

### Dealing with workflows

In one jobcentre a clearly defined process for dealing with workflows was established:

- Workflows coming in were checked by the FJR team leader and FJR officer dealing with schedules.
- In the first instance, the Team Leader would briefly discuss any issues with customers, and remind them of the JSA rules.
- If a second workflow was received about the same customer, the Team Leader decided if there was an ‘availability for work’ issue, and if so referred the case to an adviser as potential fraud.
- Customers were given two consecutive weeks to be contacted in three attempts per week by the Contact Centre. If they failed to be contacted for a second consecutive week further investigation was undertaken unless a genuine explanation could be given.

The jobcentre reported an increase in customers referred to advisers for discussions following availability doubt and problems with contacts – although this was not considered a burden as this should be picked up as part of normal FJR practice.

Very little additional time was required to administer the pilot, ranging from a couple of hours to half a day to arrange the schedules and check customer eligibility across the jobcentres visited. The demands resulting from the workflows had required additional time, and several interviewees described not always being able to follow them up in a timely manner.
5.3 Coverage of with Fortnightly Job Reviews pilot customers

The management level interviewees in the jobcentres considered that in the majority of cases FJR staff complied with the requirements of the pilot in their contacts with customers, namely referring to previous and leaving new LMS conversations as appropriate. It was, however, recognised that circumstances and time constraints meant that previous conversations may not always be reviewed as thoroughly as they could be. In addition, conversations left by the Contact Centre staff did not always act as a prompt to further discussion – for example, if they reported that customers were undertaking jobsearch but provided no further details.

Management staff appreciated the importance of keeping the LMS up to date, particularly around changes in customer circumstances such as leaving the register or changing telephone numbers/no longer having a telephone. While they considered these details were updated as rapidly as possible, they conceded that this might not always have been sufficiently rapid to feature on the Contact Centre schedules. Indeed, the Contact Centre discussions identified cases where customers had found work before notifying the jobcentre. There was a view that there would always be some customers who were included on the schedules after their claims had ended due to timing issues.

To explore compliance with the use of LMS conversations, and the conduct of the FJRs more broadly, a series of observations were undertaken with customers participating in the pilot in five of the jobcentres. The findings of these observations are summarised below.

**Observation of FJRs with TIP customers**

A series of 25 FJRs undertaken with TIP customers were observed during visits to five of the case study jobcentres. In summary, these indicated that:

- LMS conversations were reviewed prior to the majority of the FJRs observed, although not in all cases;
- customers were rarely asked directly about the TIP, unless specific issues were raised from the LMS conversation. Examples of reference to TIP contacts included being unable to contact the customer in three calls, and following-up on specific vacancies or interviews;
- in one jobcentre none of the FJRs observed referred to the content of the LMS conversations. Further probing identified that after issuing the letter conversations are not followed up other than to check telephone numbers if contact was unsuccessful;
- TIP appeared to be ‘embedded’ in the FJR procedures to varying extents – with some FJR officers expecting TIP contacts to be raised and customers to respond;
customers rarely raised the TIP contacts themselves, they were always raised first by the FJR officers;

the majority of customers appeared to be comfortable with the TIP process, and did not seem to be concerned or worried by the telephone contacts. Only one customer reacted negatively, and this was more of an overall reaction to Jobcentre Plus than to the TIP intervention, per se;

customers in one jobcentre did, however, raise the issue of being unable to understand the accents of staff in the Contact Centre. This was not apparent in any of the other offices.

The FJRs observed featured customers of different ages and employment aspirations, and across a pool of FJR officers. Although the sample size, across five offices, was small, it appeared that variations in practice were identified more at the level of the individual FJR officer than the jobcentre – with the exception of the single office where none of the FJRs referred to the conversations apart from checking telephone numbers.

However, as with the Contact Centre observations, their findings should be seen as indicative due to the small sample size and limited knowledge of the context for the individual FJR.

Interviews with individual FJR officers identified that, for the most part, LMS conversations were referred to in preparation for each FJR. Several acknowledged, however, that they did not always have sufficient time within their five minute slots to do more than a scant review of previous conversations, and reported that those from the Contact Centre did not always require or lend themselves to further follow-up. In a couple of cases, FJR officers reported sometimes spending longer with pilot customers, to allow issues to be explored as well as undertaking a ‘normal’ FJR.

The content and coverage of the conversations left by the Contact Centre were felt to be adequate overall, and although their accuracy was not questioned, some staff reported that a simple ‘complying with jobsearch requirements’ message gave them little to build on in the next FJR. Others, however, did not expect the conversations to set an agenda for discussion, but rather to highlight areas for investigation around conditionality and checking availability for work. While most of the FJR officers saw the pilot primarily as a means of providing additional support to customers, some saw its focus (and subsequent benefits) to be around enforcing conditionality and identifying potential fraud.

5.4 Implementation issues

As with the Contact Centre and District interviewees, the case study jobcentres described experiencing few difficulties in implementing the pilot. Again, the pilot’s strength was considered to be its simplicity, and fit with existing practice, which meant that the time required for implementation and changes to jobcentre organisation were minimal.
The main areas where issues or challenges were experienced, in addition to handling the additional workload created by the additional workflows, related to:

- **the allocation of the schedules** – although the time required overall was limited, staff had to manually mark up the schedules with the details of customer signing days and place them in customers’ hardcopy records. In addition to checking customer data to ensure that they were still on the register, many interviewees considered that this process could be made more efficient if the approach was to be continued;

- **managing customers contacted in advance of introduction to the pilot** – the interviewees commonly referred to customers being contacted by the Contact Centre in advance of having the pilot introduced to them. Although this appeared to be less of an issue over time, and did not appear to cause negative reactions from the customers involved, its potential importance was emphasised by one case where a PV customer was contacted who would otherwise have been excluded from the pilot.

### 5.5 Contact with District and Contact Centre

Once implementation had commenced the case study, jobcentres described having minimal contacts with the District Offices, outside of receiving the weekly schedules and in the case of the Black Country attending FJR Network meetings. Similarly, contacts between the jobcentres and the Contact Centre were limited to LMS conversations and workflows, although these were considered to be sufficient to deliver the pilot from the jobcentre perspective at least.

While the jobcentres did not feel that increased contact with District or Contact Centre colleagues was necessary, they uniformly considered that some information on the performance of the pilot during its implementation would have been helpful in maintaining staff morale and commitment. Although the pilot was frequently discussed at internal team meetings the absence of the requirement to collect local monitoring information, while a strength in terms of limiting burdens, meant that views expressed were largely anecdotal.

### 5.6 Perceptions and impacts of the pilot

The pilot was viewed positively by most staff in the jobcentres, where its simplicity, ease of implementation and minimal burden were considered to be key strengths. There was a view amongst management staff that the pilot had the potential to impact on customers’ jobsearch activities – by providing support through jobsearch and job submissions, as well as emphasising the expectation that they should be looking for work as part of their benefit conditions.

Views of the pilot amongst the FJR staff were mixed but generally positive, with it in many cases being seen as a replacement for jobsearch services they are no
longer able to provide within the time constraints of a five minute FJR. More negatively, several FJR officers considered that the pilot was a threat to their jobs, while others were concerned that the pilot may suggest that they are not fulfilling their roles effectively. While understanding of the detail of the pilot could be variable within the same office (in some cases due to the use of temporary staff), this did not negatively influence delivery. One common expectation amongst the FJR officers at the outset of the pilot was that all pilot customers would have a jobsearch undertaken on their behalf, rather than having to request one or when a specific need was identified.

Staff also considered that customers had either neutral or positive views of the pilot, and although none introduced participation as being voluntary, few customers had refused to take part.

Little information was available locally on the impact of the pilot in terms of progressing individuals into work, or any other benefits resulting from it such as increased jobsearch activity. While many of the FJR staff referred to examples of individuals benefiting from jobsearch activities stimulated by the Contact Centre, these were reported as individual incidents rather than being part of any wider pattern. Views varied on the types of customer who would benefit most from involvement in the pilot – in some cases the more motivated were felt to benefit from the opportunity to access additional support, while for others, the stimulation to undertake jobsearch on a compliance basis was the main benefit.

The extent to which the pilot was considered to support the enforcement of conditionality varied between the interviewees. While many examples of ‘suspected’ fraud were identified in the Contact Centre conversations and followed up at adviser or FJR level, it was not clear what share of these had been taken forward. One FJR officer, for example, questioned whether missing three Contact Centre calls should trigger concerns over fraud, given the range of potential reasons for this, not least the customer being out actively seeking work.
6 Customer experiences of the pilot

In addition to exploring customers’ views of the pilot with jobcentre Plus staff, short interviews were undertaken with 25 individuals involved in the pilot in seven of the eight case study offices, seven in the Marches and 18 in the Black Country. These included two customers who had received notification of the pilot on the day of the case study visit, allowing their initial thoughts and expectations of the pilot to be discussed.

The interviews covered a number of topics including how the customer first heard about the pilot, if they knew who the Contact Centre were when they called, if they were offered any assistance with jobsearch, if they found the telephone calls helpful and whether the calls were discussed at their next FJR.

6.1 Introduction to the pilot

Over half (12) of the customers interviewed recalled being informed of the pilot by their FJR officer when they signed on at the jobcentre, and all but one remembered having received and signed for the introductory letter prior to receiving their first call from the Contact Centre.

An additional six customers reported receiving calls prior to being informed of the pilot, and before they had been given the letter explaining the process. Each of these customers were registered at three of the Black Country jobcentres, although the small size of the sample precludes further conclusions regarding their distribution. However, as noted previously, the interviews with jobcentre staff suggested that receiving calls from the Contact Centre prior to customers being informed of the pilot was not uncommon. It is also worth noting that these customers were not unduly perturbed at being contacted in advance.

The remaining five customers already participating in the pilot could not remember how they heard about it, or whether they received a letter regarding the telephone contact. Again, none appeared to be concerned at being contacted despite their apparent lack of awareness of the pilot.
As previous sections have described, not all of the Jobcentre Plus offices informed customers that participation in the pilot was voluntary, and in these offices customers were not questioned on this aspect of the pilot. In the other offices 15 customers were interviewed, and their views were evenly split with seven considering participation was voluntary and eight that it was compulsory.

While individual recollection will influence this finding, it is clear that the way in which FJR officers introduce the customer to the pilot will impact on their perception regarding participation, not least as the letters provided do not mention participation being voluntary. Indeed, in all cases where customers considered participation to be voluntary, they recalled being asked by their FJR officer if they minded if the Contact Centre contacted them – at least inferring that participation was optional. In cases where the customer thought participation was compulsory the aspect of choice was not mentioned. For example, one customer stated ‘I didn’t really have a choice’, while another stated ‘... in a way I thought the calls were compulsory. If you want to get a job, you take the extra support’.

The two customers who were introduced to the pilot during the case study visits both described being pleased to join it, although their expectations varied. While both expected the pilot to assist them with their search for work, neither was clear on the form this would take. Although no mention was made of the conditionality aspect of the pilot, one considered that its overall aim was to positively assist their jobsearch activities, while the other had a more neutral view. Both of the customers were registered in jobcentres which previous staff interviews identified as not informing their customers of the voluntary nature of the pilot.

6.2 Contact Centre calls

The number of calls the customers reported receiving varied depending on the length of their claim, although several described knowing that the Contact Centre had tried to call them on several occasions before they were successful. While most expected a call at some time during the week, three customers reported knowing on which day of the week to expect the call, with one stating they had received ‘a few calls, they phone every Monday and Tuesday’, and another that ‘I get one every Thursday, I have had a call about five times’.

6.2.1 Conduct and content of the Contact Centre calls

Customers reported not always knowing who the Contact Centre staff were initially, although all stated that the Contact Centre staff introduced themselves and provided further explanation of why they were calling if necessary. The five customers described above as not receiving notification of the pilot also reported not expecting to be contacted, but did not react negatively to the unexpected call.

While recollections of the content of the calls varied between customers, each of the broad areas of discussion featuring in the Contact Centre script appeared to have been included:
• **Security questions** – although only seven customers described being asked questions to prove their identity, this is likely to be more a matter of recollection than omission on the Contact Centre’s part. Where remembered, the customers stated that they were asked to confirm their name and date of birth, the day that they sign on for JSA and the type of jobs they were looking for. For example, one customer stated ‘They asked me to confirm my ID, my name and date of birth. They asked when I came in to sign on. They asked me to confirm the sort of work that I was looking for’.

• **Coverage of previous jobsearch activities** – over half (13) of the customers recalled being questioned on their previous week’s jobsearch activity in the telephone contact, and reported providing different levels of detail in response. In some cases details of individual interviews were provided, and in others more general responses (such as attending the jobcentre, reading the local press, etc) were offered.

• **The offer of a jobsearch** – 12 customers stated that they had been offered a jobsearch as part of their contact, the experience and outcomes of which were variable. For example, one customer stated ‘they looked at what jobs I wanted and found a job I could try in Worcester. I got an interview, but I didn’t get the job as I had no experience’. Nine of the 12 customers having a jobsearch undertaken on their behalf considered that the jobs offered were suitable, with only three thinking otherwise. Of these, the first customer reported that the location of the job was not practical for their circumstances, and the remaining two stated that the jobs offered were not in areas of work they were looking for.

• **The offer of alternative sources for jobsearch** – four of the customers interviewed were signposted to other resources for jobsearch, including additional websites and Jobseekers Direct, and claimed to have explored each and would do so again in future.

Less than half of the customers interviewed could recall the content of the Contact Centre call being referred to in their FJR. However, this finding is not significant as it is likely to be influenced by a combination of individual recollection, the nature of the conversation left on LMS by the Contact Centre (and whether it can/should be followed up) and the focus of the specific FJR session.

6.3 Benefits of the Telephone Intervention Pilot contacts and impacts on customer behaviour

Fourteen of the customers described finding the TIP telephone calls useful, with the remainder either being unable to recollect or taking a more negative view. The reasons for finding the calls useful varied between the customers, and ranged from providing a gentle reminder of expectations for jobsearch activity to more explicit examples such as help with jobsearch and keeping up to date with local vacancies:
• Help with job search – this was the most commonly cited example of value added from the customers’ perspective, and in some cases was linked to customers’ personal circumstances. For example, one customer stated the calls were ‘very helpful, I am dyslexic and find it difficult to look for jobs in the paper, it’s good because they can find the jobs for me’. Another customer commented that ‘it is helpful when they look on the computer for you’.

• Keeping up to date with vacancies – a small number of customers described finding the Contact Centre calls useful in keeping them informed of local job vacancies. However, they were less clear on whether they had been put forward for the jobs or had requested more information.

A small number of customers also described being submitted for jobs by the Contact Centre staff, and having the opportunity of an interview as a result of the telephone contact. One customer described how ‘the first time they rang they got me an interview, which helped’ – both in moving towards employment and demonstrating the value of the TIP approach.

More broadly, a number of customers commented on other benefits of the contacts including increased confidence, having someone else to talk to and being able to ask questions they felt there was insufficient time to raise at the jobcentre. For the most part, the customers viewed the pilot as an added customer service element of the JSA regime, and one that was not easily delivered in jobcentres due to time constraints.

Individuals finding the calls less useful often commented that they added little value to their fortnightly signing sessions, and included those who had not been offered any jobsearch or had been offered what they considered to be the wrong jobs. These customers have arguably not received anything ‘extra’ from the service, so may not view it as beneficial as customers who have had a visible ‘outcome’ from the calls. However, even in these cases there was anecdotal evidence that individuals had been spurred into further jobsearch activity. As one customer stated ‘...[The pilot is] a waste of time, they ask me the same things as they do in here, they are not really helpful, but after they rang I thought I had better do something’.

Overall, the impacts on customer behaviour were minimal across all the customers interviewed, with the vast majority stating that they had not done anything differently as a result of receiving the TIP calls. However, some described acting on some of the recommendations made in the telephone conversations, including following up job suggestions, using the internet and calling Jobseekers Direct. In addition, two customers stated that the calls acted as a reminder to them to look for work, possibly highlighting the conditionality component of JSA. As the first described ‘It was more of a prompt, they called so I thought I had better do something so I looked online’, while the second stated ‘I expect the call so I do jobsearch during the week’.
7 Conclusions

This chapter provides the conclusions of the study, and should be considered alongside the quantitative analyses of the differential rates at which customers in the pilot and control groups leave the register.

7.1 Conclusions

7.1.1 Pilot implementation

The study found that the pilot was being implemented as intended in the Contact Centre, Districts and jobcentre offices visited. As no other pilots were taking place that were likely to influence the effects of TIP, and no significant changes in the pilot labour markets were identified, we conclude that the pilot provides a robust basis for its qualitative and quantitative evaluation.

Where local differences in implementation were identified, these resulted from responses to individual circumstances and in response to the scale of resulting workloads. The key strengths of the pilot were considered to be its straightforward nature and ease of implementation, and the ability to offer additional support to customers while also reinforcing the requirement to undertake jobsearch as a condition of receiving JSA. The extent to which the pilot processes fitted in with existing JSA and jobcentre procedures was also a strength, as was the small amount of time required outside of the Contact Centre for its implementation.

Other than the contacts from the Contact Centre, customers participating in the pilot were not treated any differently from non-pilot customers. Similarly, participants claiming JSA did not appear to be treated any differently from those claiming NI Credits, although Contact Centre staff reported not always being aware of the status of the customers they contacted.

Few implementation issues were identified at the Contact Centre and jobcentre levels, and those that were often related to the pilot nature of the approach and would not necessarily be repeated if the pilot was to be implemented more widely. For example, if mainstreamed, the TIP approach would be introduced to customers at the start of their claims, rather than requiring later introduction and the production of introductory letters.
One common issue for the Contact Centre and the jobcentres concerned the importance of ensuring that customer details were kept as up to date as possible, and that the LMS held appropriate contact details for individual customers, to avoid inappropriate contacts. The importance of details such as customer claim status and telephone numbers being up to date, and information on characteristics such as mother tongue or hearing difficulties being available on LMS, were emphasised by the pilot.

The different interviewees provided a series of key success factors for the pilot, and which may be of relevance to any extension of the pilot approach. These included:

- the positioning of the Contact Centre to customer relationship – with one of the strengths of the TIP team being considered to be their independence from the customer’s ‘home’ jobcentre;
- presenting the pilot ‘offer’ (to customers and jobcentre staff) as providing additional support to find work – rather than emphasising the conditionality element;
- the Contact Centre calls being able to offer a different opinion or advice to that available from the jobcentre.

**7.1.2 Staff and customer attitudes**

Staff attitudes to the pilot varied, with Contact Centre, District and jobcentre management staff being uniformly positive, whereas views were more mixed amongst the FJR officers interviewed:

- Contact Centre staff were particularly positive about the pilot, as it offered them the opportunity to work proactively with customers, offer them support with their jobsearch efforts, and allowed them a degree of flexibility in the time that they spent with individual customers.

- District and jobcentre managers also viewed the pilot positively as a means of supporting additional jobsearch activities and submissions to jobs amongst customers, and reminding them that they should be actively seeking work. The straightforward nature of the pilot, and its minimal impact on staff workloads, were also viewed positively.

- FJR officers’ attitudes to the pilot varied, being generally positive in terms of providing additional support with jobsearch. However, several interviewees were concerned that the pilot could be a risk to their jobs, and may suggest that they were not undertaking their roles effectively.

Customers were reported as viewing the pilot either positively or neutrally by the Contact Centre and jobcentre staff. In the experience of the Contact Centre staff, the majority of customers viewed the pilot positively once it had been explained to them. The interviews undertaken with pilot customers found that their views were particularly positive when they had been offered jobsearch or submitted for
jobs, although other benefits such as improved confidence were also reported. Customers appeared to be less positive about the pilot when they had not received any additional services under it, and did not identify any ‘added value’ from the additional contacts.

### 7.1.3 Benefits and impacts

Little information was available locally on the impact of the pilot on participating customers, due not least in part to the absence of the requirement to collect monitoring information at the local level.

Views on actual and potential impacts varied between staff at Contact Centre, District and jobcentre levels, and between individuals within the same office. While staff expected benefits in terms of increased/improved jobsearch and progression to employment to result from the pilot, there was little evidence available on the extent to which these had been achieved. At the FJR officer level examples of benefits accruing to individual customers were cited, although overall, perceptions of impact were highly variable and some considered the benefits achieved to be negligible.

The pilot’s role in identifying examples of potential fraud was often considered to be its most visible effect, and staff at all levels in the Contact Centre, District and jobcentre offices would have welcomed the opportunity to receive feedback on the success, or otherwise, of the telephone approach. The staff interviewed did not seem to be aware of the detail of the quantitative evaluation, or that information on its effects in terms of customers leaving the register would only be produced at the end of the pilot.

From the Contact Centre perspective, the pilot was felt to strike a good balance between encouraging and checking on customers’ jobsearch activities, ‘creating that little extra pain’ that could push some individuals to find a job. It also provided extra support which staff in the jobcentres can no longer offer, and as such complemented their service and could be targeted in areas of high volume need.

### 7.1.4 Specific issues

In terms of the additional specific questions set out in the study brief, we conclude that:

- the schedules were received in a timely manner, and were considered to be adequate and fit for purpose. However, their effectiveness could be improved by including customer details such as signing dates to enable more effective processing, and steps could be taken to minimise the degree to which they had to be reviewed and effectively ‘cleaned’ by the Contact Centre and jobcentre staff.

- LMS conversations were, for the most part, followed up in subsequent FJRs – although this also depended on the nature of the previous conversation left by the Contact Centre. Where conversations were not followed up, they appeared to be due to time pressures rather than officer indifference;
• contacts between the Contact Centres, District Offices and the jobcentres were limited following the initial introduction of the pilot. This was, however, not considered to be a concern, as the workflow and LMS conversations were adequate for the pilot to function.

7.2 Potential for roll-out of the pilot approach

The individuals interviewed at all levels recognised that any potential continuation of the pilot model would depend on its effect on customers leaving the register. Within this context, the majority of interviewees considered that the pilot had the potential for wider use.

Any wider roll-out of the TIP approach was recognised as posing a series of challenges for both the Contact Centre and for individual jobcentres. These included:

• scaling up issues – and ensuring that the Contact Centre element was sufficiently resourced to undertake the additional customer telephone contacts. This would include further investigation of whether a single Contact Centre could deal with the number of calls required, or if multiple Centres would be required. District and jobcentre staff wondered whether a regional or, more radically, a District level approach could be more effective or practicable.

• customer targeting – given the resources required to follow the TIP approach with all customers, questions were raised by the interviewees as to whether the approach may be more effective with some customers than with others. While introducing the approach at the start of all claims was not felt to be effective, its use on a targeted basis against a segmented customer group was felt to have merit. However, this relies on the ability to segment customers effectively and, more importantly, define which customer ‘types’ would be most appropriate for additional telephone contact. Several interviewees also wondered whether the TIP approach could be followed with post-13-week customers, again on a targeted basis;

• spatial targeting – following from the above, interviewees wondered if the TIP approach could be targeted on areas with a high claimant count, to ensure resources were most effectively targeted;

• dealing with additional workflows – one of the lessons from the pilot was the scale of workflows produced where concerns over availability for work and, to a lesser extent, potential fraud were identified. Any roll-out of the approach would need to consider how these questions would be addressed within staff resources, or to establish common thresholds for action resulting from them.

In addition to the above, a series of process issues would also need to be considered. These include making changes to the implementation processes followed under the pilot to reflect its mainstream status, such as:
• informing customers of the telephone contact approach at the point they make their claims – hence, removing the need to introduce this to them part-way through their claims, and altering the nature of any schedules of customers produced for the Contact Centre;

• formalising the different customer types and characteristics for exclusion from the pilot – for example, not including customers with hearing difficulties unless textphone facilities are made available, and others, such as those with mental health issues, who may be less able to benefit from the telephone contacts;

• ensuring that relevant customer details always feature on their hardcopy files and/or LMS records – for example, up to date telephone numbers, specific language requirements and other relevant details;

• establishing mechanisms to ensure that conversations left on LMS and workflows have been followed up where appropriate, for example, by the introduction of tick box responses on the LMS.
Appendix

Topic guides
Topic guide for Contact Centre Managers

*This checklist is to be used in interviews with the Contact Centre Manager, the manager with responsibility for TIP if different, and the Sheffield-based Contact Centre managers. It will be used in face to face interviews with staff during the visit to the Contact Centre, and by telephone with the Sheffield based staff.*

**Background and context**

- Describe how the delivery of the pilot is organised – to include:
  - Numbers of staff and managers/team leaders involved
  - How adviser teams are structured – i.e. allocated by pilot District, to specific groups of individuals, etc?
  - How is work scheduled/case loading organised? – i.e. any time targets for interviews, number of customer caseloads per adviser, etc.
  - Presence and frequency of meetings to discuss progress
- Describe the key processes involved in the pilot. *(Review producing a simple flow chart, including any changes introduced on the basis of early experience).*
- How is the pilot monitored, in terms of:
  - Compliance with pilot processes by staff – including use of scripts, coverage of interviews, time taken to complete interviews and follow-up, etc?
  - Numbers of customers receiving calls, not being contacted after three calls, etc?
  - TIP customers leaving the register?
- What are the key process issues encountered (and their implications):
  - From a management perspective
  - As reported by Contact Centre advisers
  - As reported from the Districts
  - Are scans arriving on time, and is their content accurate and sufficient for TIP interview purposes?
- To what extent are the pilot processes being adhered to? Explore any divergence, the reasons for and the implications.
- What are advisers asking to check customers’ job search?
- What general types of advice are TIP advisers giving during TIP interviews? What are client expectations in this regard?
- What help do advisers give if customers are having difficulty with self-service channels?
- What if any differences are followed for individuals claiming JSA, and those receiving NI Credits only?
• What happens with clients with speech or hearing difficulties, limiting English language abilities, or who may be less suited to the telephone approach (provide examples)?

• Are TIP advisers aware of the Big Word translation service? Is it always suggested to appropriate clients? Has it been used with TIP clients?

Prior to the start of the pilot
• How long before commencing was the pilot communicated to staff, and how was it introduced to them?

• Were all staff introduced to the pilot at the same time, or was the introduction phased? What was the impact of this?

• What initial comments/concerns were raised by staff? What were the main initial views/concerns for the management tier?

• What barriers had to be addressed/overcome prior to pilot implementation? Did any of these impact on the start date and delivery of the pilot?

• With hindsight, is there anything you would change in terms of the introduction of the pilot, including introducing it to staff? Why?

Staffing the pilot
• How were staff selected to take part in the pilot?

• What background experience do the pilot staff have? Were:
  – Existing staff used – if so, does previous experience aid their performance?
  – Staff recruited specifically for the pilot? Would newly recruited staff be equally capable of undertaking the role of adviser?

• What training did staff receive, and how was any training organised (who delivered, all staff at the same time, etc)? Collect any materials produced.

• Was the training provided sufficient? What have emerged as the key skills/experience/attributes of effective telephone interview staff?

• How do staff receive information/briefing on the local labour markets in the two pilot areas? Collect example information. How is this updated, and does the information received provide sufficient information?

• What is the current attitude of staff towards the pilot? Have attitudes changed as the pilot has progressed – if so how and why?

Relationship with the pilot areas
• What relationships exist between staff in the Contact Centre and in the pilot Districts? Are they helpful, and if so how and could they be improved?

• To what extent do the Contact Centre and the District staff communicate on a day to day basis? Do they communicate regarding the outcomes of individual interviews, concerns over potential fraud, etc?
• Is information on any labour market outcomes secured by individuals in the pilot treatment group communicated to the Contact Centre staff? If so, how, and how important is positive feedback to TIP staff?

• How is key information (e.g. on potential cases of fraud) shared with District staff? What might trigger concerns over potential fraud?

**Potential for National Roll-out**

• Which pilot elements are felt to have worked particularly well? Which less so?

• Does the TIP approach have the potential to be implemented more widely?
  – If yes, are there/what changes to the approach would be needed? Are there any ‘types’ of customers that the approach may be more or less appropriate for?
  – If no, why? Is the rationale for the approach flawed, or its implementation?

• If the pilot was extended, would it be possible to establish and maintain good relationships/links with local areas? If not, what impact would this have?

• What are the overall key learning points from the pilot?

**And finally**

• Are the any other comments the interviewee would like to make?
Topic guide for TIP advisers

This checklist is for use in interviews with the TIP advisers undertaking telephone contacts at the Contact Centre, and in focus groups with available advisers.

Introducing the pilot process

• Describe how and when the pilot was first introduced to you.

• What training have you received in association with the pilot? Describe – was this sufficient, and if not what areas were not clear?

• What were your initial views of the pilot and the pilot approach?

Overall pilot implementation

• Summarise the process from the adviser perspective (Develop simple flowchart).

• How are customer contacts scheduled? Is there a time target set for individual interviews – if so what is it, and is it realistic?

• Which aspects of the implementation approach work well? What are the key implementation issues and challenges?

Detailed implementation

Scans

• What do the scans you receive cover? Do the scans provide you with sufficient information to contact the claimant and discuss their options?

• Do they arrive in time to contact the claimant? Are they always accurate?

• Have you experienced any difficulties/problems with the scans? Are there ways in which the scan could be improved to make your job more effective/efficient?

Making contact

• Do you have responsibility for making contact with your own set of customers, or do you simply try ‘the next one on the list’ that is shared amongst the team?

• Would it be better to have your ‘own’ customers? What impact would this have?

• Before making the call, do you look for comments from the FJR to be followed up in the telephone conversation?

• Do you have a script to follow when talking with the claimant?
  – If yes, is it sufficient to cover all situations? How strictly is it adhered to?
  – If no, do you feel that you would benefit from having one?

• Are three attempts always made to call a claimant? How are follow-up calls scheduled (random, different times in week, etc)? Are there systems to remind advisers of outstanding contacts?
• Approximately how many customers are you able/not able to make contact with within three attempts? What happens if you do not get through to a customer in three calls?

• What happens if you contact a customer, but cannot complete the call or get through to them again? Is that counted as a contact, or would you try again?

• Have you experienced any communication difficulties with customers? Describe – clarity of line, disconnections, language issues etc? Are there processes for individuals with speech or hearing difficulties, and have limited spoken English?

• Are you aware of the ‘Big Word’ translation service? How often have you used it with pilot customers? Have any problems been experienced with the service?

• When would you make a direct fraud referral? What process would you follow?

• Have you ever contacted someone to find they had indicated they didn’t want to take part in TIP?

Labour Market Information (LMI)

• What information do you receive from the pilot Districts, and how do you receive it? (Get copies) How regularly is this updated? Do you feel that you have:
  – Sufficient LMI on the two Districts to offer useful advice?
  – Sufficient information about the individual claimant to offer advice/support?

• Do you always/sometimes/never use this LMI in TIP contacts? (Provide a generic example if so). If not used, or only used sometimes, why?

• If not doing so – would working with a single District be helpful in this regard?

Customer perceptions and reactions

• From your contact with them, what are clients’ perceptions of the pilot? Are they broadly positive, negative, neutral or a mix of all – and why?

• Particularly when contacting them for the first time, do customers always expect your call/knew you would call? Do you ever catch customers ‘off guard’ – e.g. it is obvious they are doing something that they shouldn’t have not reported.

• What are their initial reactions to contact, and do they change over time?

• Have you encountered situations that have been difficult to deal with? E.g. What do you do if you receive no cooperation or abuse?

• What are the most common types of advice and support do you offer to customers? Provide some examples. Are the interviews mainly/or a mix of the:
  – Proactive – the adviser leads on suggesting measures for the customer?
  – Reactive – the adviser responds to the requests/questions from the customer?
– Focused on conditionality – i.e. ensuring looking for work, not employed, etc.

– If you have experience of carrying out FJRs, how do TIP telephone contacts compare? Does the long distance communication make it easier or more difficult to take a firm line?

**Relationships with Districts and jobcentres**

- Do you have any communication with advisers/others in the FJR process in the pilot offices? Describe – including any ‘fast tracking’ such as potential fraud.

- Would you benefit from a closer relationship with Jobcentre staff in the pilot areas? If so, how could this be established?

- What would be the implications for local relationships if the pilot was rolled out?

- Are customers tracked/are you informed if a positive outcome is reached? If so, do positive outcomes impact on staff morale, and vice versa?

**Rolling out**

- What are your views of the pilot and its potential for national roll-out?

- What changes would be needed if the approach was to be rolled-out?

- What wider resources would need to be in place?

Are there any other comments you would like to make about TIP that have not yet been discussed?
Topic guide for District Performance Managers

This topic guide is to be used in the interviews with Performance Managers in the two Districts where TIP is being implemented.

Introduction
• Describe how the District and participating offices came to be involved in the pilot.
• What are the expected benefits of the pilot – and what does the District/offices think they would get out of it?
• Are the offices participating involved in any other pilots/activities that could influence the implementation or effect of the pilot? If so describe.

Implementation
• How is the pilot being managed? Describe its key characteristics – including numbers of staff and roles, management and monitoring structure, meetings, degree of contact with Contact Centre and District/Jobcentres.
• How much of your time is spent working on the pilot? Is this sufficient? Is the pilot being closely managed by the District?
• Is there a steering group at District level? If yes, who is on it, how often does it meet and how are action points/meeting minutes disseminated?
• How were staff introduced to the pilot? Describe the training that took place prior to the pilot going live – was it sufficient?
• What has been the reaction of the staff to the pilot? Has this changed as the pilot has progressed?
• What were the main challenges and barriers that had to be addressed prior to TIP implementation?
• Since the pilot started, have there been any changes in the labour market in the pilot areas that may impact on the outcome of the pilot?
• Since the pilot has been running have there been any changes in the modes of delivery? If so, what, why and what difference has this made?

Relationships with the Contact Centre and Jobcentres
• Describe your relationship with the Contact Centre and the pilot Jobcentres? Could this relationship be improved in any way?
• How often do you, if at all, visit/meet with the pilot areas/Contact Centre? If not at all/rarely, would more contact be helpful?
• Do staff have an opportunity to feedback process or performance issues? Is there sufficient flexibility to adapt to any feedback/comments received?
**Performance assessment?**

- What are the expected outcomes/benefits for the pilot?
- How are you measuring the performance of the pilot:
  - In terms of pilot processes and compliance with them?
  - In terms of the effect of the pilot on claimants, including any change in jobsearch activity or finding work resulting from it?
- How regularly is performance information collected?
- So far, are there any changes that are attributable to the pilot e.g. a reduction in duration of unemployment?
- Has the pilot unintentionally impacted on other aspects of Jobcentre Plus business? Is this positive or negative? If negative, how could this be avoided in future?

**Potential for pilot roll-out**

- Do you consider that the pilot has the potential to be rolled-out more widely?
- If so, what would be the key challenges, and what changes to the current model would you suggest?
- If not, is the rationale for the pilot flawed, or its implementation?

**And finally**

- Are there any other comments you would like to make?
Topic guide for adviser managers

This topic guide is to be used with adviser managers in each Jobcentre office visited.

Introduction
• How did the office come to be involved in the pilot?
• What were the expected gains for the office – if any?
• Is the office currently involved in any other pilot activities, which could influence the effect of the pilot?

Implementation
• Describe the organisation of the pilot and how it operates within the Jobcentre e.g. are all staff involved, roles and responsibilities, location of team, use of office space, degree of contact with Contact Centre.
• How were staff introduced to the pilot? What were their initial views, and concerns if any? Have these views changed as the pilot has progressed?
• Describe the training that took place prior to the pilot going live. Is it considered sufficient? Would further training have been useful?
• What were the main challenges and barriers that had to be addressed prior to TIP implementation?
• What are the key issues and challenges the office has faced in implementing the pilot?
• Have you been able to be flexible to adapt the delivery of the pilot whilst it has been running? If so, what have you changed, why and what impact has it had?
• What impact does TIP have on the daily running of the Jobcentre? What extra workload does it place on staff?
• Are there regular team meetings for feedback, updates? If so, how often and who is involved?
• Since the pilot started, have there been any changes in the labour market in the pilot areas that may impact on the outcome of the pilot?

Relationships with the Contact Centre and District management
• Describe your relationship with the Contact Centre? What information do you routinely receive from them? Could this relationship/information be improved?
• Describe your relationship with the District management? What information do you routinely receive from them? Could this relationship/information be improved?
• Do staff receive feedback on performance issues – i.e. off-flow rates compared to control groups, etc? What impact does this have?

Potential for roll-out
• What are the expected outcomes/benefits for the pilot?
• How are you measuring the performance of the pilot:
  – In terms of pilot processes and compliance with them?
  – In terms of the effect of the pilot on customers, including any change in jobsearch activity or finding work resulting from it?
• Have you noticed any impact on off-flow rates as a result of TIP? To what extent do you consider these effects are due to the pilot?
• Do you consider that the pilot has the potential to be rolled-out more widely?
• If so, what would be the key challenges, and what changes to the current model would you suggest?
• If not, is the rationale for the pilot flawed, or its implementation? Or would there be problems if it was scaled up?

And finally
• Are there any other comments you would like to make?
Topic guide for fortnightly Job Review Officers

This topic guide is to be used in interviews with FJR staff involved in the pilot in the participating Jobcentre Plus offices.

Implementation

• Describe your role, daily tasks and length of time spent working on the pilot. Describe how the pilot is different to your usual tasks.

• What is the average length of time you spend with a customer each visit? How much time are you spending at the FJR with customers who are on the TIP pilot? Are you spending longer than with regular customers?

• Are customers on the pilot treated any differently in their Fortnightly Job Review follow-up? If so, how, why and what impact does this have?

Customer perceptions

• What is the reaction of customers in the treatment group when you explain the TIP? What are their initial questions?

• Do you provide customers with written information to take away with them? If so, what do you give them (letter, leaflet, someone to contact for further information)? Do you record that this information has been given?

• Do customers understand what is expected of them when they receive a telephone call?

• Do customers understand that their participation in the pilot is voluntary? How many of your customers have refused to take part?

Follow up of TIP

• What is your relationship with the Contact Centre/District? Do you have regular communication with the adviser working with your customers?

• Do you always follow up the TIP in the Fortnightly Job Review? Do the Contact Centre staff provide you with sufficient information to follow-up from the TIP? If not, what information would you like to receive in order to be able to do this?

• If the TIP team have not been able to contact the customer during the previous week, are you informed of this, and do you follow this up with customers?

• Do you receive information on potential fraud through the TIP process? Do you follow this up in the FJR –and if so what happens next?

• Do you complete the workflow at the end of every FJR, to inform TIP advisers of what has been followed up/communicated?

• Do customers bring up the TIP contact during their FJR? If so, what do they say? Do people ever ask to be removed from the pilot?
Impact

- Do you feel that any customers are avoiding the telephone contact? If so, why would they be doing that, and how?

- As a result of the TIP intervention, are you noticing a change in the customers:
  - Attitudes as a result of TIP?
  - Reported job search behaviour?
  - Awareness of/level of information on local vacancies?

- What happens when the customer reverts back to face-to-face intervention without the telephone intervention?

- Do you have regular meetings with your manager/district to feedback on pilot delivery? Have changes resulted from any comments raised?

- If there is no communication between what is said with the customer in the TIP and the FJR, what impact do you feel this has? Do you think it is better to have two separate lines of communication with the customer or one?

Relationship with District and Contact Centre

- What is your relationship like with the District and the advisers at the Contact Centre? How often do you communicate/do you have regular meetings?

- What is the impact of your relationship on the delivery of the pilot? Would this be sustainable if the pilot was larger?

- Do you feel that your relationship could be improved in any way? If so, how?

Rolling out

- Do you feel that customers would benefit from rolling this pilot out nationally?

- What changes in the pilot processes would be needed before any wider roll-out?

- What impact has the pilot had on your workload? Would this be sustainable if the pilot was to be extended?

Are there any other comments that you would like to make about TIP that we have not yet discussed?
Customer topic guide

Jobcentre District: .................................................................

Jobcentre Office: .................................................................

Date of Interview: .................................................................

Location of interview............................................................

• How and when did you hear of the telephone pilot? Did you receive any written information about what it was?

• How many telephone calls have you had from Jobcentre Plus staff?

• Did you know who they were when they rang? Were you expecting their call?

• What did they ask you?

• What did they say to you? Did they offer you any help in job search?

• Do you find the telephone calls helpful/not helpful? Why? probe: to keep you up to date with job vacancies?

• Have you done anything differently as a result of receiving the phone calls? – e.g. followed up a specific job, tried a new job search activity, etc.?

• Is the information that you discuss on the telephone followed up when you sign on at the Jobcentre?

• Do you think that receiving the telephone calls is compulsory or did you volunteer?

• Are there any other comments that you would like to make about the Telephone Intervention that you have received/are receiving that we have not discussed?