Jobcentre Plus evaluation: summary of evidence

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A report of research compiled by the Department for Work and Pensions
Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... xi
The Authors ...................................................................................................................... xii
Glossary ............................................................................................................................... xiii
Summary ............................................................................................................................. 1

1 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 7
  1.1 Background .................................................................................................................. 7
  1.2 The ONE pilots, and the roots of Jobcentre Plus ..................................................... 7
  1.3 Jobcentre Plus ............................................................................................................. 8
    1.3.1 The vision ............................................................................................................ 8
    1.3.2 National roll-out of Jobcentre Plus .................................................................. 9
    1.3.3 Jobcentre Plus client groups ............................................................................ 10
    1.3.4 Size of client groups ....................................................................................... 10
    1.3.5 The process of Jobcentre Plus ...................................................................... 11
  1.4 New Deals ................................................................................................................... 14
    1.4.1 New Deal for Lone Parents .............................................................................. 14
    1.4.2 New Deal for Disabled People ....................................................................... 15
  1.5 Other welfare to work initiatives ............................................................................. 16
    1.5.1 IB Pathways to Work pilots ........................................................................... 16
  1.6 The evaluation of Jobcentre Plus ............................................................................. 17

2 Labour Market Outcomes ............................................................................................... 21
  2.1 Summary ..................................................................................................................... 23
  2.2 Job entries .................................................................................................................. 24
  2.3 Implementation effects ............................................................................................ 30
  2.4 Stock of clients ......................................................................................................... 31
  2.5 Flows on and off benefits ........................................................................................ 34
  2.6 On-flows ..................................................................................................................... 34
2.7 Off-flow rates .......................................................................................... 36
2.8 Overall message from the job entry and off-flow analysis .................. 40
2.9 Destinations Survey ............................................................................... 41

3 First Contact ................................................................................................ 43
3.1 Must Dos ............................................................................................... 44
3.2 Summary .................................................................................................. 45
3.3 First Contact volumes ........................................................................... 46
3.4 Explain that a WFI is a compulsory condition of benefit entitlement unless waived or deferred ................................................................. 47
3.5 Explain the purpose of the WFI and next steps of the process .......... 48
3.6 Booking the WFI .................................................................................. 50
3.7 Actively promote the work-focused services of Jobcentre Plus ...... 51
3.8 Undertake a job search for all customers who are job ready and undertake a submission if there is a suitable vacancy ................................. 53
3.9 Making deferral or waiver decisions .................................................... 55
3.10 Dealing with benefit enquiries ............................................................ 58
3.11 Monitoring FCOs and the non-JSA Must Dos .................................. 59
3.12 Customer satisfaction at First Contact ............................................... 60
3.13 References ............................................................................................ 60

4 Financial Assessor meeting......................................................................... 63
4.1 Must Dos ............................................................................................... 63
4.2 Summary .................................................................................................. 64
4.3 Explain the purpose of the FA meeting ................................................. 65
4.4 Explain that the benefit claim is dependent on satisfactory completion of a WFI ................................................................. 65
4.5 Explain the purpose of a WFI ................................................................. 66
4.6 Check the claim for content and completeness, and answer customers' queries about benefits so that these are resolved before the WFI ................................................................................... 66
4.7 Informing clients of the status of their claim before the FA meeting is finished ..................................................................................... 67
4.7.1 Jobseekers .................................................................................. 68
4.7.2 Lone parents .................................................................................. 68
4.7.3 People with health conditions and disabilities .............. 69
4.7.4 Carers .......................................................................................... 69
4.8 Benefit claim processing by FAs .......................................................... 69
4.9 Appointment booking ............................................................................ 70
4.10 Monitoring FAs and the non-JSA ‘Must Dos’ ...................................... 72
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.11 Customer satisfaction with FA</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12 References</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Initial Work Focused Interview (Part 1)</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Summary</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Booking of initial WFI</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Attendance of the meeting with a PA</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Considering if waiver/deferral is appropriate and setting the</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appropriate work-flow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Failure to attend</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6 Length of Work Focused Interview</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7 Explaining the mandatory nature and purpose of the WFI</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8 References</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Initial Work Focused Interview (Part 2)</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Must Dos</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Summary</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 Depth of work-focused discussion</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.1 Jobseekers</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.2 Lone parents</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.3 People with health conditions and disabilities</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.4 Carers</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Use of voluntary Customer Action Plans for non-JSA customers</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 Content of discussion: job submissions and job entries</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 Discussing ways of finding work and job vacancies</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.1 Jobseekers</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.2 Lone parents</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.3 People with health conditions and disabilities</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6.4 Carers</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7 Discussing work experience and skills</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7.1 Jobseekers</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7.2 Lone parents</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7.3 People with health conditions and disabilities</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7.4 Carers</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8 Discussing barriers to work</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8.1 Jobseekers</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8.2 Lone parents</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8.3 People with health conditions and disabilities</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8.4 Carers</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.9 Discussing tax credits and other advantages of being in work for</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the customer and their family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.9.1 Jobseekers ................................................................. 104
6.9.2 Lone parents ............................................................. 104
6.9.3 People with health conditions and disabilities ............. 104
6.9.4 Carers ....................................................................... 105
6.9.5 Partners of unemployed people ................................. 105
6.10 Advice on training, specialist services and referrals ........... 105
6.10.1 Jobseekers ............................................................... 106
6.10.2 Lone parents ........................................................... 106
6.10.3 People with health conditions and disabilities ............ 107
6.10.4 Carers .................................................................... 107
6.11 Discussion of schemes for customers with health conditions ... 107
6.11.1 Jobseekers ............................................................... 108
6.11.2 Lone parents ........................................................... 108
6.11.3 People with health conditions and disabilities ............ 108
6.11.4 Carers .................................................................... 108
6.12 Discussion about customers’ benefit claim ...................... 109
6.12.1 PA perceptions ......................................................... 109
6.13 Impact of Jobcentre Plus on customers ............................ 111
6.13.1 Jobseekers ............................................................... 112
6.13.2 Lone parents ........................................................... 113
6.13.3 People with health conditions and disabilities ............ 115
6.13.4 Carers .................................................................... 117
6.14 Partners of unemployed people ...................................... 119
6.15 Targets ......................................................................... 120
6.16 Monitoring PA meetings and the non-JSA Must Dos .......... 121
6.17 Specialist versus Generalist PAs ................................. 121
6.18 References .................................................................... 122
7 Mandatory Review and Trigger Meetings ............................ 129
7.1 Summary ....................................................................... 129
7.2 Informing clients of mandatory review and trigger meetings .... 130
7.3 Actioning of review meetings ........................................... 131
7.4 Work focus at Lone Parent Mandatory Review Meetings ...... 132
7.5 Attitudes towards timing of mandatory review meetings for lone parents ........................................... 133
7.6 References .................................................................... 133
8 Caseloading ....................................................................... 135
8.1 Summary ....................................................................... 136
8.2 The aim of caseloading for non-JSA customers ................ 137
13.3 Financial Assessor ................................................................. 210
13.4 Personal Adviser ................................................................. 211
13.5 Caseloading ........................................................................ 212
13.6 References .......................................................................... 213

Appendix Flow charts ...................................................................... 215

List of tables

Table 1.1 Demographic differences between areas ......................... 11
Table 2.1 Job entry classifications ................................................. 23
Table 2.2 Destinations survey data ................................................ 41
Table 3.1 First Contact volumes .................................................... 46
Table 4.1 FTA rates ...................................................................... 71
Table 5.2 Deferred clients ............................................................. 84
Table 7.1 Lone parents attending a WFI between four months and eight months from the initial WFI ........................................ 131
Table 7.2 People with health conditions and disabilities having their initial PCA between July and September 2004 .................. 131
Table 8.1 Activities of Lone Parents within three months of first contact 146
Table 8.2 Further voluntary (non-NDDP) contact ................................ 147
Table 11.1 Per cent of new customers having a GI ................................ 184
Table 11.2 Proportion of GIs conducted in the office ....................... 184
Table 11.3 Per cent of claimants having a CI within six months ......... 185
Table 11.4 Intervention method ...................................................... 185

List of figures

Figure 1.1 Cumulative office rollout of Jobcentre Plus Day 2 and 2003/04 stages ................................................................. 10
Figure 1.2 Mandatory process that exists in Jobcentre Plus offices .... 14
Figure 2.1 Total monthly job entries, all clients ............................... 24
Figure 2.2 National Priority Group 1 Job Entries ............................ 25
Figure 2.3 Shares of non-integrated job entries jobseekers and lone parents ................................................................. 26
Figure 2.4 Shares of non-integrated job entries people with health conditions and disabilities and ‘other’ clients .................... 26
Figure 2.5 Lone parent job entries: outcome and counterfactual in Pathfinder and Day 2 Offices ................................................ 27
Figure 2.6 Jobseeker job entries: outcome and counterfactual in Pathfinder and Day 2 offices ..................................................... 28
Figure 2.7 Shares of non-integrated job entries: people with health conditions and disabilities and ‘other’ clients .................... 29
Figure 2.8 People with health conditions and disabilities, job entries: outcome and counterfactual for Pathfinder and Day 2 offices .. 30
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Ecotec Research and Consulting Ltd; the British Marketing Research Bureau; and the Centre for Research in Social Policy for their work on the various DWP commissioned research projects that contribute to this quarterly evidence paper.

We would also like to thank our colleagues in the DWP who have provided data, analysis, and evaluation findings that make a valuable contribution to this report. These include colleagues from the Family, Poverty and Work Division; the Jobcentre Plus Analytical Division; the Jobcentre Implementation Team; and the Disability and Work Division. We also thank everyone who has regularly provided extremely helpful comments and advice on the drafts of both this report, and the various internal editions of the Quarterly Evidence paper over the last two years.

Special thanks should go to our research and analyst colleagues Liz Rayner, Phillip de la Rue and Rachel O’Brien for the hard work in helping to develop early versions of the Quarterly Evidence paper.

Finally we would also like to thank everyone who made much of the research possible; especially the staff and customers of Jobcentre Plus who gave up their time to share both their knowledge and experience that forms much of the supporting evidence of the commissioned research.
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### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASO</td>
<td>Admin Support Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Benefits Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>Contact Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>Client Management System</td>
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<tr>
<td>DEA</td>
<td>Disability Employment Adviser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DfEE</td>
<td>Department for Education and Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DWP</td>
<td>Department for Work and Pensions</td>
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<tr>
<td>EOT</td>
<td>Employer Outcome Target</td>
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<tr>
<td>ES</td>
<td>Employment Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESCOM</td>
<td>Employment Service’s electronic database containing advice and guidance for Jobcentre Plus staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESOL</td>
<td>English for speakers of other languages</td>
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<tr>
<td>FA</td>
<td>Financial Assessor</td>
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<td>FCO</td>
<td>First Contact Officer</td>
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<td>FTA</td>
<td>Failure to attend</td>
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<tr>
<td>GI</td>
<td>Gateway Interventions</td>
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<tr>
<td>IB</td>
<td>Incapacity Benefit</td>
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<td>ICA</td>
<td>Invalid Care Allowance</td>
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<td>IS</td>
<td>Income Support</td>
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<td>IT</td>
<td>Information technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>JET</td>
<td>Job Entry Target</td>
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<td>JSA</td>
<td>Jobseeker’s Allowance</td>
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<td>JSAg</td>
<td>Jobseekers Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>LMS</td>
<td>Labour Market System</td>
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<tr>
<td>LPA</td>
<td>Lone Parent Adviser</td>
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<tr>
<td>MVFE</td>
<td>Monetary value of fraud and error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>LP PA Meetings (please note are now known as National Lone Parent WFIs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDDP</td>
<td>New Deal for Disabled People</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDLP</td>
<td>New Deal for Lone Parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>National Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Personal Adviser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRA</td>
<td>Performance and Resources Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSA</td>
<td>Public Service Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTWC</td>
<td>Return to Work Credit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSP</td>
<td>Statutory Sick Pay</td>
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<tr>
<td>VANTIVE</td>
<td>Electronic appointment booking system used at the Contact Centre; also provides staff with a script to use in conversations with customers</td>
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<tr>
<td>WFI</td>
<td>Work Focused Interview</td>
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<td>WFTC</td>
<td>Working Families Tax Credit</td>
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Summary

Jobcentre Plus brings together the Employment Service (ES) and those parts of the Benefits Agency (BA) dealing with people of working age to deliver a single, work-focused, integrated service to both employers and benefit claimants of working age. The aim of this service is: to help more people into work and employers to fill their vacancies; to provide people of working age with the help and support to which they are entitled; and to continuously improve the quality, accessibility and delivery of services to all working-age customers. The aim of this work-focused approach to the benefits system is that people of working age making new or repeat claims for working-age benefits should consider work as an option before proceeding with their claims.

In October 2001, the Jobcentre Plus service began operating in 56 Pathfinder sites and associated contact centres in 17 clusters across the UK, and now covers over 50 per cent of the country. In order to monitor the extent to which Jobcentre Plus is meeting its service delivery and labour market objectives, a continuous evaluation has taken place, involving analysis of administrative data on service delivery and labour market outcomes (conducted internally); and social research (commissioned externally).

Key findings

- There is growing evidence that integrated offices in Jobcentre Plus are getting more lone parents and people with health conditions and disabilities into work. Job entries for these clients have increased both absolutely and relative to non-integrated districts. Evidence also suggests that increased interventions for these two groups have lead to increased off flows from benefits. There is little evidence to suggest any impact on carers and the bereaved.

- Evaluation evidence shows that there has been progress made in meeting the vision, and that the service is mainly delivered according to the vision. However, there still remains some difficulties in delivering a work focus to people with health conditions and disabilities, and carers, although much more of a work focus is evident for people with health conditions and disabilities in Incapacity Benefit (IB) Pathways to Work areas.
The response of customers is very encouraging, with the majority reporting that they are satisfied or very satisfied with the new service. Staff also expressed very positive views about the office environment, indicating it helped them to provide a more professional service to customers.

Labour Market Outcomes

Job entries have risen since the introduction of Jobcentre Plus; in Pathfinder offices (rolled out between October 2001 and March 2002) both absolutely and relative to non-integrated districts, in both Pathfinder and Day 2 (offices rolled out between October 2002 and March 2003) districts, performance initially fell due to the disruption of office rollout, although these districts have now recovered to levels that occurred prior to rollout.

Administrative data shows an increase in short-term off-flow rates for lone parents, and evidence from Pathways to Work areas shows that increased support has a significant impact on off-flows for people on IB.

First Contact

*Clients wishing to initiate a benefit claim are encouraged to do so through a Contact Centre where they speak to a First Contact Officer (FCO), who should explain the requirement to take part in a Work Focused Interview (WFI), and its purpose.*

Around eight in ten customers across all client groups reported being ‘very’ or ‘quite’ satisfied with the service they had received at First Contact.

The majority of customers across all client groups were informed by FCOs that attending a WFI was a compulsory condition of benefit entitlement. Between 67 per cent and 80 per cent of customers also reported that FCOs informed them that the purpose of the WFI was to discuss work.

Administrative data indicates that there is an increasing work focus element at First Contact for jobseekers, where the proportion with a job submission at First Contact increased from six per cent in October 2001, to 16 per cent in July 2004. A smaller increase has also occurred for lone parents, rising from one per cent to three per cent in 2004. However, for people with health conditions and disabilities, the proportion remains constant at one per cent. However, less than one per cent of each client group is recorded as having a job entry at First Contact, although in some Contact Centres, office managers continued to report that they were placing a higher emphasis on job brokering and, as such, FCOs acknowledged that these targets increased their awareness of the need to conduct job searches and submissions.

The process for deferring and waiving WFIs was broadly delivered in line with the Jobcentre Plus vision.
Financial Assessor Meeting

The client first attends a Financial Assessor (FA) meeting, where the FA is responsible for checking claim forms, customer statements, and any supporting evidence, and making the claim processable.

Around nine in ten customers across all client groups reported being ‘very’ or ‘quite’ satisfied with the service they had received from their FA.

Three-quarters of jobseekers were told by the FA that they would not receive benefits unless they attended a WFI, compared to around half of the other client groups.

FAs and Financial Assessor Managers (FAMs) were confident that they checked customers’ claim forms or statements in line with the requirements of the Must Dos.

Progress has occurred across all offices in that FAs were providing customers with more information and advice about entitlements to benefits and financial help. However, some FAs, especially those without a benefit background, felt that there were some gaps in the training and information provided on certain benefits, particularly those felt to be more complicated such as IB and Carer’s Allowance.

In some Jobcentre Plus offices, FAs continued to telephone customers the day before their appointment to check on their attendance, that claim forms had been completed and to remind them about bringing supporting identification and evidence to the meeting. It was felt that this helped to reduce the ‘Failure to Attend’ (FTA) rate.

Work Focused Interview

Six to seven in ten customers from all other client groups reported being ‘very’ or ‘quite’ satisfied with the service they had received from their Personal Adviser (PA). Non-JSA customers especially found PAs approachable and friendly.

Administrative data suggests that only 48 per cent of clients are booked to attend their WFI within four days of First Contact, of which lone parents are the most likely. The rollout of Day 2 offices caused this rate to fall further.

FTA rates for bookedWFIs have been rising slightly since May 2003, from 20 per cent to 24 per cent in September 2004. FTA rates for deferred WFIs have been falling from a peak of 45 per cent in September 2002 but have fluctuated between 25 per cent and 30 per cent from November 2003 onwards. It appears that the FTA rate increases as the number of days between First Contact and the interview date increases.

The majority of customers across all client groups reported that PAs had explained ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ well that the one of the purposes of the meeting was to talk about work, and between 77 per cent and 97 per cent of customers across all client groups discussed work at their WFI; although the depth of this discussion varied throughout the groups.
Around six in ten people with health conditions and disabilities and lone parents discussed barriers to work with their PA. IBPAs felt that helping the customer to overcome some of their key barriers to work was as important as moving them immediately into work, but it appeared that in Jobcentre Plus, customers’ self-assessed barriers to finding work remained unchallenged by PAs, especially where they were not confident in dealing with clients with more severe physical or mental-health conditions.

However, there was progress, in that PAs felt more comfortable discussing work with most other non-JSA customers, and some staff reported feeling more knowledgeable about the organisations and service to which customers could be referred.

Nearly all JSA customers recalled completing a mandatory Jobseekers Agreement, but only between seven per cent and 16 per cent of non-JSA customers recalled completing a voluntary customer action plan, with whom there remains little explicit action planning.

Administrative data shows that 46 per cent of jobseekers, ten per cent of lone parents and six per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities were submitted to vacancies at their initial WFI.

Around six in ten jobseekers reported that they were made aware of future compulsory meetings, compared to a much smaller proportion of non-JSA clients (between 26 per cent and 51 per cent).

**Caseloading**

PAs continued to view caseloading as an important method for achieving overall job submission targets; the initial WFI was seen as an opportunity to build up a rapport with non-JSA customers, with work discussed in more detail at future meetings.

Caseloading is concentrated on more job-ready customers; those whom PAs believed were ready to start looking immediately and had good prospects for getting back to work. As such, lone parents were routinely given information about the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) during the WFI, whereas promotion of the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) to people with health conditions and disabilities was rare. However, it appears that some customers deemed not ready for work at the time of the initial WFI are re-contacted at a later date. In addition to the New Deals, PAs offered what they regarded as ‘informal’ caseloading support which included additional face-to-face contact and telephone contact.

The impact of the introduction of WFIs in April 2001 can clearly be seen on movement into NDLP on a national basis, as can the introduction of Jobcentre Plus on take-up in Pathfinder areas, which increased from six per cent at the time of rollout to 12 per cent in March 2002. Take-up in Pathfinder areas has generally been above the other rollout stages. There has been a general upward trend in NDLP take-up since then. NDLP take-up has been increasing since offices went live in March.
2003. Take-up rates increased from six per cent at the time of rollout to ten per cent. This rise, however, occurred after a reduction, possibly associated with the disruption that rollout initially causes.

The proportion of clients caseloaded onto NDDP has been rising since rollout began in July 2001. At the time of integration, just 0.1 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities moved onto NDDP within six months of the claim start, but the latest evidence suggests this to be nearly three per cent. Pathways to Work districts are more effective (although were also more effective prior to rollout), now caseloading six per cent of clients within six months.

As well as NDLP and NDDP activity, about 19 per cent of lone parents and 30 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities attended further meetings. (The numbers will be lower for lone parents as they only cover the period before the first trigger meeting is due).

Evidence shows that caseloading is effective in securing job outcomes, suggesting that of lone parents who are caseloaded directly from the initial WFI, 52 per cent achieve a job entry. Similar results are illustrated for people with health conditions and disabilities. Overall, perceptions of caseloading varied both across and within offices.

Mandatory Review and Trigger Meetings

Analysis suggests that a significant proportion of lone parents are not having their six month review booked, and although progress is being made, there is still a significant gap in arranging these triggers meetings. It also appears that a significant volume of people with health conditions and disabilities are not having a triggered WFI following their Personal Capability Assessment (PCA). Of those who had their initial PCA between April and June 2004, 18 per cent had a triggered WFI booked in the three months; whilst over 50 per cent do not have any activity and remain on benefit. However, the proportion being triggered has risen slightly and the proportion of clients having no further contact has fallen, which is encouraging.

Fraud, Error and Accuracy

Small sample sizes have led to large uncertainties in the analysis so we cannot conclude whether the monetary value of fraud and error performance in the Pathfinder and non-integrated offices was significantly different. Although, in the wider evaluation, there is some indirect evidence that process and Gateway security have not suffered through the introduction of new procedures, there is not enough evidence to say conclusively whether this has been the case.

Office Environment and Safety

In general, both staff and customers expressed very positive views about the office environment. Staff felt the new offices were nicer places to work, and helped them
to provide a more professional service to customers, and around 80 per cent were ‘very’ or ‘quite’ satisfied with office environment, feeling it had improved over time. Customers have, however, expressed concern about a lack of privacy in the open plan environment.

Staff generally felt safe working in the integrated Jobcentre Plus office environment, valuing the safety measures put in place, and reporting that the more professional and open plan environment had a positive effect on customer behaviour and customer service. However, there was limited consistency in the operation of safety procedures, and staff were generally unaware of the content of safety guidance. There was also under-reporting of less serious incidents by staff. Generally, customers reported that they felt safe in Jobcentre Plus offices, although attitudes towards the presence of security guards was mixed.
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Jobcentre Plus brings together the Employment Service (ES) and those parts of the Benefits Agency (BA) dealing with people of working age to deliver a single, work-focused, integrated service to both employers and benefit claimants of working age. The aim of this service is: to help more people into work and employers to fill their vacancies; to provide people of working age with the help and support to which they are entitled; and to continuously improve the quality, accessibility and delivery of services to all working-age customers. The aim of this work-focused approach to the benefits system is that people of working age making new or repeat claims for working-age benefits should consider work as an option before proceeding with their claims.

In October 2001, the Jobcentre Plus service began operating in 56 Pathfinder sites and associated contact centres in 17 clusters across the UK, and now covers over 50 per cent of the country. In order to monitor the extent to which Jobcentre Plus is meeting its service delivery and labour market objectives, a continuous evaluation has taken place.

1.2 The ONE pilots, and the roots of Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus evolved from a new service introduced in June 1999, called ‘ONE’, which was piloted in 12 areas throughout Great Britain. Many lessons came out of the evaluation of the ONE pilots, which were then implemented in the new Jobcentre Plus process.

The pilots were delivered using three different approaches:

- **Basic Model:** Introduced in June 1999, the BA, ES and local authorities delivered the service from local jobcentres and benefit offices.
Contact Centre Model: Introduced in October 1999, contact centres, and contact centre technology was used for participants’ first contact with ONE, where individuals’ details and background information to their claim were collected.

Private and Voluntary Sector (PVS) Model: Introduced in October 1999, similar to the Basic Model, PVS was delivered by private and voluntary organisations using existing jobcentres and benefit offices and new dedicated ONE suites.

Up to April 2000, participation in ONE was voluntary for non-JSA clients. From 3 April 2000, these groups were required to attend an initial meeting with a Personal Adviser (PA) and further meetings at defined trigger points as a condition of receiving benefit.

Many lessons came out of the evaluation of the ONE pilots, which were then implemented in the new Jobcentre Plus process. For example:

- the introduction of a separate meeting with a Financial Assessor (FA) prior to the WFI, to ensure that a more effective discussion could be held about work with a PA if the benefits had been dealt with first;
- unlike ONE, Jobcentre Plus has a ‘three year trigger regime’ that enables continuing contact with those clients who are hardest to reach, such as carers and people on Incapacity Benefit (IB);
- ONE showed that it is necessary to have some PAs with a specialisation. In Jobcentre Plus, some of the PAs have specialist knowledge in dealing with clients such as lone parents, or people with an incapacity;
- the development of an action plan for each client that sets out steps and timeframes within which both client and PA can work together to move the individual towards work. This is not only to provide additional support to Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) clients, but is to assist those more in need of help – economically inactive clients.

1.3 Jobcentre Plus

1.3.1 The vision

Designed to build on the experience of ONE and through the lessons learned from what worked and where there were any weaknesses in the ONE service, Jobcentre Plus was introduced in October 2001, in 56 Pathfinder offices and associated contact centre sites.

The overall aim of Jobcentre Plus is to deliver ‘an integrated and efficient labour market and benefit service to people of working age’\(^1\) that helps more people into

work and employers to fill their vacancies. It aims to provide people of working age with the help and support to which they are entitled and to improve continuously the quality and accessibility and delivery of services to all working age customers. This supports the Department’s goal for people of working age to sustain a higher proportion of people in employment than ever before, while providing security for those who cannot work.

The Jobcentre Plus vision is that the service should provide:

- a work focus to the benefit system, for everyone using the service;
- a dedicated service to enable employers to fill their vacancies quickly and successfully;
- swift, secure and professional access to benefits for those entitled to them;
- a much better service for everyone who needs help;
- active help from PAs to assist people in getting and keeping work;
- a better working environment for staff, which will be safe and professional; and
- greatly improved information technology and accommodation.

1.3.2 National rollout of Jobcentre Plus

In October 2001, the Jobcentre Plus service began operating in 56 Pathfinder sites and associated contact centres in 17 clusters across the UK. Representing the second stage of the national implementation of Jobcentre Plus, Day 2 districts were planned to rollout between October 2002 and March 2003 across twenty-four districts (some of which included Pathfinder offices). The 2003/04 stage of the rollout began in April 2003, and total completion of roll out will be completed by the end of 2005/06, covering roughly a quarter of the remaining network in each of the four years that began in 2002/03.

Figure 1.1 shows the planned rollout schedule. Whilst the majority of Day 2 offices were planned to be rolled by the end of 2003/04, there will be some that remain to be rolled out. The majority of 2003/04 were planned to rollout by March 2005.
1.3.3 Jobcentre Plus client groups

The Jobcentre Plus process places particular emphasis on helping the harder to help clients move towards the labour market. Emphasis is placed on inactive clients by allocating higher points to this group. Jobcentre Plus has a current annual Performance and Resources Agreement (PRA) target of 7,295,100 points for the job entries achieved nationally. Priority Group 1 clients achieve 12 points for a job entry, which contains people with health conditions and disabilities, lone parents and other inactive clients. The lowest priority group, Priority Group 5, represents those already employed and achieves one point per job entry.

1.3.4 Size of client groups

Table 1.1 shows the stocks of benefit claimants by client group and roll out area. Stock as a share of the national figure is also shown, to highlight demographic differences between areas.2

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2 This table gives data for stock clients. Much of the mandatory process of Jobcentre Plus only occurs for new/repeat claimants, therefore in the table clients may not take part in the process.
Table 1.1  Demographic differences between areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average stock (2001/04)</th>
<th>Pathfinders</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobseekers</td>
<td>54,900</td>
<td>199,220</td>
<td>279,320</td>
<td>360,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with health conditions and disabilities</td>
<td>169,280</td>
<td>610,820</td>
<td>805,940</td>
<td>1,111,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone parents</td>
<td>53,520</td>
<td>193,320</td>
<td>251,540</td>
<td>334,160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carers</td>
<td>16,960</td>
<td>66,160</td>
<td>83,300</td>
<td>120,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>13,500</td>
<td>51,980</td>
<td>65,380</td>
<td>88,940</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Share of national Pathfinders</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
<th>03/04</th>
<th>04/06</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All clients</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administrative data shows that around 70 per cent of new clients are JSA clients, 20 per cent are people with health conditions and disabilities and around five per cent each are lone parents and ‘others’ (including carers and widows).³

1.3.5 The process of Jobcentre Plus

There are three main stages to the process of Jobcentre Plus:

- **First Contact: The Start-up stage of the ONE process was redesigned in order for staff to undertake the role of explaining to new clients the requirement to take part in a WFI, and its purpose. Under Jobcentre Plus, clients wishing to initiate a benefit claim are encouraged to do so through a Contact Centre where they will speak to a First Contact Officer (FCO). The intention is that during the phone call, FCOs take clients’ details and help them to decide the most appropriate benefit to claim, arrange to send claim forms to them, and also include some exploration of work that the client might have done in the past and the extent to which they are ready to resume working, and what help they might need to do this. Job submissions can be made at this point if appropriate. During the call, a WFI is arranged with a PA, normally within four working days. If a WFI is considered inappropriate, it can be deferred until a later date or waived altogether (for example, if the client has a terminal illness).

- **First Contact: use of Vantive and the Customer Management System (CMS):** Vantive is an IT system that appears as a desktop icon for FCOs in Contact Centres. Also known as the Client Handling Application (CHA) it is used as a tool to gather information from customers wanting to make claims to benefits. It has had many releases to upgrade it during its time, e.g. with Child Benefit Reforms and Tax Credits. There are two types of Vantive system:
  - **Vanilla Vantive:** the majority of Contact Centres use Vanilla Vantive, which is Vantive on its own, where an FCO asks questions to determine which clerical benefit forms the customer needs to complete then bring in to the Adviser Appointment which the FCO books for them on Vantive.

³ LMS data up to February 2003.
– **Papyrus**: the remaining few offices (e.g. Milton Keynes), use the Integrated System which is the same as the vanilla system except it has an attachment called ‘Papyrus’. This is a claim form that is completed on the system by the FCO as they gather information from the customer (usually done as a ‘callback’) with the idea being that the customer has a completed claim form when they arrive for their adviser interview.

- At present, there are some offices using Vantive and some offices using CMS. It is expected that by October 2005, Vantive will have been phased out completely and all Jobcentre Plus offices will be using CMS.

- JSA/IB/IS customers make an initial call, in which the customer is asked a series of questions which allows CMS to make an assessment of potential eligibility for both the customer and partner if appropriate to all Jobcentre Plus benefits. At the end of the initial call, the FCO will arrange to ring the customer back at a convenient time to gather information to support his claim. Only those questions relevant to the customer will be asked. At this point, claim details may also be taken for associated benefits including HB/CTB or CSA. At the end of the call, the customer is sent a statement of the facts they have provided which is tailored to the benefit(s) they are claiming. This is accompanied by a letter detailing an appointment date and time (if appropriate), and the name of who they will see, plus a letter asking for all verification to support the information that they provided verbally, together with any leaflets or clerical claim packs for other secondary benefits.

- The main elements of CMS are that it provides for:
  - integrated electronic information gathering and onward transmission of data to benefit processing systems;
  - responsive interactive customer interface services that have work focus and anti-fraud focus built in;
  - the availability of a variety of customer access medium and communication channels, the emphasis being on interactive means like telephone contact and face-to-face interviews.

- CMS Release 1 was first piloted in Livingstone Contact Centre and associated Jobcentre Plus and Benefit processing offices in the summer of 2003, and phased national rollout commenced in November 2003.

- CMS Release 2 was implemented in December 2004, and a further release, Release 3 (which is being sponsored and funded by the Jobcentre Plus field organisation, is planned for September 2005. Rollout is planned to continue until 2006.

- **Financial Assessor meeting**: One of the most significant lessons learned from the ONE pilots was the need to introduce a separate meeting prior to the WFI that would deal with the delivery of benefit services. In Jobcentre Plus, the client first attends a FA meeting, where the FA is responsible for checking claim forms and customer statements, any supporting evidence and assesses benefit entitlement,
and the intention is that the PA would then be able to concentrate on discussions about work in the following WFI.

- **The Work Focused Interview:** At the WFI, the intention is that the PA explains the services available to the client in Jobcentre Plus, identifies barriers to employment and discusses ways of potentially overcoming them. The PA and client should agree and complete a Jobseeker’s Agreement (JSAg) for JSA clients, or a voluntary Customer Action Plan (CAP) for non-JSA clients. A job search can be conducted at the WFI, if relevant. One of the purposes of the WFI is to encourage non-JSA clients to take up voluntary caseloading, the main source of which is New Deal provision, in order to help them find work or move closer to the labour market.⁴

- **Further mandatory contact, Review and Trigger meetings:** After the initial WFI, jobseekers are required to attend fortnightly signings and a WFI every 13 weeks. In addition to this, Jobcentre Plus has a review and trigger regime that enables continuing contact with those clients who are hardest to reach, such as carers and people on IB. Lone parents are required to meet an adviser six months after the initial WFI, 12 months after and annually after that. The other inactive client groups are required to attend a review meeting every three years. In addition to these time-bound meetings, people on IB are also obliged to attend a trigger meeting if they have a Personal Capability Assessment (PCA) and remain on benefit.

- **Further voluntary contact; Caseloading:** One aim of the WFI, as defined by the Jobcentre Plus vision, is for PAs to encourage non-JSA customers to take up voluntary caseloading to help them find work, or move closer to the labour market. When monitoring Jobcentre Plus’ progress towards the vision, caseloading is defined as New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) for lone parents and New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) for disabled people. In addition to the New Deals, caseloading for customers with health conditions or disabilities can also be provided through or referral to a Disability Employment Adviser (DEA), and where this is not appropriate, a customer can see their PA for further help and support. Carers for whom there is no New Deal provision, should be caseloaded by their PA. In addition to the New Deals, PAs also define caseloading as including: conducting job searches; conducting in-work benefit calculations; and promoting and referring customers to the services of specialist providers.

- **Figure 1.2 illustrates the mandatory process that exists in Jobcentre Plus offices.**

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⁴ Adapted from Jobcentre Plus brochure, *The work you want, the help you need.*
1.4 New Deals

1.4.1 New Deal for Lone Parents

The New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) is a voluntary programme which is open to all lone parents not working or working fewer than 16 hours per week. It aims to help and encourage lone parents to improve their prospects and living standards by entering paid employment, and to increase the job readiness of lone parents to increase their employment opportunities.

The programme is part of the Government’s Welfare to Work initiative, and was introduced in 1997 in eight prototype areas before being rolled out nationally from 1998. It was originally available to lone parents in receipt of IS and in November 2003, was made available to all lone parents not working or working fewer than 16 hours per week.

NDLP is delivered through a series of caseload interviews with a Lone Parent PA. The PA offers a package of advice and support individually tailored to the needs of each lone parent, including:

- advising lone parents on job vacancies;
explaining what benefits are available if the lone parent finds work, and helping to arrange payment of these benefits;

- explaining the incentives available to lone parents when they start work;
- advising on childcare available locally;
- arranging training to update skills and payment of the Training Premium when the lone parent starts an approved activity;
- drawing up an action plan with the lone parent’s agreement, to guide them in the process of finding work;
- providing an in-work support service to help lone parents make the transition from benefit into employment.

Participation in NDLP makes lone parents eligible for help with the costs of attending interviews with employers and advisers.

Participation in NDLP is voluntary and the programme tends to be fairly ‘light-touch’, with the majority of participants having fewer than four face-to-face meetings with their PA. Nevertheless, independent evaluation shows that the programme has a significant impact on lone parents’ employment chances. Despite this, participation in NDLP has been fairly low, and mandatory WFi’s were introduced from 2001 for claimants of IS, to increase participation in the programme.  

### 1.4.2 New Deal for Disabled People

New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) is the major voluntary employment programme available to people claiming incapacity-related benefits. It was piloted in September 1998 and extended nationally from July 2001. Two versions of NDDP were piloted and operated until June 2001: the Innovative Schemes and the Personal Adviser Service. The national extension of NDDP was informed by these pilots but it is not a simple extension of the pilots. The NDDP national extension from 2001 was originally for a three year period but has now been extended for a further two years, to March 2006.

NDDP provides a national network of Job Brokers to help people with health conditions and disabilities move into sustained employment. Job Brokers are a mix of public, private and voluntary sector organisations providing training, support and access to Jobcentre Plus programmes, such as Access to Work. One key feature of NDDP is that the funding for Job Brokers is outcome-related, based on job entry and sustained employment.

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5 Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).

6 Findings from the FPWD.
1.5 Other welfare to work initiatives

1.5.1 IB Pathways to Work pilots

Many people claiming incapacity benefits do not believe that they are allowed to look for work whilst on benefit, or think that they must not consider work until they are fully recovered from their health condition. The purpose behind the IB Pathways to Work initiative is to change the messages about what it means to be on incapacity benefits so that people coming onto those benefits will be actively and repeatedly encouraged to think about how they can plan a return to work.

Pathways to Work began in three pilot areas in October 2003, and from April 2004, have been operating in seven areas across the UK (which will continue until 2006). In his Pre-Budget Report, the Chancellor announced that the Pathways to Work pilots would be extended from October 2005 to an additional 14 Jobcentre Plus districts, to cover around one-third of the country (a total of around 900,000 people on IB). It will focus support so that Pathways provision is available in the Jobcentre Plus districts with the 30 most disadvantaged Local Authority districts (defined in terms of working age recipiency rates for IB).

Key features of the new system are:

- more skilled advice and help to return to work by specialist IB PAs;
- for new customers, a series of mandatory WFiS in the critical first 12 months of a claim (when a return to work is likely to be a more realistic option);
- direct access for customers to existing programmes and the newly introduced condition management programmes offered jointly by Jobcentre Plus and the local NHS;
- for some existing clients, a more targeted and supportive regime that focuses on options that they might not realise they still have;
- radically improved financial incentives for IB recipients, both to seek work and to move into some form of employment, including a simple Return to Work credit at £40 a week for 52 weeks, for those earning less than £15,000 a year. Also, immediate access to help of up to £300 to enable clients to purchase items such as clothes or equipment that could help improve their employment chances;
- early, tailored support for those having to move off IB onto Jobseeker’s Allowance;
- engaging other key stakeholders, particularly employers and GPs.
From February 2005, the pilot areas will introduce two extensions to existing claimants:

- three additional mandatory WFiS, specifically for those customers who started an IB claim (excluding PCA – exempt cases) in the two years before the respective pilots went live;
- a new job preparation premium of £20 per week, to be paid for a maximum of 26 weeks – for agreeing an action plan detailing a return to work and participating in relevant, verifiable activity that supports that return to work.

1.6 The evaluation of Jobcentre Plus

The Jobcentre Plus evaluation monitors the extent to which Jobcentre Plus is meeting its service delivery and labour market objectives. The evaluation provides a ‘real-time’ analysis of the delivery and performance of Jobcentre Plus starting from its initial rollout as Pathfinder offices in October 2001 and continuing until the completion of its national rollout in 2006. The evaluation is therefore part of the continuous improvement strategy of Jobcentre Plus rather than a measure of its overall and ultimate success.

The main evaluation is broadly split into analyses which assess the extent to which Jobcentre Plus meets its service delivery and labour market objectives. Within this, analyses can be split into eight thematic categories:

1 **Delivery of the mandatory process**: including initial, Trigger and Review WFiS, deferrals and waivers, and the content of these contacts.

2 **Delivery of further contact**: including levels of caseload and referral to the New Deals, and the content of these meetings.

3 **Customer satisfaction**: including levels of satisfaction with the different Jobcentre Plus processes for different customer groups.

4 **Work-focus**: including the extent of work-focused discussion in the different Jobcentre Plus processes for different customer groups.

5 **Labour market outcomes**: including differences in benefit on-flows and off-flows and job entries between Pathfinder offices, newly rolled-out offices and offices where Jobcentre Plus has not yet been rolled out; and will also look at labour market outcomes in order to explain why outcomes have occurred.

6 **Jobcentre Plus environment**: including attitudes towards the new office environment and clients’ assessments of the impact of this upon their work-focused behaviour.

7 **Staff safety**: including the factors influencing safety incidents occurring and the role of Jobcentre Plus in increasing or reducing the number and type of incidents occurring.

8 **Fraud**: including an assessment the impact of the introduction of Jobcentre Plus on levels of fraud and error.
This includes assessing the contribution of Jobcentre Plus to the Department’s PSA targets, monitoring progress against baselines presented in the Jobcentre Plus business case, and contributing towards the evidence base for the spending reviews. Where appropriate, evidence from the evaluation of Jobcentre Plus is considered against evidence from other programmes, such as the New Deals, Lone Parent PA meetings, the IB pilots and ONE.

All social research projects undertaken as part of the Jobcentre Plus evaluation are published as part of the DWP research series. To date, the following reports have been published:

- **DWP In-House research series no. 111** ‘Experiencing Jobcentre Plus Pathfinders: Overview of Early Evaluation Evidence’, was published in February 2003. The report takes an overview of the evaluation evidence from the first six months of operation of the Jobcentre Plus Pathfinders, charting the changes in Jobcentre Plus provision since its inception and identifying how Jobcentre Plus services have progressed from ONE.

- **DWP In-House research series no. 126** ‘Deferrals in Jobcentre Plus: Research into Application of Deferral Guidance for Non-Jobseekers Allowance Customers’, was published in October 2003. This report presents findings from qualitative research with Jobcentre Plus staff and customers in Pathfinder offices to examine the deferrals and waivers process, considering staff understanding and application of the processes in light of revised guidance.

- **DWP research series no. 222** ‘Delivering the Jobcentre Plus vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase Three’, was published in October 2004. The report assesses the extent to which Pathfinder and Day 2 offices were delivering the Jobcentre Plus vision. It presents the findings of qualitative research conducted from July to September 2003 with staff and customers in Jobcentre Plus offices, and builds on earlier research to show the progress achieved by Pathfinder offices over the last year. It also includes an assessment of delivery within the new, Day 2 offices.

- **DWP research series no.223** ‘Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey, Wave 1’ was published in October 2004. This report collected details of customers’ views and experiences of First Contact, the FA meeting and initial mandatory WFI, considering clients perceptions of the effect of the Jobcentre Plus progress on their behaviour and attitude. The survey provides detailed coverage of the main client groups.

The published social research evidence is complemented by analysis of administrative data. The Jobcentre Plus evaluation uses evidence on job entries and flows to and from benefit. Job entry data is gathered by Jobcentre Plus itself and used in the calculation of point towards the PRA total. The 100 per cent benefit database is used to provide analysis on the flows to and from benefit. The dataset holds every benefit record (working age and non-working age) dating back to June 1999.
Analysis of these outcomes are complemented by operational and process data to identify how these objectives are achieved. Statistical evaluation is used to identify whether the integrated process is achieving the job outcomes through NDLP/NDDP. The Jobcentre Plus database is linked with New Deal databases to identify whether the caseloding was achieved through attending a Jobcentre Plus meeting.

Similar analysis of the Jobcentre Plus process can help us to identify progress with ‘the vision’. Evidence supplied by Operational Research colleagues, based on the Jobcentre Plus database, has been used to ascertain to what extent the Jobcentre Plus process is adhered to.

As a result of the evaluation to date, some changes have been made to the original process these changes are:

- the initial WFI for carers and the bereaved will be made voluntary from 31 October 2005. This recognises that an immediate WFI may not be appropriate given an individual’s changed circumstance and allows them to choose when it is most appropriate for them;

- the initial WFI for people with health conditions and disabilities will be rescheduled to the eighth week of the benefit claim from 31 October 2005. This builds on the work of the ‘Pathways’ pilots and also allows the individual time to adjust to their new circumstances prior to a work-focused discussion;

- the FA role is being redesigned to become more flexible in its delivery, based on the customer programme protection risk. This is currently being piloted in Chester Jobcentre Plus with evaluation available in May 2005;

- the introduction of a single call process at initial contact with the facility to deliver a call back after the initial call if requested by the client. This will be piloted in Grimsby Contact Centre in April 2005;

- the requirement to agree an action plan as part of participating in a WFI will be made compulsory for lone parents and people with health conditions and disabilities from 31 October 2005. This will enable the client and PA to focus on and agree the most appropriate steps to gain employment;

- From October 2005, lone parents, who have been claiming IS for 12 months or more, with a youngest child aged 14 years or over, will be required to attend an interview once every three months to help them prepare for the transition to work when their child reaches 16.
2 Labour Market Outcomes

- One of the key aims of Jobcentre Plus and the WFI process is to move clients closer to, and ultimately joining, the labour market. Of particular interest are the labour market outcomes that occur through the process, which we measure in two ways – job entries, and flows to and from benefit.

- The objective of the analysis is to assess the level of additionality. This is the proportion of job entries that can be attributed to the new process – those that would not be expected to occur in the absence of rollout.

- Our analysis operates by classifying districts on when they are due to be fully rolled out, as described in the introductory chapter. The districts used in the analysis are Pathfinder offices and Day 2 districts, using districts in the final phase as a benchmark for comparison, for the period October 2001 to December 2004 for job entries, and August 2004 for on-flows/off-flows.

- Performance is analysed in two ways. Firstly, we can compare the performance of districts before and after rollout. If integration and the WFI process are working effectively we can expect to see job entries/off-flows to rise as more offices rollout within the district. We can also compare the performance of integrated districts against non-integrated, which we can expect integrated offices to be performing better. Finally, we can compare performance against the counterfactual. This is what we expect to have happened in the absence of integration and its associated processes.7

- As outlined in Chapter 1, the rollout of Jobcentre Plus is accompanied by the mandatory process for people with health conditions and disabilities, lone parents and ‘others’ (consisting mainly of carers or clients on bereavement benefit). These clients are placed into the Priority Group 1 category, the hardest to help of the Jobcentre Plus client types. Jobcentre Plus places particular emphasis on labour market outcomes on clients in this category because an entry gives the most

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7 This counterfactual is calculated by using integrated office (before they actually became integrated) job entries as a proportion of those that took place in non-integrated offices. The counterfactual is derived by applying this proportion to non-integrated entries throughout the entire period.
points towards the Jobcentre Plus (formerly PRA) target (12 points, against one for an already employed individual).

- Our analysis expects the major differences in performance to come from the people with health conditions and disabilities category in particular. There is no difference between the intervention regime of JSA claimants in integrated districts compared to non-integrated districts. Similarly, the initial WFI for lone parents and subsequent contact has now rolled out nationally. Therefore, there is little difference between regimes for these clients in Jobcentre Plus offices and legacy offices.

- The introduction of Jobcentre Plus is not just intended to deliver outcomes in itself, but also to act as a foundation for further policy initiatives. One such initiative is already introduced; Pathways to Work, offering further Jobcentre Plus support to IB claimants. This support comprises a £40 a week return to work credit and NHS rehabilitation to ease the transition back to work.

- A job entry is recorded when a client enters employment, and this movement can be directly attributed to Jobcentre Plus. Jobcentre Plus staff do this by looking for any interaction with the client, a submission to the job for instance, or a financial incentive. These job entries can then be counted against the Jobcentre Plus target. If the process is operating effectively, we expect job entries to be higher in integrated districts relative to non-integrated districts.

- The analysis also looks at flows to and from benefit. Again, the emphasis is on clients receiving inactive benefits. Our analysis calculates off-flow rates, and splits these down by the benefit duration. To illustrate, a three month off-flow rate in March of ten per cent, shows that ten per cent of those clients who began to claim a benefit in March had left the benefit within three months. We would expect short-term off-flow rates to increase after roll out of Jobcentre Plus, as the introduction of the greater work focus encourages clients to move from inactive benefit to employment. We may also see an increase in on-flows to JSA as clients move across to JSA. These clients may leave benefit for a variety of reasons; hence off-flows may differ significantly from job entry data.

- The job entry data includes both programme and non-programme job entries. Our classifications are as Table 2.1
Table 2.1 Job entry classifications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client type</th>
<th>Containing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Jobseekers                                      | New Deal for Young People
New Deal 25+
New Deal 50+
Remaining JSA six months and under
Remaining JSA six months and over
Remaining people with disabilities               |
| Lone parents                                    | New Deal for Lone Parents
Other Jobless Lone Parents                        |
| People with health conditions and disabilities  | New Deal for Disabled People
Inactive Benefit Sick and Disabled                  |
| Others                                          | Other Inactive Benefit, comprising mainly carers and those on bereavement benefit |

2.1 Summary

Job entries

- Job entries for Priority Group 1 clients increased over the entire period between October 2001 and December 2004. Pathfinder Priority Group 1 entries rose both in absolute and relative terms to non-integrated districts. However, this is not to say that increases in Priority Group 1 entries have replaced jobseeker job entries – in Pathfinder offices, these have also increased relative to non-integrated offices.

- However, the message from Day 2 districts was less clear. While Priority Group 1 job entries rose, the performance of lone parents and jobseekers was disappointing, being what we would have expected to happen even in the absence of Jobcentre Plus.

- An implementation effect was experienced by Day 2 offices in 2003. This dip was less profound than that seen by Pathfinder offices, despite rollout being protracted over a longer period.

- The improvement that we have seen in Priority Group 1 job entries, suggests that the WFI regime in Jobcentre Plus is having a positive impact. The small improvement that we have seen in jobseeker and lone parent job entries from Pathfinder offices may be a sign of an integrated office effect, although it could be caused by other factors.

Stocks and flows of benefit recipients

- There were no visible increases in on- or off-flows. On-flows remained relatively stable over the period for all client types, except for jobseekers where there were dips due to implementation effects.

- Pathfinder jobseeker and people with health conditions and disabilities short term off-flow rates have consistently been lower than those of non-integrated offices. They worsened under implementation, then recovered, but have since shown no visible increases despite rising job entries.
Pathfinder lone parent off-flow rates, however, appear to have shown a sustained increase relative to non-integrated offices in 2003 and 2004. This may be a tentative sign of an integrated office effect, although it may have been caused by other factors.

Short-term Day 2 off-flow rates for jobseekers and people with health conditions and disabilities fell during 2003 and 2004, relative to non-integrated offices, due to implementation of this stage of the rollout. Lone parent and ‘other’ off-flow rates remained close to those for non-integrated offices.

The size of increases in job entries, relative to off-flows, may help us to understand why we may not see a significant change in off-flow rates. The estimates of additionality for NDLP and job entries for people with health conditions and disabilities, suggest that we may not see a visible increase in off-flow rates.

Early evidence from the IB pilot districts shows an increase in the three-month and six to 12-month off-flow rates since late 2003. Three-month off-flow rates now stand at 17 per cent, having been at 12 per cent 12 months earlier.

Performance variation
- There is much wider variation in labour markets and performance between districts than there is across rollout stages. The spread of results from Day 2 districts is similar to that of other districts. Districts that do well against one performance measure, tend to do well against others. This is something that we will be exploring further.

2.2 Job entries

There has been a small increase in the average number of monthly job entries since the rollout of the Pathfinder offices in October 2001.

Figure 2.1 Total monthly job entries, all clients
Priority Group 1 job entries have been increasing nationally. Pathfinder job entries have increased both absolutely and relative to non-integrated districts, although the picture for Day 2 job entries is less clear.

Figure 2.2 shows that job entries have been increasing nationally for people with health conditions and disabilities and lone parents. Job entries for ‘other’ clients have remained on a flat trend (the step change in April 2004 is due to a change in definition of the client type).

**Figure 2.2  National Priority Group 1 Job Entries**

Figures 2.3 and 2.4 show that job entries from Pathfinder offices have increased relative to non-integrated districts for the major client types with the exception of those on ‘other’ inactive benefits. Pathfinder’s share of non-integrated job entries rose from an average of 17 per cent in 2002, to 20 per cent by December 2004.
**Figure 2.3** Shares of non-integrated job entries jobseekers and lone parents

**Figure 2.4** Shares of non-integrated job entries people with health conditions and disabilities and ‘other’ clients
Job entries from Day 2 districts also rose relative to non-integrated districts. Their share of non-integrated job entries rose from 50 per cent at the time of rollout, to 59 per cent in December 2004.

Further analysis by the Jobcentre Plus Analytical Division (JPAD) found that the performance of Pathfinder offices in terms of both job entries and points scored is more than 30 per cent above what would have been expected to have occurred had rollout not taken place.

* Lone parent job entries have been encouraging. Job entries from Pathfinder offices have increased since rollout (both absolutely and relative to non-integrated districts). After initial falls in performance, job entries from Day 2 districts have now regained their previous share of non-integrated district entries.*

Pathfinder lone parent job entries have been increasing relative to non-integrated offices, although these have also been increasing nationally. Job entries have been marginally above the counterfactual throughout the entire period.

Figure 2.3 shows that the job entry performance of lone parents in Day 2 districts has been encouraging. Absolute job entry levels are showing a slight trend increase throughout the period. Job entries in these districts have been marginally above the counterfactual since mid-2004, having been below earlier. This small differential is expected, as the Lone Parent Work Focused Interview (LP WFI) process is now rolled out nationally across both integrated offices and non-integrated.

Day 2 districts have, however, been improving relative to non-integrated districts, rising from 43 per cent of non-integrated entries in 2003 rising to 50 per cent by December 2004. This is, however, a return to previous levels, as performance fell before this.

**Figure 2.5  Lone parent job entries: outcome and counterfactual in Pathfinder and Day 2 Offices**
Jobseeker job entries have shown little change since rollout in both Pathfinder offices and Day 2 districts, although this is expected.

Jobseeker job entries in Pathfinder offices have risen relative to non-integrated offices, increasing from 12 per cent at the time of rollout, to 14 per cent in December 2004. Performance was higher, but there has been a sharp fall relative to non-integrated districts in April 2004. Entries have been above the counterfactual since rollout.

Day 2 jobseeker job entry levels have now moved marginally above the counterfactual up to June 2004, having been below the counterfactual from 2002 onwards. Day 2 districts have now regained their former share of non-integrated job entries after falling from 53 per cent in April 2001, to 42 per cent in April 2003.

This small differential (as with lone parents) is to be expected, as the intervention regime is the same in integrated districts as non-integrated districts.

Figure 2.6  Jobseeker job entries: outcome and counterfactual in Pathfinder and Day 2 offices

The performance of job entries for people with health conditions and disabilities has been strong. Job entries in both Pathfinder and Day 2 districts have increased relative to non-integrated districts, and exceeded the counterfactual throughout.

Figure 2.7 shows that job entries for people with health conditions and disabilities in Pathfinder offices increased relative to those of non-integrated districts. Between January 2002 and December 2004, their share of non-integrated entries increased from 17 per cent to 29 per cent. In absolute terms, job entries increased from 62 per month at the time of introduction (October 2001) to 570 in October 2004. Job entries have been above the counterfactual since rollout.
Figure 2.8 shows that job entries for people with health conditions and disabilities were consistently above the counterfactual by an average of 23 per cent since the main Day 2 rollout in March/April 2003. The job entries of Day 2 districts have increased relative to non-integrated districts from early 2003, rising from 47 per cent in April 2003, to 78 per cent in December 2004.

Entries have been affected by a change in classification from April 2004, resulting in clients moving from the ‘others’ category into the people with health conditions and disabilities category. Absolute levels will, therefore, increase, and are not directly comparable against pre-April 2004 levels. The counterfactual breaks down after this date.
Job entries for carers and the bereaved increased both absolutely and relative to non-integrated districts after rollout, although performance has now fallen back to pre-rollout levels.

Pathfinder job entries for ‘other’ clients increased between 2001 and March 2004 relative to non-integrated districts, although these have since fallen back significantly to their original levels.

Job entries for clients on other benefits increased as a share of non-integrated job entries, experiencing a step change of some 20 percentage points following the main rollout period from around 50 per cent prior to rollout to around 70 per cent (although this has now fallen back to original levels).

2.3 Implementation effects

The rollout of Jobcentre Plus can be a very disruptive process, requiring substantial construction work and potentially moves to new premises. Although measures are made to minimise this disruption, some short-term impact is inevitable.

An implementation effect can be seen to take place when looking at job entry performance for Pathfinder offices. Pathfinders jobseeker and lone parent job entries fell, relative to non-integrated districts in the months surrounding rollout and have now returned to previous levels, suggesting the reduction was due to the adverse effects of rollout.
Implementation effects were also seen for the rollout of Day 2 districts. Job entries for these districts fell for lone parents and jobseekers relative to non-integrated districts, and performance is now approaching the levels seen prior to rollout. We have not seen any implementation effects for people with disabilities and health conditions and ‘Other’ clients since there was no established intervention regime for rollout to disrupt. The counterfactual analysis supports this, as job entries fell below the counterfactual in the months immediately after rollout for both jobseeker and Day 2 districts.

Our analysis in the chapter (and other chapters) suggests that Pathfinder offices suffered an implementation effect in a number of measures. As discussed, job entries fell relative to non-integrated districts but have not yet recovered. Job entries however are not the only measure that was adversely affected. The analysis shows that on-flows and off-flows also dipped slightly on the rollout of Pathfinders. Rollout also had implications for caseloading to NDLP/NDDP, and the volume of Gateway and Case Interventions (see Chapter 11).

Disruption caused by the rollout of Pathfinder offices led to a reduction in performance of 20 per cent from the time of rollout. Rollout of the Pathfinder offices was concentrated into just one month (October 2001), so we would perhaps expect a significant reduction in performance to occur. It took 13 months for job entry performance to return to previous levels.

The disruption that occurred in Day 2 offices seems to have been less profound than what occurred for Pathfinders. Additionally, the period of disruption in Day 2 districts was shorter than that for Pathfinders, despite the rollout period being much longer for this group. However, although the rollout period was prolonged, the schedule was less concentrated. A large proportion of offices did rollout in March 2003, with the remainder rolling out around this date. The Day 2 office districts (excluding Pathfinder offices) were not affected by industrial action, where some offices resorted to processing claims clerically.

As rollout progresses, evidence suggests that the process may have become better managed. Offices that rolled out in the first half of 2003/04 experienced an average monthly dip in performance of 6.8 per cent lasting six months. The second half of 2003/04 saw a dip of 9.3 per cent, although the dip did last a shorter amount of time. Analysis of the different ‘Tranches’ shows that the length of depth of each dip gets shorter and shallower, suggesting a better understanding of rollout problems.

2.4 Stock of clients

There has been little impact on the stock of claimants in Pathfinder areas and Day 2 districts relative to non-integrated districts.

The number of people JSA clients in Pathfinder offices relative to non-integrated districts has varied only slightly from October 2001 to August 2004. Figure 2.9 shows the proportion initially rose to a peak of 15.7 per cent, but has since fallen
back to 15.2 per cent. This initial rise may have been due to an implementation effect, as reduced off-flows lead to a temporarily higher stock of claimants.

A similar story can be seen in the Day 2 districts. The stock of JSA clients, as a proportion of clients in non-integrated districts, increased slightly from an average of 55 per cent in 2002, to peak at 56.6 per cent in September 2003. A similar argument to that discussed above may hold here. Jobseekers could be more sensitive to roll out than other groups due to their more regular attendance (through the fortnightly signing) at the office.

**Figure 2.9 JSA stock by rollout**

![Graph showing JSA stock by rollout](image)

Figure 2.10 shows that the proportion of claimants categorised as lone parents in both Pathfinder offices and Day 2 districts has remained broadly constant relative to non-integrated districts. We would not expect any significant difference, however, due to the national rollout of the WFI process for lone parents.
Figure 2.10  Lone parent stock by rollout

Figure 2.11 illustrates the number of people with health conditions and disabilities in Pathfinder and Day 2 districts, relative to non-integrated districts which has also shown little variation. The proportion in Pathfinder areas has risen from 15 per cent in October 2001, to 15.5 per cent in August 2004, and from 54.9 per cent to 55 per cent in Day 2 districts.

Figure 2.11  People with health conditions and disabilities, stock by rollout
Figure 2.12 confirms that the stock of carers in Pathfinder offices and Day 2 districts has remained broadly constant relative to non-integrated districts. The Day 2 district proportion has also remained broadly constant at 55 per cent of the non-integrated stock.

**Figure 2.12  Carers stock by rollout**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pathfinder</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.5  Flows on and off benefits

*There were no visible trend increases in on- or off-flows over the period.*

The Jobcentre Plus process is expected to result in clients moving closer to, and then joining, the labour market. Ultimately, the clients may flow off-benefit, leading to savings in benefit payments. The processes can also be expected to lead to a more efficient and competitive labour market, by increasing the effective labour supply.

Flows off inactive benefits can be expected to increase after integration, as clients either leave benefit, or move onto Jobseeker’s Allowance. Hence, we expect jobseeker on-flows to increase. We might also see on-flows to inactive benefits fall, as increasing client contact could reduce the potential for benefit fraud.

2.6  On-flows

*Excluding the adverse effects of industrial action, on-flows were stable for all client types in Pathfinder and Day 2 districts.*

On-flows in Pathfinder offices have been relatively constant for all client types. An exception to this is where an implementation effect is visible where performance dipped relative to non-integrated offices in the two months prior to rollout, due to industrial action (see Chapter 12).
Day 2 on-flows were also broadly constant for all client types. Again, this was with the exception of jobseeker on-flows, which fell relative to non-integrated districts. These started to recover in May 2003, so the fall may have occurred due to implementation effects.

**Figure 2.13** Shares of non-integrated on-flows, jobseekers and lone parents

**Figure 2.14** Shares of non-integrated on-flows, carers, people with health conditions and disabilities, and others
2.7 Off-flow rates

There were no trend increases visible in short-term off-flow rates in Pathfinder or Day 2 offices, other than for lone parent groups.

We would expect to see effects particularly in short-term off-flow rates, as new claimants will receive more assistance than existing claimants.

However, as Figures 2.15 and 2.16 show, there were no trend increases in three month off-flow rates in Pathfinder or Day 2 offices, except for the Pathfinder lone parent group.

Off-flow rates for people with health conditions and disabilities have been below those of non-integrated districts for both Pathfinders and Day 2 districts. Three month rates are currently below levels prior to integration.

Figure 2.15 Three month off-flow rates, people with health conditions and disabilities, and others

The proportion of claimants who left benefit within three months in Pathfinder offices has generally been below that of non-integrated districts. This gap widened during implementation, but the differential has since been significantly reduced. Latest evidence suggests that 15 per cent of IB claimants leave within three months of joining in Pathfinder areas, matching the rate of non-integrated districts.

Day 2 districts tell a similar story. As expected, the proportion of people with health conditions and disabilities leaving their benefit claim within three months closely followed those of non-integrated districts before the main rollout in March/April 2003. In the three months prior to rollout, these rates began to under-perform the non-integrated districts. Although this gap has been reduced, off-flow rates continue to be below pre-implementation levels and are in fact falling. This trend is
at odds with the increase in job entries, although visible changes in off-flows may not be expected (see Section 2.8).

Evidence from the Pathways to Work areas is encouraging. The proportion of people with health conditions and disabilities leaving benefit within three months is currently above that of the other district types, although these districts have had higher rates historically. These rates now stand at 17 per cent, having been 12 per cent 12 months earlier.

The off-flow rates of ‘other’ clients in Pathfinder offices also fell in the months surrounding rollout. The proportion leaving benefit within three months of their claim start averages 20 per cent in 2004, against an average of 18 per cent in 2001. These results must be treated with caution due to small sample size (approximately 80 claimants per month).

We are unable to draw any significant conclusions from the analysis of 3 month off-flows in Day 2 districts. The proportion leaving within three months has averaged 19 per cent every year 2001-2004.

**Off-flow rates have risen for lone parents for both Pathfinder and Day 2 districts, whilst there has been little impact on off-flows for jobseekers.**

**Figure 2.16 Three month off-flow rates, jobseekers and lone parents**

Three month off-flow rates for jobseekers in Pathfinder offices have also shown little evidence of a trend. On average, 60 per cent of JSA claimants in Pathfinder districts leave within three months. This has been the average for the last four years of the analysis. The same can be said of Day 2 districts which follow a similar trend.
The proportion of lone parents that left benefit within three months has increased in Pathfinder offices. These have risen from six per cent at the time of integration to stand at almost 15 per cent by August 2004.

A similar result can be seen in Day 2 districts. The evidence shows that the proportion of sick and disabled clients leaving benefit within three months has increased since the main period of rollout, rising from nine to 11 per cent in 2003, to 15 per cent in August 2004.

Both of these findings are supported by national data, which mirrors the trends of the two integrated classifications. Since the WFI process is rolled out nationally, we would expect off-flows to follow a similar pattern.

**Integration appears to have had little effect on off-flows for carers.**

The three month off-flow rate shows little evidence of a trend, with both the proportions and absolute numbers being low. Approximately two to three per cent of carers leave within three months for all districts types. It appears that rollout of Pathfinder and Day 2 districts has had little effect on these rates.

**Figure 2.17 Three month off-flow rates, carers**

*The patterns in short term off-flow rates were reflected in the off-flow rates of all durations.*

Off-flow rates of up to six and 12 months and for more than 12 months tended to follow the same patterns as for those of up to three months. Of significant interest is that increases in Pathfinder Lone Parent off-flows rates for all durations are now visible and beyond the rise nationally.
Figure 2.18  Lone Parent Off-flow Rates by Duration

Figure 2.19  Off-flow rates for people with health conditions and disabilities, by duration
2.8 Overall message from the job entry and off-flow analysis

On initial inspection, the messages from the above analysis appear to be mixed. Job entry data seems to be present an encouraging picture. Job entries for lone parents in Pathfinder offices have been strong, and although the job entry performance in Day 2 districts initially fell, it has recovered substantially. Supporting this, job entries for people with health conditions and disabilities have been strong in both Pathfinder offices and Day 2 districts. Although less significant, the job entry performance of Carers/Bereaved has also been strong. It is perhaps surprising therefore that this performance is not reflected in a significant rise of short term off-flow rates.

The off-flow analysis has shown less positive results. The proportion of people with health conditions and disabilities who leave within three months of starting their claim has been below compared to that of non-integrated districts throughout, and is currently below their rates prior to integration. The Lone Parent off-flow rates have been increasing, although there is no significant difference between Pathfinders, Day 2 districts and non-integrated districts (this is however expected due to the national rollout of the WFI process).

This result may be expected however. The number of additional job entries is very low in relation to on and off-flows. We have evidence of some additionality for lone parents through participation in the NDLP scheme. If we assume that 50 per cent of Lone Parent job entries occur through New Deal and of these 30 per cent are additional, then an average of 98 job entries per month are additional. These additional job entries will have little impact on off-flow rates.

This result is also expected for people with health conditions and disabilities. Although job entries have increased, these were from low levels and, therefore, may not be evident in off-flows. However, evidence from Pathways to Work suggests that increased interventions are having an impact on the client group.

The Destinations Survey (see Section 2.9) shows that there does appear to be a significant difference between the proportion of people with health conditions and disabilities moving into work (of 16 hours or more) in Pathfinder offices, compared to non-integrated districts. This suggests that Pathfinder offices are performing better at getting this client type into work than non-integrated districts, and, therefore, gives us some supporting evidence of additionality that is not visible in off-flows.
2.9 Destinations Survey

*Destinations data reveals no significant differences between Pathfinder and Day 2 districts for jobseekers (with unknown destinations) or lone parents. However, Pathfinder offices recorded a higher proportion of people with health conditions and disabilities leaving benefits and moving into work of 16 hours or more compared to Day 2 districts and elsewhere.*

A further source of data available is the Destinations Survey. This survey presents data from interviews with clients who had left benefit between February and April 2003, and allows us to gain inferences on the performance of Pathfinder and Day 2 districts on off-flows into work, compared to non-integrated districts.

An extract of the results is included in Table 2.2, for the destination ‘work of 16 or more hours’. The survey found no significant difference between Pathfinder, Day 2 or elsewhere (non-integrate districts) for lone parents. For JSA unknown leavers, a significant difference was found between the Pathfinder and non-integrated districts but not the Pathfinder and Day 2 districts. Pathfinder offices recorded a significantly higher proportion of people with health conditions and disabilities leaving benefit to go into work of 16 hours or more than Day 2 or non-integrated offices. A correspondingly lower proportion of people with health conditions and disabilities moved to another working age benefit in Pathfinder offices.

**Table 2.2 Destinations survey data**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Destination:</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Pathfinder</th>
<th>Day 2 Districts</th>
<th>Elsewhere</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work (16+hours)</td>
<td>Total off-flow</td>
<td>Total off-flow</td>
<td>Total off-flow</td>
<td>Total off-flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with health conditions and disabilities</td>
<td>55,910</td>
<td>5,5125</td>
<td>12,584</td>
<td>38,843</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone parents</td>
<td>30,227</td>
<td>1,1529</td>
<td>7,760</td>
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</tr>
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<td>JSA unknown*</td>
<td>78,414</td>
<td>3,3910</td>
<td>11,448</td>
<td>61,235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures within the total off flow columns are population estimates for the period 1 February to 30 April 2003.

*JSA leavers recorded on the admin system as having unknown destinations.

The variation in employment and inactivity rates is much wider across districts than between rollout stage.

There is much wider variation across districts than between rollout stages. Inactivity rates for example range from 15 per cent to 37 per cent. This variation therefore makes it difficult to isolate the effects of rollout on inactivity and employment rates from local labour market factors.
There is also much wider variation in indicators of performance at district level than there is at the level of rollout stages.

Initial analysis found that there is a large degree of variation in the performance of Jobcentre Plus districts, and that the spread of Day 2 district performance is similar to that of other districts. There is large variation amongst both Day 2 and other districts in terms of achieving lone parent job entries relative to the client base. It can be seen that the job entry proportion ranges from four per cent to 18 per cent with almost as wide a variation of Day 2 districts as other districts.

There is similar variation in other outcome measures. Furthermore, there is a relatively strong correlation between different performance and outcome measures in that districts that do well against one measure tend to do well against others. We are continuing to look into performance variation across Jobcentre Plus districts.
3 First Contact

• This chapter focuses on the experiences of delivering and receiving the Jobcentre Plus First Contact process and describes administrative data relating to deferrals, waivers, job searches and submissions.

• Within Jobcentre Plus integrated offices, customers who initiate a claim for benefit are expected to make First Contact with the service through a telephone call to the contact centre. The evidence found a high level of satisfaction amongst customers with the FC process, and key factors of this satisfaction related to the speed and convenience of appointment booking over the telephone. However, evidence from CAB found that this may not work well for all customers, such as those for whom English is not a first language, or those that have poor basic skills or mental health conditions.

• Due to the timing of the most recent research, this chapter draws mainly on findings from Vanilla Vantive sites, unless otherwise stated, where evidence from Enhanced Vantive sites and CMS1 Contact Centres has been available. Vantive is an IT system that appears as a desktop icon for FCOs in Contact Centres. Also known as the Client Handling Application (CHA) it is used as a tool to gather information from customers wanting to make claims to benefits. It has had many releases to upgrade it during its time, e.g. with Child Benefit Reforms and Tax Credits. There are two types of Vantive system:

  – **Vanilla:** the majority of Contact Centres use Vanilla Vantive, which is Vantive on its own, where an FCO asks questions to determine which clerical benefit forms the customer needs to complete then bring in to the Adviser Appointment which the FCO books for them on Vantive.

  – **Papyrus:** the remaining few offices (e.g. Milton Keynes), use the Integrated System which is the same as the vanilla system except it has an attachment called ‘Papyrus’. This is a claim form that is completed on the system by the FCO as they gather information from the customer (usually done as a ‘call back’) with the idea being that the customer has a completed claim form when they arrive for their Adviser interview.

• At present, there are some offices using Vantive and some offices using the Customer Management System (CMS). It is expected that by October 2005, Vantive will have been phased out completely and all Jobcentre Plus offices will be using CMS.
• JSA/IB/IS customers make an initial call, in which the customer is asked a series of questions which allows CMS to make an assessment of potential eligibility for both the customer and partner, if appropriate, to all Jobcentre Plus benefits. At the end of the initial call, the FCO will arrange to ring the customer back at a convenient time to gather information to support their claim. Only those questions relevant to the customer will be asked. At this point, claim details may also be taken for associated benefits, including HB/CTB or CSA. At the end of the call, the customer is sent a statement of the facts they have provided which is tailored to the benefit(s) they are claiming. This is accompanied by a letter detailing an appointment date and time (if appropriate), and the name of who they will see, plus a letter asking for all verification to support the information that they provided verbally, together with any leaflets or clerical claim packs for other secondary benefits.

• CMS Release 1 was first piloted in Livingstone Contact Centre and associated Jobcentre Plus front and benefit processing offices in the summer of 2003, and phased national rollout commenced in November 2003. Rollout is planned to continue until 2006. CMS Release 2 was implemented in December 2004, and a further release, Release 3 (which is being sponsored and funded by the Jobcentre Plus field organisation), is planned for September 2005.

3.1 Must Dos

• The requirements of First Contact Officers within Vantive offices (as described in the Must Dos) are to:
  – act as first point of contact;
  – explain that a WFI is a compulsory condition of benefit entitlement unless waived or deferred;
  – explain the purpose of the WFI;
  – book a WFI to take place within four working days of First Contact if not waived or deferred;
  – allocate a PA able to deal with a customer’s particular needs, e.g. a lone parent or Incapacity Benefit (IB) customer;
  – actively promote the work-focused services of Jobcentre Plus;
  – discuss any current job search activity;
  – undertake a job search for all customers who are job-ready and undertake a submission if there is a suitable vacancy;
  – promote the work requirement essential for JSA customers;
  – decide if a WFI should appropriately be waived or deferred;
3.2 Summary

- The majority of customers across all client groups were informed by FCOs that attending a WFI was a compulsory condition of benefit entitlement, and lone parents whose first contact with Jobcentre Plus was via a CMS site were more likely to have been informed of this (85 per cent) than those whose first contact was with a Vantive site (68 per cent). The majority of customers also reported that they were informed by FCOs that the purpose of the WFI was to discuss work, although FCOs tended to tailor this explanation according to client type.

- As a result, this explanation of the purpose of both FA and PA meetings often varied considerably, as did customers’ understanding of the process as a result, although there was evidence of some progress in 2003 where explanations of the service and support available through Jobcentre Plus were being offered. Research conducted in 2004 suggests that FCOs were aware of the purpose of the FA and PA meetings, although explanations of this still tended to vary.

- Customers consistently recalled that they were given details of the appointment, and were aware of the need to take identification with them, but overall, customers’ (especially people with health conditions and disabilities) understanding of the Jobcentre Plus process by the end of First Contact varied hugely.

- FCOs tried to allocate specialist PAs to customers where possible, although this could have an impact on the length of time between First Contact and the WFI.

- Discussion about work or training was more direct for JSA customers; more limited for lone parents (where FCOs were concerned about putting pressure on client groups already thought to have other concerns or priorities); contained little meaningful discussion with people with health conditions and disabilities; and was limited for carers.

- Admin data suggests that there has been an increase in work focus at First Contact for jobseekers and lone parents over time, although the increase has not been seen for people with health conditions and disabilities.

- Some office managers continued to place a higher emphasis on job brokering and, as such, FCOs had an increased awareness of the need to conduct job searches and job submissions. Jobseekers were the only client groups to continue receiving job searches, although some FCOs offered a job search to customers from all groups. In practice, it was rare for customers to be submitted for a job at First Contact.

- There is evidence that FCOs were encouraged to keep a caseload.

- There is little evidence of a trend for deferral rates, although they have fallen from August 2003, and waiver rates have fallen since August 2002, although this reduction looks to have slowed since October 2003.
• Qualitative research conducted in 2003 indicated that the process for deferring and waiving WFIs was broadly delivered in line with the Jobcentre Plus vision. In a survey conducted in 2004, it was found that although there is little difference in deferral rates between Vantive and CMS sites, there were statistically significant differences in terms of discussing deferring the WFI; around two in ten discussed this at First Contact in a Vantive site, compared to around four in ten when using a CMS site.

• FCOs were generally confident about identifying the various benefits that customers could claim, although several training needs were identified to address any gaps in knowledge.

• It appeared that FCOs’ awareness of the Must Dos had become more varied since the previous wave of research, although it should be noted that different offices were visited during the 2003 and 2004 research. It appears that office managers continued to use the Quality Assurance Framework to monitor services delivered at First Contact.

3.3 First Contact volumes

Jobseekers were the most likely client group to make first contact, followed by people with health conditions and disabilities, and lone parents.

Table 3.1 First Contact volumes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JSA</th>
<th>HC&amp;D</th>
<th>LP</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>85,300</td>
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Jobseekers represent the majority of clients who make a first contact. Around 247,600 first contacts for jobseekers took place between October and December 2004, accounting for 65 per cent of the total. Approximately 85,000 people with health conditions and disabilities made first contact in the period (22 per cent of the total), and 25,900 lone parents (seven per cent of the total).

In a survey with clients conducted in 2004, around two-thirds of people with health conditions and disabilities (68 per cent), lone parents and jobseekers (both 66 per cent) reported being called back on their phone at home, with around a quarter of these same client groups being called back on their mobile phone. \(^{18}\)

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\(^{18}\) Please note: figures are not shown here for carers because of the small number of respondents.
3.4 Explain that a WFI is a compulsory condition of benefit entitlement unless waived or deferred

The majority of customers across all client groups were informed by FCOs that attending a WFI was a compulsory condition of benefit entitlement, and lone parents whose first contact with Jobcentre Plus was via a CMS site were more likely to have been informed of this (85 per cent) than those whose first contact was with a Vantive site (68 per cent).

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, 76 per cent of JSA clients said that they were informed at First Contact that they would not receive benefits if they did not attend the meeting with a PA. Fewer non-JSA clients said that they were informed at First Contact that they would not receive benefits if they did not attend the meeting with a PA, with 69 per cent of carers, 68 per cent of lone parents and 65 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities.

The survey also found that lone parents whose first contact with Jobcentre Plus was via a CMS site, were more likely to have been informed of the mandatory nature of attending a meeting with a PA (85 per cent), compared to those whose first contact was with a Vantive site (68 per cent).

The survey found that most jobseekers (86 per cent) said that they had been informed that they had to be available and looking for work to qualify for Jobseekers Allowance (JSA). Eleven per cent said that they had not been told, and two per cent said that they did not know if they had been told or not.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that the extent to which FCOs explained the mandatory requirement to attend a WFI varied according to their experience and confidence. In general, customers were aware that attendance at the WFI was a compulsory condition of their benefit entitlement. They understood that failure to attend would affect the success of their receipt of the benefit either at all or at a reduced rate. However, it is not clear if this understanding was based on the FCOs explanation or through the letter received shortly after First Contact.

FCOs consistently informed non-JSA customers to inform Jobcentre Plus if, for some reason, they could not attend their meetings at the public office. In fact, in one Contact Centre, FCOs were making calls back to customers in order to reduce the numbers failing to attend.
3.5 Explain the purpose of the WFI and next steps of the process

The majority of customers also reported that they were informed by FCOs that the purpose of the WFI was to discuss work, although FCOs tended to tailor the explanation of the WFI according to client type...

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, there were few statistically significant differences between the client groups when asked how well it was explained that the purpose of the PA meeting was to discuss work. Jobseekers (80 per cent) were most likely to report that this was explained ‘very well’ or ‘fairly well’, compared to non-JSA clients, where 76 per cent of lone parents reported that it was explained ‘very well’ or ‘fairly well’ followed by 74 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities, and 67 per cent of carers. The survey also found that around seven in ten of all client groups reported that the FCO explained what was to be covered in the meeting with a PA ‘very well’ or ‘fairly well’.

…and as a result this varied explanation of the purpose of the FA and PA meetings often varied considerably, as did customers’ understanding of the process as a result.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 found that some FCOs had a limited knowledge of what happened in FA and PA meetings, and were less confident about explaining the next steps of the process to clients. This poor understanding of what happened in public offices had implications such as not realising the impact of errors made at First Contact on the public office process.

However, there was evidence of some progress in 2003, where explanations of the service and support available through Jobcentre Plus were being offered...

The 2003 research found that for non-JSA clients, FCOs tended to place more emphasis on the wider support that was available through Jobcentre Plus, rather than solely on work, and there was some evidence that progress was being made where individual FCOs were providing good explanations of the service and support available through Jobcentre Plus, and, in some cases, possible action points for the WFI were identified.

However, some FCOs reported feeling uncomfortable about promoting the work-focused services offered by Jobcentre Plus to some people with health conditions and disabilities and carers. Some FCOs were still making assumptions about a customer’s job readiness and delivering a reduced work focus as a result. As was the case with earlier research, FCOs tended to rely on customers’ self assessment of their work readiness, and work-related discussion, (and job searches in particular) were offered to non-JSA customers if they clearly indicated that they were interested in work. This may be, in part, because FCOs saw their role as being to book appointments and provide a gateway to the system, rather than challenging customers’, attitudes towards work.
There were some examples where lone parents and people with health conditions and disabilities reported slightly more detailed work discussions, where they were usually informed about the specialist support services available through Jobcentre Plus to help them back to work. However, as was the case with JSA customers, it was common that non-JSA customers felt that the extent of work discussion was limited or was only mentioned as a background to their claim. Some customers had explained their situation at the start of the conversation with the FCO, and therefore it was clear that they were not available for work. As was consistent with earlier research, some customers, in this case there were examples of lone parents and carers, felt that it was inappropriate for the FCO to mention work.\textsuperscript{vii}

...and research conducted in 2004 suggests that FCOs were aware of the purpose of the FA and PA meetings, although explanations of this still tended to vary.

However, research conducted in 2004 found that whilst FCOs were aware of the purpose of the FA and PA meetings, observations revealed considerable variations in the explanations provided to customers about this at First Contact. FCOs explained that this was due to the pressure they felt under to take the next call, thus, limiting the time needed to ensure that customers understood the next steps.

The research also found that the explanation by an FCO of the WFI also depended on confidence and the understanding of its purpose. Jobseekers were consistently told that the purpose of the WFI was to cover the conditions of signing a Jobseekers Agreement (JSAg). However, the work element purpose was not routinely explained to people with health conditions and disabilities and carers. These customers were usually told that the WFI might cover benefit entitlements, the support available through Jobcentre Plus and job opportunities, although there were some people with health conditions and disabilities who recalled that a direct focus on work was evident in the explanation given to them by the FCO.\textsuperscript{viii}

Customers consistently recalled that they were given details of the appointment, and were aware of the need to take identification evidence with them...

Research conducted in 2004, found that customers consistently recalled that they were told the appointment time, date, and the name of the PA, but where they were told that they would be meeting two people, they were not always clear about the distinction between an FA and a PA.

Customers from all groups routinely received a letter confirming the date, time and location of their WFI appointment, and the name of the adviser they would see. The relevant benefit forms to be completed were also received in this pack. The main exceptions to this were where appointments were booked for the next day. In these circumstances, customers were told to collect their forms from the reception desk in the public office, as there would be insufficient time to receive them in the post before their appointment.
Customers across all groups reported that they were aware that they had to take identification evidence with them to their appointment. FCOs reported that they consistently told customers at the end of the conversation about the supporting evidence required for different claims, although observational evidence revealed that this did not always happen. Jobseekers and lone parents who had been recently employed were generally informed by the FCO that their pay slips would be required, and similarly, people with health conditions and disabilities, were told to bring sick notes to their WFIs. However, carers and other lone parents were not consistently informed of what evidence they were expected to take to their meetings.

...but overall customers’, especially people with health conditions and disabilities, understanding of the Jobcentre Plus process by the end of First Contact varied hugely.

As such, customers’ understanding of the process by the end of First Contact, varied hugely: where some had a clear understanding of their need to complete claim forms and collect relevant evidence to support their claim, whereas others knew what to expect, having had previous experience of Jobcentre Plus. For those new to the service, there was awareness of the number of people that they were due to see, but less awareness of the purpose and content of these meetings.\(^x\)

The research conducted in 2004 also found that some lone parents and people with health conditions and disabilities reported feeling bewildered with the First Contact process due to the sensitivity of their circumstances at the time. Some of these clients were confused as to what to expect at the FA and PA meeting after receiving their appointment letter, feeling that the explanation given by the FCO focused on discussing their claim, caring responsibilities, or condition of their illness, whereas the letter indicated that they would be discussing work.\(^x\)

3.6 Booking the WFI

FCOs tried to allocate specialist PAs to customers where possible, although this could have an impact on the length of time between First Contact and the WFI.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that FCOs selected specialist PAs from a list on the Labour Market System (LMS) and allocated them where available for specific customers. In some cases, the availability of specialist PAs affected the length of time between First Contact and the date of the WFI, and in these cases, FCOs used their judgement or asked customers which sort of PA they would prefer.

FCOs felt that there was a tension between the need to allocate customers to specialist PAs and the ‘date of claim’ requirement in the Must Dos, and were unsure which should take priority. In general, Contact Centres booked WFIs to take place within four working days, but there were areas where the next available date was not for three weeks. FCOs suggested delays in booking WFIs were caused by
unavailability of specialist PAs; a backlog of appointments due to holidays; or part-time staff and staff secondments to other offices.

Customers typically found the appointment system to be efficient, and an observation showed that when an appointment was not soon enough for a customer to receive benefit payment, the FCO advised the customer about applying for a crisis loan, whilst attempting to bring the appointment forward. There were also some examples of carers and people with health conditions and disabilities who were offered some flexibility as to the appointment time given.\textsuperscript{xii}

3.7 Actively promote the work-focused services of Jobcentre Plus

3.7.1 Discussion of work at First Contact

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that FCOs generally led discussions about work with customers, adopting different approaches to discussions according to type of customer and their individual circumstances.

\textit{Jobseekers}

\textit{Discussion about work or training were more direct for JSA customers.}

In a survey conducted with clients in 2003, 61 per cent of JSA clients reported discussing work or training at First Contact, and 76 per cent of these felt that their discussion about work or training with an FCO was ‘very helpful’ or ‘quite helpful’.\textsuperscript{xii}

FCOs tended to concentrate on the requirement to look for work as a compulsory condition of entitlement to JSA as an introduction to work discussion with jobseekers. Discussions were driven by a number of issues, such as (if relevant) when customers had left work and why; what jobs they hoped to do in the future; and how they looked for work.

Some discussions about work were driven by the customer’s personal circumstances, and customers tended to lead in discussions where there was a particular issue around work, such as redundancy or an involuntary suspension.\textsuperscript{xiii}

\textit{Lone parents}

\textit{Discussions about work or training were more limited for lone parents, where FCOs were often concerned about putting pressure on a client group already thought to have other concerns and priorities.}

In a survey conducted with clients in 2003, 53 per cent of lone parents were likely to have discussed work or training at First Contact, and 76 per cent then felt that this discussion with an FCO ‘very helpful’ or ‘quite helpful’.\textsuperscript{xiv}

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that First Contact discussions about work with lone parents were limited, with any discussion tending to concentrate more on employment history with limited discussion about
future employment possibilities unless lone parents clearly stated that they were looking for work.

In some cases, FCOs were observed to make assumptions about a lone parent’s work readiness and, thus, the appropriateness of subsequent discussions about work. Other FCOs felt that in-depth discussions about work were inappropriate for lone parents who had a recent relationship breakdown or had very young children; in fact, FCOs were generally concerned about putting pressure on lone parents when they had other concerns or priorities. xv

Customers claiming health or disability related benefits

There was little meaningful discussion of work with people with health conditions and disabilities observed at First Contact.

In a survey conducted with clients in 2003, 55 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities discussed work or training at First Contact, and 68 per cent found this discussion with an FCO ‘very helpful’ or ‘quite helpful’. xvi

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that there was little evidence that meaningful work discussion occurred with people with health conditions and disabilities. Where work discussion did occur, it tended to concentrate on employment history and whether or not work was currently an option. Some FCOs felt it was inappropriate to take any work discussion beyond this point with customers claiming IB due to their perceptions of the customer’s circumstances. xvii

Carers

Discussions about work or training were more limited for carers.

In a survey conducted with clients in 2003, 47 per cent of carers discussed work or training at First Contact, and 65 per cent found this discussion with an FCO ‘very helpful’ or ‘quite helpful’. xviii

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that FCOs routinely checked the current employment status of carers, and some discussion involved current or previous employment. Some FCOs regarded caring responsibilities as the deciding factor as to whether work should be discussed. Work discussion was not pursued with carers who indicated that, due to the level or intensity of their caring responsibilities, they were not interested in work.

Carers who did discuss work were comfortable in doing so, perceiving the discussion to be part of the claiming process. However, there were isolated examples of carers who objected to a work discussion at First Contact, feeling that the timing was inappropriate if they were not in a position to return to work. xix
3.8 Undertake a job search for all customers who are job ready and undertake a submission if there is a suitable vacancy

Admin data suggests that there has been an increase in work focus at first contact for jobseekers and lone parents over time, although this increase has not been seen for people with health conditions and disabilities.

Figure 3.1 Proportion of clients with submission at First Contact

Administrative data indicates that there is an increasing work-focus element at First Contact for jobseekers and lone parents. The proportion of jobseekers with a submission at first contact increased from six per cent at the time of Pathfinder introduction, to 16 per cent in July 2004. A smaller increase has occurred for lone parents, rising from one per cent to three per cent in 2004. This change however is not seen for people with health conditions and disabilities – the proportion of which has been constant at one per cent. Qualitative research conducted in 2003, indicated that in the cases where job submissions occurred at First Contact, the job description was read out by the FCO and the customer was given the employer’s number to ring for an application form.\(^x\)

However, the numbers actually getting a job entry at first contact remain low, less than one per cent of each client group is recorded as having a job entry at First Contact.\(^9\)

\(^9\) Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, 28 per cent of JSA clients reported that they discussed specific job vacancies at First Contact. As expected, for non-JSA clients the proportions were significantly less, at nine per cent for lone parents and seven per cent for people with health conditions and disabilities, and three per cent for carers. The 2004 survey (Wave 2) also found that 100 per cent of carers in Pathfinder offices had not discussed specific vacancies at First Contact, compared to 94 per cent of carers in the 2003 survey (Wave 1). The opposite was true for jobseekers in Pathfinders, where they were more likely to have discussed specific job vacancies Wave 1 (38 per cent) than in Wave 2 (26 per cent).¹⁰

The 2004 survey found that of the customers who had discussed specific job vacancies at First Contact, jobseekers (52 per cent) were more likely to have applied for a job as a result of this discussion, compared to lone parents (39 per cent) and people with health conditions and disabilities (34 per cent).xxi¹¹ This is likely to reflect the work readiness of the respective client groups.

Some office managers continued to place a higher emphasis on job brokering and, as such, FCOs had an increased awareness of the need to conduct job searches and job submissions...

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that in some Contact Centres, Office Managers continued to report that they were placing a higher emphasis on job brokering and, as such, FCOs acknowledged that these targets increased their awareness of the need to conduct job searches and submissions. However, emphasis on job search at First Contact varied within both different case study areas and customer groups. The key factors that influenced whether or not an FCO conducted a job search included:

- the FCOs perception of the suitability of the vacancies available on their systems;
- if the customer had already looked at the job point in the public office;
- external factors, such as pending appeal decisions, ACAS involvement, pending financial decisions about starting up a small business;
- if customers had a job to return to;
- if someone was ringing on behalf of the customer.xxii

¹⁰ Throughout the report from the client survey conducted in 2004, where comparisons have been made between Wave 1 and Wave 2, these refer only to Pathfinder offices in non-IB pilot areas.

¹¹ Please note: Figures are not shown here for carers because of the small number of respondents.
... jobseekers were the only client group to continue to receive job searches, although some FCOs offered a job search to customers from all groups.

The research conducted in 2004 also found that some FCOs offered the option of a job search to customers from all groups, and whether one was carried out tended to be dictated by the customer’s response.

Reports from customers and observations of First Contact continue to show that in practice, job searches were often only conducted for jobseekers, and that FCOs did not conduct job searches for customers claiming non-JSA benefits.xxiii

There is evidence that FCOs were encouraged to keep a caseload.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that FCOs were encouraged to keep a caseload, where Contact Centre Managers encourage FCOs to call customers in ‘down time’ to look for suitable vacancies for customers.

Caseloading was undertaken to some extent. In general, they looked for jobs for customers after the initial phone call and if they found a suitable job, contacted the customer to let them know. The motivation to caseload customers was to increase their job entry points and, as such, typically customers perceived to be the most job-ready (mostly jobseekers) were caseloaded. Few customers were aware that they had been caseloaded, instead they were generally asked if they minded being contacted if a vacancy arose.xxiv

3.9 Making deferral or waiver decisions

Deferral rates for lone parents and people with health conditions and disabilities have been relatively flat since April 2003, although carer’s deferral rates have been rising...
Deferral rates have fluctuated since the introduction of Pathfinders in October 2001. They immediately fell in the months after rollout, perhaps due to clearer guidance on the use of referrals. They then rose slightly to August 2003, perhaps due to rollout of new Contact Centres that will have been operating with less experienced staff, before falling significantly since then.

…and waiver rates have fallen since August 2002, although this reduction looks to have slowed since October 2003.

Waiver rates have been falling since the initial months of rollout, and this may constitute a better understanding of when a waiver can be used. This fall looks to have bottomed out in late 2003, with rates being flat since then. Four per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities were being waived, one per cent of lone parents, two per cent of carers and one per cent of ‘other’ clients.
Qualitative research conducted in 2003 indicated that the process for deferring and waiving WFIs was broadly being delivered in line with the Jobcentre Plus vision. Staff felt clear about the distinction between deferrals and waivers, and were generally confident about waiver decisions. FCOs were generally confident in making waiver decisions, and drew clear distinctions between waivers and deferrals. FCOs tended to waive customers with wholly retrospective claims, terminally ill customers, 16/17 year olds in full-time education and customers aged 60 plus.

Research on deferrals conducted in 2003 found that FCOs were generally clear about deferral decisions in the case of lone parents and carers, but reported more difficulty when it came to people with health conditions and disabilities. Lone parents were only deferred in specific circumstances, because FCOs felt they had a good awareness of the support available to lone parents, and viewed them as being a ‘priority group’. However, staff reported difficulty in making decisions for people with health conditions and disabilities (other than terminally ill customers and those claiming Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)), pointing to problems in acquiring information from customers about physical and mental health conditions and limited awareness of support available to them. Decisions about deferring carers were based on FCOs perceptions about the carer’s availability for work, and about what support was available to them through Jobcentre Plus. Bereaved customers were generally deferred.

However, customers were not usually aware that their WFI could be deferred or waived, instead feeling that they had to attend the WFI to be eligible for benefit. As such, some customers who attended a WFI could have benefited from a deferral, but
in these cases, FCOs may not have been aware of individuals’ circumstances if they had not disclosed them.

FCOs set specific deadlines when they would expect the PA to re-contact the customer to arrange a WFI, based on indicative timescales, available evidence and individual customer circumstances. Making appropriate decisions on deferral timescales had received increased emphasis, and the timescales for which customers were deferred, appear to be broadly appropriate. FCOs indicated they found it difficult to decide the most appropriate deferral timescale for many customers, particularly when it was hard to predict when their circumstances might change (such as those with longer term illnesses and carers).

There were some PAs who felt that FCOs were not making appropriate deferrals, and, in some cases, were sending people for WFIs in order to keep the number of deferrals down. No evidence was gathered from FCOs to support or refute this claim.\textsuperscript{xvi}

\textit{In a survey conducted in 2004, it was found that although there is little difference in deferral rates between Vantive and CMS sites, there were statistically significant differences in terms of discussing deferring the WFI: around two in ten discussed this at First Contact in a Vantive site, compared to around four in ten when using a CMS site.}

Although there are different deferral rates for the non-JSA groups (see Section 2.8), a survey conducted with clients in 2004, found that there were no significant differences between the non-JSA client groups, in terms of discussing with an FCO the possibility of deferring their meeting with a PA (around two in ten). Although there is little difference in deferral rates between Vantive and CMS sites, there were statistically significant differences in terms of discussing deferring the WFI: around two in ten discussed the possibility of deferring their WFI at First Contact in a Vantive site, compared to around four in ten when using a CMS site.\textsuperscript{xxvii}

3.10 Dealing with benefit enquiries

\textit{FCOs were generally confident about identifying the various benefits that customers could claim, although several training needs were identified to address any gaps in knowledge.}

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003, found that FCOs were generally confident in identifying which types of benefit the customer should claim, with the exception of Carer’s Allowance and bereavement benefits for which claims were rarer. However, it was unusual for non-JSA customers to recall that the FCO provided further advice or information on benefits, and customers tended not to ask for this anyway. FCOs identified a number of barriers to offering more detailed benefits advice, such as fully establishing the customer’s circumstances which was time consuming, or where the customer did not speak English.

Newer staff were less confident across the range of Jobcentre Plus benefits, as was
the case in more established Contact Centres and in more recently opened ones. Some identified training needs as a reason for their lack of confidence. Whilst FCOs are not expected to give customers an indication of what benefit they will receive, customers sometimes asked for this information, and a strong message from FCOs was that they did not have sufficient knowledge to give an indication of how much they might receive and, as such, were reluctant to offer advice in case it was inaccurate.\textsuperscript{xxviii}

Similarly, new findings from the qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that the extent to which customers’ benefit enquiries were dealt with varied depending on a FCOs confidence and experience. FCOs were generally found to be confident in dealing with jobseekers’ and lone parents’ benefits.

FCOs who were not able to answer benefit queries were observed to consult more experienced colleagues or signpost customers to other information sources. However, there was limited evidence of FCOs offering customers, from all groups, additional advice about benefits. FCOs did not tend to see this as part of their role, and so no consistent approach was found.\textsuperscript{xxix}

3.11 Monitoring FCOs and the non-JSA Must Dos

\textit{It appeared that FCOs’ awareness of the Must Dos had become more varied since the previous wave of research, although it should be noted that different offices were visited during the 2003 and 2004 research. It appears that office managers continued to use the Quality Assurance Framework to monitor services delivered at First Contact.}

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003, found that most FCOs were aware of the non-JSA Must Dos document, and appeared to be using the document more actively than previously.\textsuperscript{xxx} However, staff interviewed in 2004 demonstrated a more varied awareness of the Must Dos. Some FCOs associated them with the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) and, as such, perceived it to be more concerned with monitoring rather than as a guide for day-to-day practice, although other offices used them to guide practice on a daily basis. With these findings in mind, it should be noted that fieldwork was conducted in different offices for the 2003 and 2004 research, which may explain why the 2003 research appears to show progress that is not sustained in the 2004 research.

Office Managers continued to use the QAF to monitor the delivery of First Contact services.\textsuperscript{xxxi}
3.12 Customer satisfaction at First Contact

There was a high level of satisfaction with the service received at First Contact amongst all client groups...

A survey conducted with clients in 2003 found that around eight in ten customers reported they were either ‘very satisfied’ or ‘quite satisfied’ with the First Contact service. Of those customers claiming inactive benefits, satisfaction was lower in the people with health conditions and disabilities group (77 per cent) than in the lone parent group (84 per cent) and the carer group (83 per cent).\textsuperscript{xxxii}

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 suggests that FCOs were perceived by customers to be informative, friendly and helpful, especially by those who were unfamiliar with the process of claiming benefit. There were some examples of jobseekers who were less happy with the service, although this was mainly due to the telephone manner of the FCO, or because the computers were down when they telephoned and their call was not returned as promised.\textsuperscript{xxxiii}

...and clients were positive about the telephone service provided by the Contact Centre.

Research conducted in 2004 found that customers remained positive about the telephone service provided by the Contact Centre, with the reasons for their satisfaction being the speed and convenience of booking an appointment over the telephone. The contact with an FCO who dealt with all aspects of the claim, rather than an automated system, was also welcomed. Customers who had experience of both the old and new service were generally positive about the new approach and process, some feeling that First Contact was more convenient because they did not need to visit the jobcentre in person. However, some customers, mainly jobseekers, reported that they preferred the old system where they could deal with everything in one visit, i.e. look for work, sign on, and have their claim dealt with straight away\textsuperscript{xxxiv}. A 2004 report by the Citizen’s Advice Bureau on the effectiveness of Contact Centres also claimed that they are receiving increasing numbers of reports that phone contact with Jobcentre Plus offices may not work well for all claimants. The report suggest that ‘emphasis on telephone contact with Jobcentre Plus offices causes particular problems for people whose first language is not English, or who have poor basic skills or mental health conditions.’\textsuperscript{xxxv}

3.13 References

i Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey: Wave Two (due to be published summer 2005).

ii Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey: Wave Two (due to be published summer 2005).

iii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Wave Four (due to be published Spring 2005).
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Hanging on the telephone: CAB evidence on the effectiveness of contact centres (September 2004).
4 Financial Assessor meeting

- This chapter focuses on the Financial Assessor (FA) stage of the Jobcentre Plus process, outlining evidence from research based on the views and experiences of staff and customers.

- Prior to taking part in a Work Focused Interview (WFI), a customer first attends an FA meeting (although where a WFI is deferred or waived, it is unlikely to occur). This will usually take place with an FA, but more complex cases may be conducted by a Financial Assessor Manager (FAM). The FA/FAM ensures the claim form or customer statement is complete, checks supporting evidence, identifies any need for additional information, and answers any questions about the claim, customer statement or benefit. If the claim form or customer statement and the supporting evidence is satisfactory, they will be sent for processing, once they receive confirmation that the WFI has been completed. A key purpose of the meeting is to enable the customer to discuss any issues related to the claim, and resolve queries before their WFI.

4.1 Must Dos

- The requirements of the FA are to:
  - explain that the benefit claim is dependent on satisfactory completion of a WFI;
  - thoroughly check the benefit claim for content and completeness, raising and resolving queries with customers while the customer is present;
  - answer customer’s queries about benefits so that these will not be carried forward to the WFI;
  - gather all evidence and verification to reduce opportunities for fraud and error;
  - advise the customer of the status of their claim before they leave the office and tell them of any further evidence needed before the claim can be processed;
  - explain to JSA customers that they must be available for, and actively seeking, employment;
  - alert the PA if it appears that a WFI might not be appropriate.
The FA plays a key role in minimising fraud and error. Please note that evidence relating to this is detailed separately in Chapter 11.

4.2 Summary

- FAs reported that they provided an explanation of the purpose of their meeting with customers, however, some customers did not recall such an explanation.

- Three-quarters of jobseekers were told by their FA that they would not receive benefit unless they attended the WFI, compared to around half of the other client groups.

- Customers were informed by the FAs that they would be meeting with a PA after the FA meeting, although the explanation of the purpose of this meeting was tailored according to client group.

- FAs continued to be confident about checking customers’ claim forms or customer statements.

- Research in 2003 suggested there had been progress in the provision of information and advice. Research conducted in 2004 suggests that this varied between client groups. However, some FAs continued to express their view that there were some gaps in the training and information provided on certain benefits, particularly for those of a more complicated nature.

- Observations of FA meetings and interviews with customers found that FAs gave a varied range of information at the meeting across the different client groups.

- It appears that although progress had been made in developing the skills of some FAs to be able to process benefit claims, the most recent research shows that, in practice, this multifunctional role may impact on the level of service they were able to provide.

- FAMs and FAs consistently prepared for meetings with customers using Vantive, LMS and claim forms. However, some FAs felt unprepared due to a lack of preparation time, or because they felt that FCOs had provided insufficient information on a customer’s needs.

- Some progress has been made in reducing the high failure to attend rate at FA meetings.

- Within the public office, there appeared to be various appointment systems in use for the FA meetings.

- FAs had mixed views on the way appointments were booked at the Contact Centre, and at the public office. However, some difficulties were reported with the appointment booking system in some Vantive areas.

- FAs were generally aware of the content of the Must Dos, and it appeared that there was more formal monitoring of FAs.
• There was a high level of satisfaction with the service received from the FA amongst all client groups, although some non-JSA customers were less satisfied with the service provided by the FA.

4.3 Explain the purpose of the FA meeting

_FAs reported that they provided an explanation of the purpose of their meeting with customers, however, some customers did not recall such an explanation._

Qualitative research conducted with staff and customers in 2004 found that FAs typically explained the purpose of the FA meeting at the outset, explaining that the meeting was as an opportunity for the FA to check through the customer’s claim forms. In some cases, FAs described their role as providing information and advice on benefits. However, whilst all FAs claimed to provide an explanation of the meeting’s purpose, this did not always happen in practice, as some customers did not recall receiving an explanation of the meeting by either the FCO or FA, and as such were surprised that they had to see two different people at the public office. This supports findings from the earlier research conducted in 2003 which produced similar evidence. There also appeared to be considerable variation in explanations that were given, which resulted in a variety of customers’ understanding of the purpose.

4.4 Explain that the benefit claim is dependent on satisfactory completion of a WFI

_Three-quarters of jobseekers were told by their FA that they would not receive benefit unless they attended the WFI, compared to around half of the other client groups._

A survey with clients conducted in 2004 found that jobseekers (69 per cent) were more likely to be informed by the FA that they had to attend another meeting with a PA in order for them to receive any benefits, compared to lone parents (57 per cent), people with health conditions and disabilities (53 per cent) and carers (47 per cent). Qualitative research conducted with staff and customers in 2004 found that FAs viewed part of their role as being responsible for making sure that customers were aware that attending a WFI was a condition of their claim for benefit. In exceptional cases, FAs viewed this as the responsibility of the FCO, or did not raise the mandatory nature of the WFI with non-JSA customers in order to avoid a potential reaction.
However, observations of FA meetings revealed that the mandatory nature of the WFI was not usually explained by FAs.

4.5 Explain the purpose of a WFI

Customers were informed by the FAs that they would be meeting with a PA after the FA meeting, although the explanation of the purpose of this meeting was tailored according to client group.

Qualitative research conducted in 2004 found that FAs typically explained the distinction that the FA meeting focused on the customer’s benefit claim, while the PA meeting focused on work. There also appears to have been progress in that explanations of the WFI given to JSA customers were typically job-related and focused directly on work.

However, this research also supports that which was undertaken in 2003 in that it continues to suggest that the explanation of the WFI was more varied and less direct for non-JSA customers. For lone parents, the explanation varied between that of a clear work focus and one which focused on who the customer would be seeing rather than the explicit purpose of the WFI. FAs gave a softer explanation of the WFI to people with health conditions and disabilities, and carers due to their perceptions that the process could be upsetting for some of them.

4.6 Check the claim for content and completeness, and answer customers’ queries about benefits so that these are resolved before the WFI

FAs continued to be confident about checking customers’ claim forms or customer statements.

The 2004 survey (Wave 2) also found that people with health conditions and disabilities in Pathfinder offices were less likely to have completed their claim form before the meeting with an FA (78 per cent) than those in the 2003 survey (Wave 1) Pathfinder offices at 84 per cent.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 had found that FAs in Pathfinder offices felt confident in checking claim forms or customer statements across all customer groups. Research conducted in 2004 found that FAs and FAMs were confident that they checked customers’ claims in line with the requirements of the Must Dos, and observations of FA meetings confirmed that this was the case.

Particular examples of areas that individual FAs noted checking with particular care included capital questions, as customers did not always disclose all the necessary

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12 Throughout the report from the client survey conducted in 2004, where comparisons have been made between Wave 1 and Wave 2, these refer only to Pathfinder offices in non-IB pilot areas.
information relating to their income or assets; co-habitation; and unanswered questions, where FAs asked for further information if they had reason to doubt information already provided by the customer.vii

FAs consistently asked for two forms of identification to verify customers’ identity; typically passport, driving licences or birth certificates. Other documentation was also used such as rent books, utility bills or Home Office papers in the case of asylum seekers.

(Please see Chapter 11 for further research findings on checking the claim).

Research in 2003 suggested there had been progress in the provision of information and advice. Research conducted in 2004 suggests that this varied between client groups…

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003, suggested that across all offices progress had been made in that FAs were providing customers with more information and advice about entitlements to benefits and financial help.viii Research carried out in 2004 found that information provided to customers about additional benefits varied between customer groups; JSA customers, lone parents and carers were given relatively little information, however FAs were observed giving customers claiming IB information about possible entitlements to additional benefits. In terms of wider information and advice, lone parents usually received information on child tax credits.ix

…and some FAs continued to express the view that there were some gaps in the training and information provided on certain benefits, particularly for those of a more complicated nature.

However, some FAs, especially those without a benefit background, felt that there were some gaps in the training and information provided on certain benefits, particularly those felt to be more complicated such as IB and Carers Allowance (CA). FAs felt that this restricted their ability to give customers more in-depth information and advice across the full range of benefits if required. The issue of not wanting to misinform customers still remained.x

4.7 Informing clients of the status of their claim before the FA meeting is finished

Observations of FA meetings and interviews with customers found that FAs gave a varied range of information at the meeting across the different clients groups.

A survey conducted with clients in 2004, found that the majority of customers across all client groups were informed by the FA what would happen with their claim before the meeting finished. The proportion was highest amongst lone parents (86 per cent) and jobseekers (85 per cent), and people with health conditions and
disabilities (80 per cent). For carers, the figure was 83 per cent, however, this is not significantly different from any of the other groups. The survey also found that lone parents in Pathfinder offices were more likely to be told what would happen with their claim before the end of the FA meeting than those who had been to a Day 3 office.\textsuperscript{13 xi}

The 2004 survey (Wave 2) also found that people with health conditions and disabilities in Pathfinder offices were less likely to have been told what would happen with their claim before the end of the FA meeting (79 per cent) than those in the 2003 survey (Wave 1) Pathfinder offices at 86 per cent.\textsuperscript{14 xi}

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, had found that the extent to which FAs gave customers an indication of the amount of benefit they could expect to receive remained varied across, and within offices, and depended on the experience and ability of the FA. There was still reluctance among some FAs to give detailed information due to concerns about giving misleading information or simply because of a lack of time. The customer research indicated that, generally, further progress amongst FAs was necessary in terms of providing information on the status of a claim and the amount of benefit a customer could receive.\textsuperscript{xiii}

\subsection{4.7.1 Jobseekers}

Observations showed that eligibility to claim JSA was discussed with jobseekers in some circumstances, however, FAs rarely gave customers definite confirmation of their eligibility for JSA benefits. This was due to the fact that the final decision lay with the processing staff. Where processing took place on site, FAs were able to give JSA customers a more accurate estimate of when they would receive their first payment, as they were more aware of potential delays that could occur. JSA customers typically reported that they were informed about the amount of benefit they could expect to receive, although observations of FA meetings indicated that this information was not consistently given.\textsuperscript{xiv}

\subsection{4.7.2 Lone parents}

Lone parents’ eligibility to claim IS was rarely discussed explicitly by FAs, unless customers themselves raised concerns about their eligibility due to circumstances such as pregnancy. Similarly to the situation with jobseekers, FAs could not give customers a definite response as they were not responsible for processing the claims themselves. Estimates were given about the length of time a lone parent could expect to wait until receiving their first benefit payment, unless the FA was aware of local

\textsuperscript{13} Pathfinder offices refers to Jobcentre Plus offices rolled out between October 2001 and April 2002 and Day 3 offices were planned to rollout between June 2003 to October 2004.

\textsuperscript{14} Throughout the report from the client survey conducted in 2004, where comparisons have been made between Wave 1 and Wave 2, these refer only to Pathfinder offices in non-IB pilot areas.
delays in processing. However, observations of FA meetings provided no examples of FAs informing lone parents of the timescale in which payment could be expected.\textsuperscript{xv}

4.7.3 People with health conditions and disabilities

Discussions around eligibility were evident in observations of FA meetings with people with health conditions and disabilities, with the focus principally on potential eligibility. However, other than one isolated example, customers typically reported that their eligibility to receive benefit was not confirmed by the FA, and as a result, these customers had to wait until their first payment was actually made until this was confirmed.\textsuperscript{xvi}

4.7.4 Carers

FAs felt that the key factor that influences their ability to provide carers with information about the status if their claim in terms of both eligibility and timing of the first payment, was the fact that a dedicated processing department existed outside the public offices and districts, of which FAs had little contact. FAs were also less confident about eligibility for Carer’s Allowance as they had little experience of processing the claims themselves. As such, carers were unsure whether they would receive any benefit following the FA meeting. Observations and customer interviews also showed FAs did not usually provide carers with information on the level of benefit they could expect to receive or the timescales for subsequent payment.\textsuperscript{xvii}

(Please see Chapter 11 for details on FAs use of Gateway Interventions).

4.8 Benefit claim processing by FAs

\textit{It appears that although progress had been made in developing the skills of some FAs to be able to process benefit claims, the most recent research shows that in practice, this multifunctional role may impact on the level of service they were able to provide.}

Research conducted with staff and customers in 2003 found that although benefit claims were processed by separate processing teams rather than FAs, in some offices progress had been made where a few FAs had received training to be able to process claims, thus moving closer to the Jobcentre Plus vision of parallel processing. In one office it meant that urgent JSA claims could be processed, thus, avoiding potential financial difficulties for customers who would have otherwise had to wait. Staff felt that this method of on-site processing (either by FAs or benefit processing teams) would improve service delivery to customers.\textsuperscript{xviii}

However, research conducted in different offices in 2004 identified some problems with the introduction of parallel processing, in that the introduction of this system led to resource issues for both aspects of the FA role. While staff were undertaking training in benefit processing, there were less staff left to deliver the FA meeting. Evidence also found that FAs were unable to process a claim in the time taken to
conduct the customer’s WFI, and staff who undertook the processing were often
distracted by having to deal with queries from customers over the telephone or in
person at the office. The processing could also be delayed if further evidence was
needed from the customer. Another unforeseen effect of the resource needs for
parallel processing was an increase in the office’s FTA rate, due to FAs in offices
where parallel processing was undertaken having less time to make reminder calls to
customers the day before their appointments.\textsuperscript{xxix}

\textbf{FAMs and FAs consistently prepared for meetings with customers using
Vantive, LMS and claim forms. However, some FAs felt unprepared due to a
lack of preparation time, or because they felt that FCOs had provided
insufficient information on a customer’s needs.}

FAs and FAMs consistently used the LMS, Vantive and claims forms to prepare for
their meeting with a customer, which was done either immediately before each FA
meeting or at the beginning of each day. FAs routinely gathered information on a
customer’s National Insurance Number (NINO), date of birth, and contact details
from the Departmental Central Index (DCI) before an appointment. If time permitted,
some also looked at customers’ claim history. In one office, FAs found that time
pressures meant that they did not always check the DCI and that this could lead to
them missing fraudulent claims or overpayments.

Some FAs also used other information from the following sources: the First Contact
Officer (FCO); the ‘conversations’ box; or, in one area, preview telephone calls made
the day before a customer’s appointment. This additional information provided a
more complete picture of the customer, their needs, and their claim history.

FAs felt that they sometimes felt unprepared for interviews with customers. This was
either due to a lack of available preparation time because of work pressures, or
because FCOs provided insufficient information on customers’ particular needs,
such as customers with hearing difficulties or those that might need an interpreter.
As such, these needs were not then catered for at the FA meeting.\textsuperscript{xx}

\section*{4.9 Appointment booking}

\textit{Some progress has been made in reducing the high failure to attend rate at
FA meetings.}

Qualitative research with staff and customers undertaken in 2004, found that some
Jobcentre Plus offices continued to use a pre-appointment checking system
whereby FAs telephoned customers the day before their appointment to check
whether customers were still able to attend, had received and completed their claim
form or customer statement, and to remind them to bring any supporting
identification and evidence with them to the meeting. Staff believed that this
measure had helped to reduce the problem of a high ‘fail to attend’ (FTA) rate.\textsuperscript{xxi}

This is supported by other evidence; meetings booked on a Monday tend to have a
higher FTA rate than meetings booked for the rest of the week as shown in the
following table. This may be because it is not possible to remind the customer the day before.

**Table 4.1 FTA rates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekday</th>
<th>Mon</th>
<th>Tue</th>
<th>Wed</th>
<th>Thu</th>
<th>Fri</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the figure for Tuesday is partly inflated by weeks where there is a Bank Holiday Monday and Tuesday is the first working day of the week. For weeks where this is not the case, the FTA rate for Tuesday meetings is 19.8 per cent.¹⁵

**Within the public office there appeared to be various appointment systems in use for the FA meetings.**

Research conducted with staff and customers in 2003 found that FAs in Pathfinders and also in the IB Pilot offices felt that the 20 minutes allocated for meetings was not sufficient for non-JSA customers. This was because these claim forms were longer and required more information.¹xxii Research carried out in 2004 found that generally, FAs were able to conduct meetings in the allocated time slot, reporting that 20 minutes was sufficient. However, there appeared to be various appointment systems in use. One Day 2 office allowed 30 minutes for IB customers, and others found that a system of ‘allocation on arrival’ was in use, where FAs were allocated to customers according to their knowledge/expertise or availability which was felt allowed greater flexibility to ensure that customer waiting times were kept to a minimum. It also helped FAs deal with cold callers to the Jobcentre Plus office more quickly.

There was also a mixed use of specialist/generalist FAs. Staff regarded the main advantage of specialising to be the added value in the service received by the customers. However, when a specialist FA was not available a different FA would deal with the customer to avoid a delay to the claim. This sometimes meant that customers, for instance carers, left their meeting with questions unanswered.¹xiii

Research conducted with staff and customers in 2003 found that some Pathfinders had reported difficulties with managing workloads due to recent cuts in staff numbers. The overall impact was that FAs felt under pressure and meetings were often rushed.¹xiv Research conducted in 2004 found that FAs attitudes to their workload was more mixed; some felt that they were stretched, whilst others did not feel there were any issues with their workload. Some FAs spent their downtime catching up on paperwork, preparing for the next day’s meetings, registering claims, and processing claims, whilst other FAs reported that there was no downtime.¹xv

¹⁵ ‘Failure to Attend PA Meetings in Jobcentre Plus Integrated Offices’ by IAD OR 9.
Some FAs and FAMs had mixed views on FA appointments made centrally by the Contact Centre, as although it appeared to work well, FAMs still had to manage diaries locally. In one office, where the Contact Centre had used two different systems to book appointments (Vantive and LMS), the FAM then had to spend time to match these systems and finalise FAs’ diary appointments, and this could only be done after the Contact Centre closed at 6pm.xxvi

Some difficulties were reported with the appointment booking system in some Vantive areas.

In some Vantive areas, difficulties were reported with the appointment booking system and the First Contact process, which could hinder the delivery of services in the Pathfinder public offices. These difficulties included:

- double-booked appointments;
- customers attending their appointment with no claim forms or the wrong claim forms which impacted on the ability of the FA to conduct the meeting;
- customers being unaware that they would see an FA because the confirmation letter only mentioned the PA, causing confusion for some customers on arrival;
- interpreters not being booked for speakers of other languages – in one office with a high proportion of refugees and asylum seekers, it was reported that FCOs at the Contact Centre did not always add any information to the booking system as to whether a language line interpreter was required. This could mean that the FA had to re-book the customer’s appointment unless they were able to book a language line interpreter for later that day, or unless the customer had someone they could call upon at short notice to interpret for them; and
- the booking of FA appointments (through Vantive) according to the availability of PA appointments, regardless of how many FAs were actually available, was reported to cause problems in some offices. The use of additional fictitious or ‘dummy’ FA diaries, and the leaving open of diaries for FAs who were away on holiday or off sick, left FAs having to juggle several appointments booked for the same time.xxvii

4.10 Monitoring FAs and the non-JSA Must Dos

FAs were generally aware of the content of the Must Dos, and it appeared that there was more formal monitoring of FAs.

Research conducted with staff and customers in 2003 and 2004 found that FAs and/or FA Managers in Pathfinder offices were generally aware of the non-JSA Must Do’s, although the contents of the list were not known in detail.xxviii However, research in 2004 suggests that there were mixed messages regarding the extent to which they Must Dos were used and how well they were understood. Some FAs believed that
they naturally covered the Must Dos during FA meetings, whereas other FAs demonstrated less use and knowledge of the Must Dos.

FAs awareness of the Must Dos was raised through observations and e-mails received when the Must Dos were first introduced, or through regular guidance or updates provided on the intranet. However, there is some evidence to suggest that the amount of guidance had a negative impact on the FA workload due to the sheer amount of it.

Research conducted with staff and customers in 2003 found that it was rare for offices to formally monitor their FAs in their conduct of meetings, those that did used Quality Assurance Frameworks (QAF). However, research in 2004 suggests that FAMs generally monitored the content of FA meeting on a monthly basis using the QAF framework. The frequency with which monitoring occurred varied due to time constraints experienced by FAMs. They usually observed but also sat in on the FA meeting to look at a FA’s interview style and the quality of information gathered. FAMs consistently reported providing feedback to the FA and used this to identify strengths, recommended changes to delivery, and/or to identify training needs.

4.11 Customer satisfaction with FA

There was a high level of satisfaction with the service received from the FA amongst all client groups…

Combined figures of clients who were ‘very satisfied’ and ‘quite satisfied’ with the service received from the FA found that there were no differences across the client groups, with around nine in ten customers reporting they were satisfied.

Non-JSA customers across all groups were positive about their meeting with a FA, feeling confident that their claim forms had been completed correctly and comforted that they were being checked. They appreciated any additional advice or information that the FA could provide, particularly when they were alerted to other benefits that they could be eligible for. In these cases, FAs were perceived to be helpful, professional, efficient and in some instances, knowledgeable. They felt that the way the FA treated them was important, and appreciated it when FAs dealt with their circumstances and a sensitive yet practical manner. These individuals found the FAs to be kind and approachable and had no misgivings about using the service again.

Some of the larger public offices were using security guards to greet customers, and in a couple of instances customers reported feeling intimidated by this. However, generally, staff were considered to be ‘pleasant and friendly’ or ‘polite and helpful’.

…although some non-JSA customers were less satisfied with the service provided by the FA.

Other non-JSA customers were more negative, disappointed that the FA was unable to answer their queries or provide further information on benefits. Some felt that the FA had misunderstood their situation and asked inappropriate questions. They felt
disengaged from the meeting and felt that their presence at the meeting had been irrelevant. xxxiv

4.12 References

i Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Wave Four (due to be published spring 2005).

ii Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey: Wave Two (due to be published summer 2005).

iii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Wave Four (due to be published Spring 2005).

iv Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Wave Four (due to be published spring 2005).

v Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey: Wave Two (due to be published summer 2005).

vi Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).

vii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Wave Four (due to be published spring 2005).

viii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).

ix Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Wave Four (due to be published spring 2005).

x Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Wave Four (due to be published spring 2005).

xi Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey: Wave Two (due to be published summer 2005).

xii Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey: Wave Two (due to be published summer 2005).

xiii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Wave Four (due to be published spring 2005).

xiv Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Wave Four (due to be published spring 2005).

xv Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Wave Four (due to be published spring 2005).

xvi Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Wave Four (due to be published spring 2005).

xvii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Wave Four (due to be published spring 2005).

xviii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).
5 Initial Work Focused Interview (Part 1)

- After taking part in a meeting with a Financial Assessor (FA), a customer participates in a WFI with a Personal Adviser (PA).

- In April 2004, mandatory Work Focused Interviews (WFIs) for the partners of unemployed people were introduced. This meant that from this date, anyone being claimed for as a dependent partner has been required to attend an interview with an adviser to discuss the possible options for entering employment, or moving closer to the labour market.

- This chapter focuses on the administrative side of the WFI stage of the Jobcentre Plus process. Using administrative data, the chapter looks at the booking of WFIs and subsequent attendance rate across all client groups, including Failure To Attend (FTA) rates. Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 and 2004, interim findings from the research on WFI with partners (WFIPs), and findings from a survey conducted with clients in 2003 and 2004 are used to demonstrate the use of deferrals, length of the WFI and explanations of the mandatory nature and purpose of the WFI.

- This chapter covers the administration and purpose of the WFI. Please see the second chapter on WFIs for the details of the requirements of the PA (as described in the Must Dos) and evidence on the content of the WFIs.

5.1 Summary

- The proportion of clients being scheduled to attend a WFI within four days of First Contact has been falling, and now only applies to 48 per cent of clients, with lone parents the most likely client group to meet this target.

- Some difficulties were reported with the appointment booking system in some Vantive areas.
Interim findings from the research on WFIPs suggest that early teething problems had been encountered at the start of the initiative, although these were mainly dealt with by the end of the year.

The time taken to see clients in Vantive districts is shorter than CMS districts.

WFI attendance rates have been relatively constant over time for all client types. Those client types with high waiver/deferral rates are likely to have lower attendance rates.

PAs generally had a good understanding of waivers and deferrals, and in such cases where customers were felt to have been inappropriately submitted to a WFI by an FCO, PAs were shown to have autonomy to make decisions to re-defer customers. However, there is evidence that some customers are not being re-contacted.

Only 27 per cent of those deferred between April and June 2004 attend a WFI within the following six months.

FTA rates are generally higher for deferred WFIs than booked WFIs, although rates for those deferred have been falling. It appears that FTA rates increase as the length of time from First Contact to WFI increases.

PAs maintain that 40 minutes is sufficient time in which to conduct a WFI.

The majority of all clients reported that they were told that the WFI was about work.

JSA customers’ understanding of the mandatory nature of the WFI tended to depend on their experiences of claiming benefit in the past, rather than the PAs explanation. However, JSA customers were generally informed of their obligations to look for work.

For lone parents, the explanation of the mandatory nature of the WFI tended to be more mixed, but there appeared to be progress with a more explicit focus on work as part of the explanation on the WFI’s purpose.

It appeared that the mandatory nature of the WFI was less clear for people with health conditions and disabilities, and explanations of the purpose of the WFI were mixed, while for carers, there was little evidence that the mandatory nature of the WFI was being explained, and little evidence of a work focus.

5.2 Booking of initial WFI

The proportion of clients being scheduled to attend a WFI within four days of First Contact has been falling, and now only applies to 48 per cent of clients...

The proportion of clients attending/being scheduled to attend a WFI within four days of First Contact has been falling since the peak achieved in October 2002. A sharp drop occurred in April 2003, which corresponds with the time when a large
number of Day 2 offices rolled out. Latest evidence suggests that only 48 per cent of clients are booked to attend their WFI within four days of First contact.

As expected, districts using CMS are able to book fewer customers for WFIs within the four day target, due to the additional call-back stage occurring within the time period. The introduction of CMS has therefore led to a reduction in the overall national percentage.

**Figure 5.1 Proportion attending/booked to attend WFI within four days**

![Graph showing proportion attending/booked to attend WFI within four days]

...*with lone parents being the client group most likely to meet the target*

Lone parents are more likely to be scheduled to attend a WFI within four days of First Contact. The evidence from the most recent quarter available suggests that 59 per cent of lone parents achieve the four day target compared to 47 per cent for JSA claimants and 49 per cent for people with health conditions and disabilities. Overall, 51 per cent of clients have to wait longer than the four day target for a WFI.

**Table 5.1 Four day target for a WFI**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JSA</th>
<th>HC&amp;D</th>
<th>LP</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct - Dec 04</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
<td>59.0%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul - Sep 04</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
<td>40.1%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct - Dec 03</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
<td>61.2%</td>
<td>64.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some difficulties were reported with the appointment booking system in some Vantive areas.

PAs and PA Managers in Vantive areas reported a few problems with appointment booking process. The main problem was that FCOs did not always transfer the appointment booked on the Vantive system onto the PA diary system (LMS). As a result, PAs needed to check across both computer systems to find out what appointments they had. This also meant that PAs had to spend time setting up LMS records for new customers or updating LMS records for existing customers, which in some cases happened during the WFI and impacted on the amount of time that PAs had for actually conducting the WFI with the customer.\(^1\)

Interim findings from the research on WFIPs suggest that early ‘teething’ problems had been encountered at the start of the initiative, although these were mainly dealt with by the end of the year.

Interim findings from the research on WFIPs, conducted in 2004, suggest that there were a number of problems with the administration of setting up and booking appointments encountered during the early months of WFIPs. However, nearly all were related to one-off ‘teething’ issues at the start of the initiative or had been substantially dealt with by the end of the year.\(^1\)\(^\text{ii}\)

The time taken to see clients in Vantive districts is shorter than CMS districts.

Figure 5.2 illustrates the difference in the time it takes to see clients in Vantive districts compared to CMS districts. This clearly shows the additional time taken within CMS districts; only 80 per cent of customers in CMS districts have their initial WFI appointment within two weeks of making first contact, whereas this proportion is reached after seven working days in Vantive districts. Within two weeks, almost 95 per cent of customers either attended or failed to attend their initial WFI in Vantive districts. However, in CMS districts, the WFI is booked in the call-back stage, which usually takes place the day following first contact.

\(^{16}\) Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
Figure 5.2  Number of days to initial WFI

Figure 5.3 illustrates performance on meeting the four day target since the ‘go live’. Day 2 districts were poorer at meeting the target than Pathfinders in the immediate months after rollout, although they do improve later.

Figure 5.3  Clients that meet the four day target
5.3 Attendance of the meeting with a PA

WFI attendance rates have been relatively constant over time for all client types. Those client types with high waiver/deferral rates are likely to have lower attendance rates.

Interim findings from the research on WFIPs conducted in 2004, suggest that advisers reported that a large proportion of WFIPs were being attended jointly. Advisers had mixed views on joint WFIPs, often perceiving both positive and negative aspects to them compared to interviews with just the partner. It was often found to depend on the ‘type’ of couples in question, and it was widely acknowledged that no one model would suit all couples.\textsuperscript{17 ii}

5.4 Considering if waiver/deferral is appropriate and setting the appropriate work-flow

PAs generally had a good understanding of waivers and deferrals, and in such cases where customers were felt to have been inappropriately submitted to a WFI by an FCO, PAs were shown to have autonomy to make decisions to re-defer customers...

\textsuperscript{17} Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 found that PAs felt that some customers had been inappropriately submitted to a WFI at First Contact when they should have been deferred.iv However, research from 2004 shows there appears to have been progress where PAs believed that FCOs were more aware of the circumstances where deferrals and waivers can occur, and felt that appropriate decisions were generally being made. Examples of customers being booked a WFI where a deferral would have been more appropriate were exceptional. In these cases, PAs dealt with them in much the same way as suggested in earlier research from 2003; they would deliver a shortened WFI.v

Interim findings from the research on WFIPs, conducted in 2004, suggest that waiver and deferral criteria for partners were said to be essentially the same as for the other WFIs and advisers were, therefore, comfortable with making these decisions.18 vi

…and there is evidence that some deferred customers are not being re-contacted.

Part of the FCOs’ role was to set specific deadlines for when they could expect the PA to re-contact the customer to arrange a WFI. Decisions on whether to defer the WFI for a longer period tended to be based on the ability of the customer to attend the meeting, rather than whether it was an appropriate time for them to consider work. Offices re-contacted customers just prior to the end of the period, either by letter or telephone.vii

Staff in one office reported that they did not re-contact deferred customers because of lack of PA time (reporting that they felt this was a low priority due to there being no performance targets attached to this activity), although subsequent changes to LMS are likely to have improved methods of identifying customers at the end of a deferral period, and provided more effective management of the deferrals process.

Only 27 per cent of those deferred between April 2004 and June 2004 attend a WFI within the following six months…

The above below shows the further action recorded for deferred clients. All deferrals are classified into one of the following hierarchical groups:

- WFI attended;
- WFI booked but the customer fails to attend;
- a later decision is made to book a WFI, but no meeting record is held;
- another decision is made (e.g. re-deferred or waived);
- the customer exits Jobcentre Plus;19
- none of the above.

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18 Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
19 This includes exits recorded on LMS and customers identified as leaving benefit from legacy systems.
Table 5.2 Deferred clients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Attended</th>
<th>FTA</th>
<th>Booked</th>
<th>Other decision</th>
<th>Exit</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>After three months</td>
<td>4,800</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr - Jun 04</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>After three months</td>
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<td>4.7%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Jul - Sep 03</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After three months</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>After six months</td>
<td>4,900</td>
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<td>1,200</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24.3%</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
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<td>After six months</td>
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<td>700</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
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<td>6.1%</td>
<td>700</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 shows that only 27 per cent of the customers making contact between April and June 2004 whose initial WFI was deferred, attended a WFI during the next six months with 29 per cent of this group having no subsequent action. 17 per cent of these attended a WFI within the first three months (as the second row shows) with the remaining ten per cent attending three to six months after first contact.

5.5 Failure to attend

FTA rates are generally higher for deferred WFIs than booked WFIs, although rates for those deferred have been falling.

Failure to attend the initial WFI could be seen as an indication of possible fraudulent activity, as well as wasting valuable resources.

Evidence shows that FTA rates are generally higher for WFIs that are deferred than for immediate WFIs. FTA rates for booked WFI have been relatively constant over time at approximately 20 to 25 per cent. FTA rates for deferred WFIs have been falling from a peak of 45 per cent in September 2002 but have fluctuated between 25 to 30 per cent from November 2003 onwards.
The FTA rate increases as the number of days between first contact and interview date increases as the following graph illustrates. The FTA rate is five to ten percentage points higher for meetings towards the end of the second week than those within a couple of days. This may explain why lone parents have the lowest FTA rate, as it was earlier shown that a higher proportion of lone parents attend or are booked to attend their initial WFI within four days of first contact.

Despite a worsening in the ability of Jobcentre Plus to book early meetings, the FTA rate for initial booked interviews has managed to remain fairly stable around 20 per cent, which suggests an improvement in real terms.

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20 Information from IAD OR 9.
Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that FTA at WFs varied between offices. Staff felt that there were no noticeable patterns in the type of customers who failed to attend interviews. Instead, they identified a number of key factors that affected customers’ ability to attend, that included difficulty with childcare, that they or their child was ill on the day of the appointment; and that they had secured employment prior to the WFI. Some offices (both Pathfinder and Day 2) introduced preview phone calls to customers the day before their WFI, and reported some success in helping to minimise FTAs this way.

There was no evidence that JSA customers were followed up if they failed to attend; instead the onus was on with the individual to contact Jobcentre Plus to rearrange a WFI so that their claim could proceed.

For non-JSA customers who failed to attend, letters were sent explaining the mandatory nature of the WFI as a condition of the benefit claim. Customers were asked to contact Jobcentre Plus within five days to rearrange their WFI. From October 2003, non-JSA customers were only able to re-book their WFI once; if an FTA occurred a second time, and staff believed that the customer did not have good cause not to attend, receipt of their benefit could be affected. Staff felt that this led to more customers attending the second appointment.

5.6 Length of Work Focused Interview

_PAs maintain that 40 minutes was sufficient time in which to conduct the WFI._

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that PAs continued to feel that 40 minutes was sufficient time in which to conduct WFs.
5.7 Explaining the mandatory nature and purpose of the WFI

The majority of all client groups reported that they were told that the WFI was about work.

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, jobseekers (83 per cent) were the most likely of the client groups to say that PAs had very well or fairly well explained that the one of the purposes of the meeting was to talk about work. Of the non-JSA client groups, lone parents (77 per cent) were the most likely to be informed of the same, compared to people with health conditions and disabilities (72 per cent) and carers (63 per cent). Amongst jobseekers, those from a Pathfinder office (91 per cent) were more likely to say that the reason of the meeting had been explained very or fairly well than those from a Day 2 office (80 per cent).²¹

JSA customers’ understanding of the mandatory nature of the WFI tended to depend on their experience of claiming benefit in the past, rather than the PAs’ explanation. However, JSA customers were generally informed of their obligations to look for work...

In the qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, the mandatory nature of the WFI was not observed to be routinely explained by PAs to JSA customers. Customers with previous experience of claiming tended to be aware of the mandatory nature, but others with little or no previous experience of claiming, recalled that this condition of receipt of benefit was explained to them either at First Contact or in the letter received following their initial call, rather than by their PA.

As is consistent with research carried out in 2003, JSA customers continued to receive explanations from PAs that the purpose of the WFI was to discuss the conditions and obligations of claiming JSA and thus the explanations were related to work.¹¹

...for lone parents the explanation of the mandatory nature of the WFI tended to be more mixed, but there appeared to be progress with a more explicit focus on work as part of the explanation of the WFI's purpose...

The qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 observed that lone parents were not routinely given explanations of the mandatory requirement to attend the WFI as a condition of receipt of benefit, although there were examples of some clear and explicit explanations being given.

However, there appeared to be some progress since the research in 2003, where WFI with lone parents now typically began with an explicit focus on work, although

²¹ Pathfinder offices refers to Jobcentre Plus offices rolled out between October 2001 and March 2002 and Day 2 offices refers to those rolled October 2002 and March 2003.
in some cases, these explanations were not specific about the aspects of work to be discussed during the WFI. For other customers, a work focus was still evident but PAs adopted a softer approach by emphasising that the WFI would explore customers’ options in terms of work and the help that can be accessed through Jobcentre Plus.\textsuperscript{xi}

\textit{...it appeared that the mandatory nature of the WFI was less clear for people with health conditions and disabilities, and explanations of the purpose of the WFI were mixed...}

Some PAs informed people with health conditions and disabilities that the WFI was a compulsory part of the Jobcentre Plus process, and others explained that it was a mandatory requirement for the receipt of benefit. However, customers’ recollections of these explanations were mixed; whilst some understood these conditions, observations of WFIs found no examples of the explanations being given by the PAs in practice.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that PAs consistently provided an explanation of the purpose of the WFI to people with health conditions and disabilities, although the extent to which this involved a work focus varied. Some PAs were concerned about the potential reaction of customers if they focused too heavily on work, and, as such, concentrated more on the information and options available to help customers return to work when the time was right. This evidence is consistent with that conducted in 2003.\textsuperscript{xiii}

However, contrary findings from the latest IB Reforms research suggest that there was a strong perception amongst IBPAs that the key purpose of the programme was to move customers into work. As a result, they could feel that focusing on motivation and routes towards work was of necessity a key early priority.\textsuperscript{22 xiv}

\textit{...while for carers there was little evidence to suggest that the mandatory nature of the WFI was being explained, and little evidence of a work focus.}

Observations found no evidence that PAs explained the mandatory nature of the WFIs to carers. Customers rarely recalled their PA providing such an explanation and tended to assume that they were required to attend a WFI in order to be eligible for CA.

Observations also found that PAs did not consistently provide carers with an explanation of the purpose of the WFI; where explanations were provided, PAs did not emphasis work due to their concern about the customers’ potential reaction if they felt that work was pushed too hard at a time when it was inappropriate. Instead, PAs tended to offer softer explanations by either emphasising the help and support available from Jobcentre Plus. This evidence is consistent with that from research undertaken in 2003.\textsuperscript{xv}

\textsuperscript{22} Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
5.8 References

i Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).

ii Work Focused Interviews with Partners Interim Report, February 2005 (final report due to be published summer/autumn 2005).

iii Work Focused Interviews with Partners Interim Report, February 2005 (final report due to be published summer/autumn 2005).

iv Deferrals and Waivers in Jobcentre Plus: Research into Staff Understanding and Application of Deferrals Guidance (October 2003).

v Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

vi Work Focused Interviews with Partners Interim Report, February 2005 (final report due to be published summer/autumn 2005).

vii Deferrals and Waivers in Jobcentre Plus: Research into Staff Understanding and Application of Deferrals Guidance (October 2003).

viii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

ix Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

x Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey: Wave Two (due to be published summer 2005).

xi Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

xii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

xiii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).


xv Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).
6 Initial Work Focused Interview (Part 2)

- This chapter focuses on the content of the WFI, where the intention is that the PA explains the services available to the client in Jobcentre Plus, identifies barriers to employment and discusses ways of potentially overcoming them.

- Findings are presented by client type where possible, drawing from administrative data, qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 and 2004, interim findings from the research on WFIPs, and findings from a survey conducted with clients in 2003 and 2004. Findings are also drawn, and comparisons made where possible, from research from the IB Pathways to Work Evaluation, National Lone Parent PA Meetings, and interim findings from the WFIPs.

- Since the roll out of WFI to the non-JSA client groups, there appears to have been progress in some areas relating to the content of the WFI such as:
  - the promotion, by PAs, of financial support for customers who were claiming benefits due to health conditions;
  - where PAs reported feeling more comfortable in dealing with non-JSA customers having gained more knowledge and experience of dealing with these clients;
  - where PAs were more confident about providing further help and information to non-JSA customers, and the proactive steps being made by PAs to obtain more knowledge about specialist services;
  - the two Pathfinder offices who were actively gathering information from local organisations that could provide assistance to people with health conditions and disabilities who had longer-term or more severe physical or mental health conditions.

- This chapter details findings by client type where possible, from the procedure of the WFI in order of:
  - depth of work focused discussion;
  - the use of voluntary Customer Action Plans (CAPs) for non-JSA customers;
– content of discussion: job submissions and job entries;
– discussing ways of finding work and job vacancies;
– discussing work experience and skills;
– discussing barriers to work;
– discussing tax credits and other advantages of being in work for the customer and their family;
– advice in training, specialist services and referrals;
– discussion of schemes for customers with health conditions;
– discussion about customers’ benefit claim;
– PA perceptions;
– the impact of Jobcentre Plus on customers;
– targets;
– specialist versus generalist PAs.

6.1 Must Dos

The requirements of the PA are to:

• explain the purpose of the WFI and the requirement to participate;
• consider if a waiver/deferral is appropriate and take the necessary action;
• discuss any current job search activity;
• undertake a job search for those ready for work and make a submission if there is a suitable vacancy;
• focus on an IB customers’ residual capacity not their incapacity; what they can do, not what they cannot and be prepared to challenge assumptions;
• actively promote in-work benefits and tax credits and other advantages of being in work for the customer and their family;
• agree a Jobseeker’s Agreement (JSAg) (for JSA customers) or encourage the customer to develop a CAP (for non-JSA customers) setting out what they will do to prepare themselves for work and what we will do to help them;
• offer continuing contact with the customer and encourage further interviews before the mandatory repeat WFI to discuss their options;
• tell the customer about mandatory trigger meetings and set an appropriate work flow or reminder on LMS;
• advise the FA whether the customer has participated in the WFI so that benefit is not delayed.
6.2 Summary

- The vast majority of clients (between 77 per cent and 97 per cent of each group) did discuss work at their WFI, although the depth of this discussion varied.

- Forty-six per cent, ten per cent and six per cent of jobseekers, lone parents and people with health conditions and disabilities were submitted to vacancies at their initial WFI, resulting in job entries for around eight per cent of jobseekers and two to three per cent of lone parents and people with health conditions and disabilities. The numbers of partners entering employment following a WFIP were reported to be very small.

- Nearly all JSA customers recalled completing a JSAg, but only between seven per cent and 16 per cent of non-JSA customers recalled completing a CAP, and there remains little explicit action planning with non-JSA customers. However, the latest research from the IB Pathways to Work Evaluation suggests that some customers were more involved in the drawing up of an action plan and some used the plan to review and measure their progress at subsequent meetings.

- Around two-fifths of jobseekers and two-thirds of non-JSA customers discussed barriers to work with their PA, however, there continued to be little evidence that customers’ self-assessed barriers to finding work were being challenged by PAs, and PAs remained uncomfortable in dealing with clients with more severe mental or health conditions. IBPAs, however, placed less emphasis on the seriousness of the customer’s condition, feeling that helping the customer to overcome some of their key barriers to work was as important as moving them immediately into work.

- It appears that few customers discussed any of the schemes for people with health conditions with their PA.

- Generally, PAs continued to feel more comfortable discussing work with most non-JSA customers, although overall, discussions about work for these clients tended to remain fairly low-key as in Jobcentre Plus, PAs saw the WFI as having a broader, more long-term objective for non-JSA clients, and their main aim was to establish a rapport that would encourage the customer to return in the future. In the IB Pilots, IBPAs viewed discussion about work as a critical part of the initial WFI.

- There is evidence, however, that staff are feeling more knowledgeable and, therefore, confident about the range of organisations and services to which customers could be referred.

- Advisers felt that they needed more training on dealing with partners, who they perceived to be a ‘difficult’ client group with complex problems, which in turn provided a poor return in job outcomes against which the advisers were judged.
Despite exceptional negative reactions, the majority of partners (and claimants) were untroubled by their invitation to the WFIP. Once experienced, the reactions to the WFIP were mixed, and the timing was felt to be largely appropriate. Attitudes towards advisers appeared to be mixed, with most finding their PAs to be personable, friendly and helpful, and many said that they would be happy to revisit their PA or the office again in the future.

6.3 Depth of work-focused discussion

The vast majority of clients (between 77 per cent and 97 per cent of each client group) did discuss work at their WFI.

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, based on a variety of indicators, not surprisingly, it was JSA clients who were more likely to have had a meeting with a PA which was work focused (97 per cent). Of the non-JSA client groups, lone parents (90 per cent) were the most likely to have had a ‘work focused’ interview, compared to people with health conditions and disabilities (86 per cent) and carers (77 per cent).

The survey also found that lone parents who attended a WFI in a Day 3 office (100 per cent) were more likely to have had a ‘work-focused’ interview than those who attended at a Day 2 office (89 per cent). The 2004 survey (Wave 2) also found that lone parents in Pathfinder offices were also more likely to have had a ‘work-focused’ interview (93 per cent) than those in the 2003 survey (Wave 1) Pathfinder offices (87 per cent).

Observations during qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that feedback from PAs showed that the varying depth of discussions across customer groups at First Contact was reflected in the level of information collected and recorded on LMS by FCOs. PAs in public offices suggested that the Labour Market Information (LMI) recorded was insufficient for their requirements.

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23 Interviews with a PA can be classified as ‘work-focused’ if they cover any of the following: when the interviewee might find work, or how likely they are to find it; ways of finding work; types of job or particular jobs; training; benefits or help interviewees might get if they started work; New Deal; JSAg or CAP; things that make it difficult for the interviewee to work; the interviewee’s work experience and skills; an in-work benefit calculation; for those with a disability: the kind and amount of work they can do.


25 Throughout the report from the client survey conducted in 2004, where comparisons have been made between Wave 1 and Wave 2, these refer only to Pathfinder offices in non-IB pilot areas.
This was also an issue for FAs who gave one reason for feeling unprepared for meetings with customers as insufficient information provided by FCOs on customers’ particular needs, for example, where customers might have hearing difficulties or customers who needed an interpreter. As such these needs were not then catered for at the FA meeting.ii

6.3.1 Jobseekers

The work-focused discussion with JSA customers tended to be structured around the JSAg...

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that the subject of work was typically raised with jobseekers at the outset of the WFI, and the JSAg tended to shape the overall structure of work discussion. iii

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, it was found that 85 per cent of JSA customers reported completing a JSAg.iv

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 found that there was considerable variation in the extent to which customers were involved in drawing up the content of the JSAg.v Research carried out in 2004 suggests that the JSAg covered a wide range of topics concerning the type of work jobseekers were looking for and how they were going to find it, and these topics were routinely covered by PAs during the WFI. vi

...although the depth of work discussion varied.

There were some circumstances where the depth of work-focused discussion with JSA customers varied, such as where customers already had a JSAg on record; where customers had very clear job goals; where customers lacked motivation and who PAs found more difficult to engage in a conversation; and where customers spoke English as a second language. These findings remain consistent with evidence from qualitative research with staff and customers carried out in 2003.vii

6.3.2 Lone parents

The extent of work-focused discussion for lone parents tended to depend on whether or not the customer was in a position to look for work.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that PAs and lone parents engaged in a work-focused discussion at the outset of the WFI where the explanation of the WFI had been work-related. The depth of work focus tended to depend on whether or not the customer indicated that they were interested in looking for work; for customers who stated that work was not an option, discussions focused on training or other support available through Jobcentre Plus.viii
6.3.3 People with health conditions and disabilities

Research found that people with health conditions and disabilities did not tend to engage in a work focused discussion from the outset of the WFI...

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that PAs and people with health conditions and disabilities did not tend to engage in discussion at work from the outset of the WFI. Rather, discussions tended to explore customers’ circumstances or the nature of their illness. Sometimes this would result in the issue of work being raised, otherwise WFIs were relatively short and focused on the services available through Jobcentre Plus, which remains consistent with findings from research undertaken in 2003. ix

...although findings from the IB Pathways to Work Evaluation suggests that the initial WFI contained more of a work focus.

In the latest IB Pathways to Work Evaluation, work is generally being described by PAs and customers as the main focus of the initial WFI. However, in cases where customers had particular barriers related to health or social circumstances, PAs identified these barriers at the beginning of the WFI and the discussion would focus on overcoming the barrier first. 26 x

6.3.4 Carers

PAs tended to explore carers’ circumstances at the outset of the WFI to establish their position in terms of work.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that PAs usually explored carers’ circumstances at the outset of the WFI in order to establish their position in terms of work. Other PAs were more direct in their approach to a work-focused discussion, informing customers about Permitted Work. However, as is consistent with research carried out in 2003, discussion about work became limited once it was established that customers were not in a position to work due to their caring responsibilities. There were also examples of PAs who were observed to make assumptions about the carer’s inability to work. xi

6.4 Use of voluntary Customer Action Plans for non-JSA customers

As was the case with earlier research, findings from research conducted in 2004 found that there was no consistent use of voluntary CAPs across the non-JSA client group...

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, it was found that 16 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities, 13 per cent of lone parents, and seven per

26 Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
cent of carers reported completing a voluntary CAP. Amongst carers, those who attended a WFI in a Day 3 office were more likely to have completed a voluntary CAP (21 per cent), than those who attended a WFI in a Day 2 office (eight per cent) or a Pathfinder office (four per cent).²⁷ xii

Qualitative research conducted in 2004 continued to find that CAPs were not consistently used for non-JSA customers. Where CAPs were completed with non-JSA customers, they were loosely structured and recorded the WFI discussion including: the customer’s current circumstances; employment history; the advice or help suggested by the PA; and any follow-up contact or action that had been agreed. In offices that did not complete CAPs, PAs still recorded notes of the meeting on LMS but only after the WFI, for the PAs own future reference. There remained limited awareness amongst non-JSA customers that the CAP existed.xiii

...although, latest research from the IB Pathways to Work Evaluation suggests that some customers were more involved in the drawing up of an action plan and some used the plan to review and measure their progress at subsequent meetings.

Qualitative evidence from the IB Pathways to Work Evaluation²⁸ xiv suggests that when questioned, some customers recalled drawing up a CAP outlining their discussion with their PA and any decisions made about what action to take. Some also used the CAP to review and measure their progress, explaining that the PA had made a note of their situation and plans and that this would be revisited at subsequent meetings.

6.5 Content of discussion: job submissions and job entries

Forty-six per cent of jobseekers, ten per cent of lone parents and six per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities were submitted to vacancies at the initial WFI...


²⁸ Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
Figure 6.1 Proportion of clients with job submission at initial WFI – all Jobcentre Plus

There does appear to be some element of work focus at the initial WFI. Over 40 per cent of jobseekers are submitted to a vacancy at the WFI, and one in ten lone parents. Although the proportion has been increasing for jobseekers, the trend is flat for the inactive client base.²⁹

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that there were few examples of customers from across all groups being submitted for vacancies following a job search by a PA. xv

...resulting in job entries for around eight per cent of jobseekers and two to three per cent of lone parents and people with health conditions and disabilities.

²⁹ Source: FPWD.
Approximately nine per cent of jobseekers receive a job entry at the initial WFI, compared to just two to three per cent of lone parents and people with health conditions and disabilities (the dip in the later months reflects the fact that not yet all job entries will have been recorded).³⁰

**The numbers of partners entering employment following a WFIP were reported to be very small.**

Interim findings from the research on WFIPs, conducted in 2004, found that the numbers of partners entering work following a WFIP, whether via the New Deal for Partners or not, were reported by advisers to be very small.³¹ xvi

### 6.6 Discussing ways of finding work and job vacancies

**Three-quarters of jobseekers and around one-third of other client groups discussed ways of finding work with their PA...**

In a survey conducted with clients in 2003, 77 per cent of JSA clients discussed ways of finding work with their PA, along with 43 per cent of lone parents reported discussing ways of finding work with their PA, as did 35 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities, and 22 per cent of carers.³¹ xvii

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³⁰ Source: Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
³¹ Findings from FPWD.
...with slightly fewer reporting that they discussed specific job vacancies.

The 2003 survey also found that 69 per cent of jobseekers reported receiving information from their PA about job vacancies, along with 25 per cent of lone parents, 20 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities, and 12 per cent of carers.xviii

6.6.1 Jobseekers

_PAs routinely covered job search activity as part of the JSAg with JSA customers, and job searches were routinely provided for jobseekers..._

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that PAs routinely covered jobseekers’ planned job search activity as part of the JSAg, and observations of WFIIs found that a range of new or alternative places to look for work or receive support were discussed. Interviews with jobseekers revealed that PAs were successful in raising their awareness of the different places at which they could look for work.

Job searches were consistently provided for jobseekers, but some staff reported that the depth of the job search depended on the time available in the WFI once other requirements such as completing the JSAg, were met. In general, jobseekers felt that the job searches conducted were appropriate to their needs, although there were some customers who did not feel that the job search was useful or appropriate. These included those who were seeking to become self-employed; those who had specific job goals and were looking for high skilled or professional jobs; and those who perceived the positions found through job searches to be limited to low paid jobs.xix

6.6.2 Lone parents

...but for lone parents job search discussions tended to occur with clients who were more job-ready, and were more customer-led and tailored to individual circumstances. Job searches were routinely conducted for lone parents who were ready to consider work immediately and in some instances where customers expressed an interest in returning to work in the future.

Research from 2004 found that PAs discussed job search activity with lone parents who were looking to move into work in the short-term. Discussions were very much customer led, and more tailored to their individual circumstances. Observations showed examples of PAs attempting to engage all customers in a discussion about work during the initial WFI, but as was consistent with earlier research from 2003, PAs did not want to push the issue of work too strongly for fear of discouraging customers from attending Jobcentre Plus in the future. This was especially relevant where other PAs preferred to get customers to attend a further meeting, by which time the customer’s claim would be processed and they might be more ready to talk about work.

Job searches were routinely conducted for lone parents who were ready to consider
work immediately, and in some cases for those who expressed an interest in returning to work in the future. PAs reported that they would not conduct a job search if the customer had not expressed an interest in work, or it was clear that work was not a current option due to the customer’s circumstances. However, PAs did ensure that these customers understood that a job search service was available if the customer wanted to return to Jobcentre Plus at a later date. Lone parents felt that the type of vacancies the PAs looked for were appropriate as they included hours that fitted in with childcare responsibilities.xx

6.6.3 People with health conditions and disabilities

_Job search activity was not routinely discussed with people with health conditions and disabilities, although there was greater engagement between PAs and customers who were interested in work. Provision of job searches for these customers was varied, and was usually dependent on individual circumstances._

Research from 2004 found that job search activity was not routinely discussed with people with health conditions and disabilities. As is consistent with earlier research carried out in 2003, PAs did not challenge customers’ assumptions of their inability to work and PAs also felt that customers with mental health conditions would not engage in discussions as a result of their condition. As such, these customers were given limited information.

However, greater engagement in discussion was observed between PAs and customers who were interested in work, for example, some customers with physical health conditions were interested in alternative jobs.

Job searches for people with health conditions and disabilities were more variable than was the case with jobseekers or lone parents. The biggest factor in the decision of a PA to undertake job searches for people with health conditions and disabilities was on their ability to take work in the short- or longer-term due to their illness or condition. Since the last phase of research undertaken in 2003, the latest research conducted in 2004 found that there were some examples of job searches being done for customers with longer-term, physical health conditions who expressed an interest in looking for different types of work. There were exceptional examples of job searches being conducted for customers who felt this was inappropriate. However, these customers did not raise their concerns with the PAs, feeling that the WFI would finish sooner if they did not interrupt them.xxi

6.6.4 Carers

_Job search activity was not routinely discussed with carers, and it was extremely rare for job searches to be conducted for carers._

Research from 2004 found that job search activity was not routinely discussed with carers. Where customers did not perceive work to be an option, job search was not discussed at all. For other customers, job search services such as Job Brokers were
mentioned by PAs for future reference. Some specific job search discussions occurred with carers who had recently undertaken some job search activity of their own.

It was extremely rare for job searches to be carried out for carers.\textsuperscript{xxii}

6.7 Discussing work experience and skills

Over seven in ten JSA customers reported that they discussed their work experience and skills with a PA at their initial WFI, but this was less the case for non-JSA customers.

In a survey conducted with clients in 2003, 78 per cent of JSA customers, 52 per cent of lone parents, 45 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities and 33 per cent of carers reported that they discussed their work experience and skills at their initial WFI.\textsuperscript{xxiii} In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, jobseekers (13 per cent) were the most likely of all the client groups to say that advice they received from their PA improved their skills, compared to lone parents (nine per cent), people with health conditions and disabilities (six per cent) and carers (four per cent).\textsuperscript{xxiv}

6.7.1 Jobseekers

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that discussions with JSA customers during the WFI were principally focused around their work experience and skills as part of the job goals for the JSA. However, it was observed that discussions about skills were more limited, although some PAs used this discussion as an opportunity to inform customers of potential training opportunities that could be accessed through Jobcentre Plus.\textsuperscript{xxv}

6.7.2 Lone parents

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that discussions about work with lone parents tended to be initiated by PAs asking customers about their work experience. PAs also collected basic information about any qualifications or existing skills to use for future reference. However, it was exceptional for this information to be used in the context of a job search.\textsuperscript{xxvi}

6.7.3 People with health conditions and disabilities

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that any work discussion that did occur with people with health conditions and disabilities focused on what work they had done prior to their illness or injury. Observations of WFI showed that skills were not routinely discussed.\textsuperscript{xxvii}

6.7.4 Carers

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that carers’ work history was explored where they had worked recently, regardless of whether or not the customer was in a position to work at the time of their WFI. PAs reported that they would discuss skills with carers particularly if they had been away from the
labour market for a significant period; however observations of WFiS revealed no examples of skills being discussed.xxvii

6.8 Discussing barriers to work

Around two-fifths of jobseekers and two-thirds of non-JSA clients discussed barriers to work with their PA...

6.8.1 Jobseekers

In a survey conducted with clients in 2003, 45 per cent of JSA clients discussed barriers to work with their PA.xxx Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003, found that jobseekers’ barriers to work were not being fully addressed or discussed with their PAs.xxx This finding is maintained in research carried out in 2004, where although barriers were identified, the extent to which PAs addressed these or put forward solutions during the initial WFI, were limited.xxxi

6.8.2 Lone parents

The 2003 survey also found that 60 per cent of lone parents discussed barriers to work with their PA.xxxii As was consistent with earlier research, qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that PAs did not consistently identify or discuss lone parents’ barriers to work.xxxiii

6.8.3 People with health conditions and disabilities

The 2003 survey found that 61 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities discussed barriers to work with their PA.xxxiv As was consistent with earlier research, qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that PAs did not challenge customers’ assumptions about their ability to work where they raised their condition or illness as a barrier. Some PAs put this down to a lack of confidence on their part to challenge these assumptions, particularly with customers who were visibly in pain during the WFI or had been claiming IB for a number of years.xxxv

…however, IBPAs placed less emphasis on the seriousness of the customer’s condition, feeling that helping the customer to overcome some of their key barriers to work was as important as moving them immediately into work.

The latest evidence from the IB Pathways to Work Evaluation suggests a similar picture in that IBPAs perceived customers with moderate to severe health conditions, those misusing alcohol or drugs and those with caring responsibilities as harder to progress. However, IBPAs placed less emphasis on the seriousness of the customer’s health condition that affected progression which suggests that they had grown more confident in dealing with this type of client. Despite problems with progressing these groups, IBPAs typically saw helping a customer to overcome some of the key barriers to work as equally important and valid as moving a customer immediately into work.xxxvi
6.8.4 Carers
The 2003 survey also found that five per cent of carers discussed barriers to work with their PA. Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that discussions with carers about barriers to work tended to focus on their caring responsibilities. Observations of WFI s revealed no evidence that PAs routinely explored with customers the barriers caused by their caring responsibilities.

6.9 Discussing tax credits and other advantages of being in work for the customer and their family

Promotion of the financial benefits of work appears to be most likely to be with lone parents, although there appeared to be some progress in the promotion of financial support for customers who were claiming benefits due to health conditions.

In a survey conducted with clients in 2003, lone parents were the most likely client group to have discussed tax credits or any other financial help with their PA (50 per cent) compared to 23 per cent of jobseekers, 19 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities and 14 per cent of carers.

6.9.1 Jobseekers
Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 continued to find that it was rare for the financial benefits of work to be discussed with JSA customers.

6.9.2 Lone parents
As is consistent with earlier findings, qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that tax credits were actively promoted to all lone parents, although the extent to which they were discussed varied.

Lone parents were also the most likely client group to receive an in-work benefit calculation (28 per cent). Research conducted in 2004 maintains that IWBCs for lone parents were not generally performed at the initial WFI, although they were constantly offered. They were usually undertaken at further meetings when customers were more ready to think about work. Although customers who had a calculation routinely reported that they were surprised by its outcome, they did not feel that it directly influenced their attitudes to work, which is consistent with earlier research carried out in 2003.

6.9.3 People with health conditions and disabilities
In a survey conducted with clients in 2003, ten per cent of people with health...
conditions and disabilities received an IWBC during their WFI.\textsuperscript{xiv} As is consistent with earlier findings, qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that the financial benefits of work were not generally discussed with people with health conditions and disabilities.

### 6.9.4 Carers

The 2003 survey also found that six per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities received an IWBC during their WFI.\textsuperscript{xiv} Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that the focus of discussions was typically on how much carers could earn before their CA was affected.\textsuperscript{xlii}

### 6.9.5 Partners of unemployed people

Interim findings from the research on WFIPs, conducted in 2004, suggest that advisers were generally in agreement that the most valuable ‘tools’ they had at their disposal for engaging partners and even persuading them of the benefits of returning to work were the Tax Credits information and their incorporation into the IWBC. Some went as far as to describe the IWBC as the ‘key’ to challenging some of the attitudes presented by partners in WFIPs.

However, despite claims by a few Advisers that they tried to conduct an IWBC with all partners, most said that they could not find the time to do one in an initial WFIP, and that the usual available interview slot of half an hour allowed no more than ‘basics’ to be covered.\textsuperscript{33, xlii}

### 6.10 Advice on training, specialist services and referrals

*Lone parents were the most likely client group to have discussed training at their initial WFI.*

In a survey conducted with clients in 2003, 55 per cent of lone parents reported discussing training with a PA at their initial WFI, compared to 41 per cent of jobseekers, 35 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities and 23 per cent of carers.\textsuperscript{xliii}

\textsuperscript{33} Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
6.10.1 Jobseekers

Research in 2003 found that jobseekers were able to address issues that hindered their job search as a result of referral to other agencies, advisers or programmes, however, research from 2004 found little evidence that they were being referred to specific services, although it should be noted that different offices were visited during the 2003 and 2004 research.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003, found that as a result of referral to other agencies, advisers or programmes for specialist support, JSA customers were able to address issues that hindered their search for work and, therefore, move closer to the labour market. However, research undertaken in 2004 found that there was little evidence that jobseekers were referred to specific services by PAs at the time of the WFI. It was rare for PAs to inform jobseekers about the New Deal programmes at the initial WFI. With these findings in mind, it should be noted that fieldwork was conducted in different offices for the 2003 and 2004 research, which may explain why the 2003 research appears to show progress that is not sustained in the 2004 research.

Research undertaken in 2003 found that there appeared to be progress where PAs were more confident about providing further help and information to non-JSA customers, and proactive steps were being made by PAs to obtain more knowledge about specialist services...

Progress had been made where overall, PAs felt confident and knowledgeable about the help and support available to non-JSA customers, with the extent of the information given and referrals made tailored to the client’s individual circumstances.

6.10.2 Lone parents

…and in 2004, PAs felt confident about giving lone parents specialist information and advice, although the depth of the information given varied.

Qualitative research undertaken in 2004 found that in general, specialist PAs felt more confident and able to apply specialist advice and information to lone parents than generalist PAs. As was consistent with research undertaken in 2003, this latest qualitative research found that PAs typically gave lone parents information about the services available through the New Deal, although the depth of description, what was available through the New Deals varied, and sometimes depended on the level of the customer’s interest.
6.10.3 People with health conditions and disabilities

People with health conditions and disabilities continued to receive little information on specialist services and the New Deal, although there was progress in two Pathfinder offices who gathered information from local organisations that could provide assistance to these customers...

Qualitative research undertaken in 2004 found that PAs provided little information to people with health conditions and disabilities who were intending to return to an existing job after they had recovered from an illness, or who had a short-term illness. As was consistent with earlier research carried out in 2003, the latest qualitative research found very little evidence that people with health conditions and disabilities were told about the New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP). However, observations found that customers were told about individual agencies or brokers rather than explicitly being told about the overall programme.

However, there was some progress in two Pathfinder offices who were actively gathering information from local organisations that could provide assistance to people with health conditions and disabilities who had longer-term or more severe physical or mental health conditions. The purpose of this was to ensure that PAs had easy access to referral and advice options for these customers, and research found that it also increased PAs confidence to deliver specialist advice to customers.

PAs in other areas were aware of Disability Employment Advisers (DEAs) and referred customers to them if they felt that they were not able to supply sufficient information themselves. Customers reported that seeing a DEA was useful as they were able to supply information and referral advice to organisations that dealt specifically with their particular illness or condition.

6.10.4 Carers

...and carers continued to be given limited information on specific services available through Jobcentre Plus.

As was consistent with earlier research in 2003, qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that carers were given limited information about specific services available through Jobcentre Plus because customers either clearly indicated that they were not interested in such information, or because PAs assumed that they were not interested due to their current circumstances.

6.11 Discussion of schemes for customers with health conditions

It appears that few customers discussed, with their PA, any of the schemes for people with health conditions.

A survey with clients conducted in 2004 found that few customers who had said that they had a long-standing illness or disability that affected the kind or amount of work they could do, discussed schemes for people with health conditions. Carers (89 per
cent) were the most likely to have discussed none of the schemes followed by lone parents (79 per cent) and then people with health conditions and disabilities (73 per cent). lv

6.11.1 Jobseekers
The 2004 survey found that few jobseekers who said that they had a long-standing illness or disability that affected the kind of or amount of work they could do, discussed: NDDP (nine per cent); a job introduction scheme (four per cent); Access to work (two per cent); Workstep (three per cent); employment assessment (three per cent); job matching (four per cent); work preparation (one per cent); specialised training (two per cent); none said that they discussed any other schemes, and 80 per cent said that they discussed none of the above at all. lvii

6.11.2 Lone parents
The 2004 survey found that few lone parents who said that they had a long-standing illness or disability that affected the kind of or amount of work they could do, discussed: NDDP (eight per cent); a job introduction scheme (five per cent); Access to work (seven per cent); Workstep (two per cent); employment assessment (one per cent); job matching (two per cent); work preparation (two per cent); specialised training (three per cent); other schemes (three per cent); and 79 per cent said that they discussed none of the above. lviii

6.11.3 People with health conditions and disabilities
The 2004 survey found that few people with health conditions and disabilities who said that they had a long standing illness or disability that affected the kind of or amount of work they could do, discussed: NDDP (11 per cent); a job introduction scheme (three per cent); Access to work (five per cent); Workstep (two per cent); employment assessment (three per cent); job matching (one per cent); work preparation (two per cent); specialised training (two per cent); other schemes (two per cent); and 73 per cent said that they discussed none of the above. lx

6.11.4 Carers
The 2004 survey found that few carers who said that they had a long-standing illness or disability that affected the kind of or amount of work they could do, discussed: NDDP (four per cent); a job introduction scheme (two per cent); Access to work (one per cent); Workstep (one per cent); employment assessment (one per cent); job matching (two per cent); work preparation (two per cent); specialised training (two per cent); other schemes (one per cent); and 89 per cent said that they discussed none of the above. lxii
6.12 Discussion about customers’ benefit claim

There appeared to be a small amount of discussion of benefits during the WFI, despite this not being one of the Must Dos, but did not appear to prevent the PA from maintaining a work-focused discussion.

Findings from the qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, are consistent with those from the phase carried out in 2003 where there appeared to be some discussion about the customer’s benefit claim during WFIs. PAs believed that the customers raised these issues because they had forgotten to do so during the meeting with the FA, or because they wanted the PA to reiterate information previously provided by the FA.

Some benefit issues were routinely raised by PAs, such as in the context of IWBCs with lone parents. People with health conditions and disabilities reported few specific discussions about benefits, other than PAs checking they were claiming additional benefits such as HB or CTB, and, for carers, discussions about benefits concerned the eligibility and conditions around working while still claiming CA. As was the case with earlier research, there was no suggestion that any of this benefit-related discussion prevented the PA from maintaining a work focus during the WFI.\textsuperscript{x}

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, it appeared that around half of carers (57 per cent), people with health conditions and disabilities (52 per cent) and jobseekers (50 per cent) and 64 per cent of lone parents found that the advice they had received from their PA had increased their understanding of benefits that they could claim.\textsuperscript{xi}

6.12.1 PA perceptions

Generally, PAs felt more comfortable with discussing work with most non-JSA customers, although overall, discussions about work for these clients tended to remain fairly low-key…

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 found that generally, there was progress within the role as PAs reported feeling more comfortable in dealing with non-JSA customers having gained more knowledge and experience of dealing with these clients. Any work discussion concentrated mainly on what training they had done, qualifications they held, and what type of work they wanted to do in the future.\textsuperscript{xii}

…as in Jobcentre Plus, PAs saw the WFI as having a broader, more long-term objective for non-JSA clients, and their main aim was to establish a rapport that would encourage the customer to return in the future…

In Jobcentre Plus, the PAs saw WFIs for non-JSA clients as having broader, more long-term objectives, with the main aim to establish a rapport with the customers and put them at ease so that they would be encouraged to return in the future. This resulted in customers further from the labour market, such as people with health conditions and disabilities reporting that they were happy to use Jobcentre Plus in
their search for work either now or in the future, especially carers and clients with severe physical disabilities or mental illness.

However, some PAs remain uncomfortable discussing work with customers who had mental health conditions, were drug users and carers who had given up work to care.\textsuperscript{biii}

\textit{...although in the IB Pilots, IBPAs viewed discussion about work as a critical part of the initial WFI.}

Early findings from the IB Pathways to Work Evaluation suggest that IBPAs view a discussion about work as a critical part of the initial WFI. IB PAs tended to be more confident in discussing work with all IB customers.\textsuperscript{lxiv}

Some recalled that the PA engaged them in a discussion of work immediately after the introduction, but appeared to acknowledge that for these clients work was not an immediate option, and, as such, the meeting was drawn to a close shortly after. For some clients (especially those claiming a sickness or disability benefit) PAs were reported to emphasise that the discussion would focus on the future and what type of work the customer might want. This approach worked well, making customers feel at ease and not pressured into returning to work.

Some PAs reported that they had never conducted a WFI with a customer claiming bereavement benefits, and for those that had, their main concern was to be sensitive and treat the customer sympathetically, rather than have a discussion that primarily focused on work.\textsuperscript{lxv}

\textit{There is evidence to suggest that staff are feeling more knowledgeable and, therefore, confident about the range of organisations and services to which customers could be referred...}

Some staff reported feeling more knowledgeable about the organisations and service to which customers could be referred, finding that direct contact between them and the service providers appeared to be key in improving their knowledge and confidence in informing non-JSA customers and making referrals.

However, although PAs reported feeling more confident, this did not necessarily mean that they gave customers information and advice in all cases where it may have been appropriate. For example, lone parents and people claiming sickness or disability benefits who discussed work with a PA, were routinely given advice or information on the different services available through Jobcentre Plus, but this was usually verbal introductory information that was not put into the context of its purpose or usefulness for the customer. Carers rarely received such information.\textsuperscript{lxi}

\textit{...although some gaps in knowledge remained.}

Recent findings from the case studies research found that some PAs still identified areas of providing further information and advice where they felt less confident, such as opportunities for work based learning and training courses, immediate
eligibility for the New Deal programmes, advising clients with mental health conditions, and the role of DEAs.\textsuperscript{iixi}

*Advisers also felt that they needed more training on dealing with partners, who they perceived to be a ‘difficult’ client group with complex problems, which in turn provided a poor return in job outcomes against which the advisers were judged.*

Interim findings from the research on WFIPs, conducted in 2004, suggest that most advisers perceived this customer group to be a low priority for their managers, and accordingly, were likely to attribute it an equally low priority among their own responsibilities. Many advisers felt that they had received insufficient training to deal with the complexities of this customer group.

Advisers felt that also, in most cases, it was extremely difficult (if not impossible) for them to address partners’ barriers and work-related issues in isolation from the main claimant’s circumstances and attitudes. For these reasons, and because of the range of different benefit claims that could involve partners, they were seen by advisers as a ‘difficult’ client group with complex problems. This was felt to often lead to a sharp contrast in approach by advisers. Many concluded that for the time and effort spent on them, partners provide a poor return in terms of the hard outputs against which advisers are judged and managed – job outcomes.

Evidence suggests that complaints from partners of being rushed through interviews provided evidence that some opportunities were being missed by a too readily dismissive attitude from some Advisers, in the name of efficiency and good time management. However, there were Advisers who had taken up the challenge of the complexity of partners’ situations and adopted an approach that involved taking extra time with them, accepting that much preparatory work should be required and that there was likely to be a long road prior to any job outcome.\textsuperscript{34}\textsuperscript{iixii}

6.13 Impact of Jobcentre Plus on customers

*In Jobcentre Plus, there was a high level of satisfaction with the service received from their PA, especially amongst lone parents.*

In a survey conducted with clients in 2003, lone parents (72 per cent) reported the highest satisfaction levels of all client groups who were ‘very satisfied’ and ‘quite satisfied’ with the service from the PA at the WFI, with the figures fairly even between JSA clients (67 per cent), people with health conditions and disabilities (65 per cent) and carers (62 per cent).\textsuperscript{34}\textsuperscript{iixiii} In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, lone parents (84 per cent) were most likely to find that the advice given at the WFI was ‘very helpful’ or ‘quite helpful’. This is compared to between 76 per cent and 80 per cent for people with health conditions and disabilities, carers and jobseekers client groups. The same level was reported by lone parents who experienced the National

\textsuperscript{34} Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
Amongst jobseekers, those who attended a WFI in a Pathfinder office (84 per cent) were more likely to have found the advice they received helpful than those jobseekers who attended a WFI at a Day 3 office (72 per cent).³⁵

6.13.1 Jobseekers

Many jobseekers felt that discussing work with their PA had been helpful, and just under half said that the advice they had received from their PA had made a positive impact on their job search activity and left them more motivated …

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, 80 per cent of jobseekers found their discussion about work matters with their PA helpful.³⁶

The survey also found that 31 per cent of jobseekers said that the advice they had received left them feeling more hopeful about the future than before the WFI, and 29 per cent said that this advice had increased their confidence. Forty per cent felt that the advice they had received had made them ‘much more’ or ‘a little more’ motivated to find paid employment.³⁶

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 suggest that where work was discussed with PAs, jobseekers felt that these staff had made a positive impact on their job search activity, feeling that their searches were more work-focused and they were more motivated.³⁶ Research in 2004 found evidence that suggested Jobcentre Plus had increased some jobseekers’ awareness of ways to look for work.³⁶

…and there were jobseekers who for various reasons felt that Jobcentre Plus had little impact on their ability to find work, while around three in ten felt that it was not a good time in their lives to have a WFI…

However, in a survey conducted with clients in 2004, 69 per cent of jobseekers felt that the advice they had received had not increased their confidence and 58 per cent said it had made no difference to how hopeful they felt about the future than before the meeting. Around half (51 per cent) said that the meeting had made no difference to their motivation to find paid employment, and around three in ten jobseekers felt that it was not a good time in their lives to have a WFI.³⁶

Research in 2004 also found that the impact of Jobcentre Plus on jobseekers’ engagement with the labour market was mixed; some who were more motivated prior to attending the WFI moved into employment soon after their experience of Jobcentre Plus, and so found that the service had little impact on their movement into

³⁵ Day 2 offices refers to Jobcentre Plus offices rolled out between October 2002 and March 2003 and Day 3 offices refers to those rolled out from June 2003 to October 2003.

³⁶ Pathfinder offices refers to Jobcentre Plus offices rolled out between October 2001 and March 2002, and Day 3 offices refers to those rolled out from June 2003 to October 2003.
work. Others felt the Jobcentre Plus had little opportunity to impact on their ability to find sustained employment.\textsuperscript{lxxiv}

\textit{...some JSA customers were disappointed when they felt unable to build a rapport with their PA and, as such, left the Jobcentre Plus office with unresolved queries...}

However, research in 2004 found that some jobseekers continued to have more mixed views of their meeting with a PA. Some customers felt that they had been unable to build a rapport with either their FA or PA and, as a result, had felt that they could not raise queries which meant they left the Jobcentre Plus office with unresolved problems. As is consistent with earlier research conducted in 2003, some jobseekers were disappointed when job searches were not conducted, or when further assistance was not offered to tackle training needs.\textsuperscript{lxxv}

\textit{... but for some had changed their negative attitude towards the process of claiming benefit to a more positive one}

A good explanation of the key stages of the Jobcentre Plus process was a key factor that helped to change some jobseekers’ old negative attitudes towards claiming benefit to a more positive outlook, whether or not they had previous experience of claiming benefits. Their attitude was changed especially where staff were felt to be helpful, interested in a customer’s situation and treated them with respect.\textsuperscript{lxxvi}

### 6.13.2 Lone parents

\textit{Around seven in ten lone parents felt that discussing work with their PA had been helpful, and around three in ten said that the WFI had left them feeling more hopeful about the future...}

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, 73 per cent of lone parents found their discussion about work matters with their PA helpful, and lone parents were most likely to say that the advice they received at the WFI had left them feeling more hopeful about the future than before the meeting (36 per cent). The 2004 survey (Wave 2) also found that lone parents (39 per cent) in Pathfinder offices were less likely to have found that the advice they received from their PA had left them feeling more hopeful about the future compared to 46 per cent of lone parents in the 2003 survey (Wave 1) Pathfinder offices.\textsuperscript{37 lxxvii}

The 2004 survey also found that 29 per cent said that the advice they received from their PA increased their confidence and 31 per cent said that the advice they had received had made them ‘much more’ or ‘a little more’ motivated to find paid employment.\textsuperscript{lxxviii}

\textsuperscript{37} Throughout the report from the client survey conducted in 2004, where comparisons have been made between Wave 1 and Wave 2, these refer only to Pathfinder offices in non-IB pilot areas.
Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that Jobcentre Plus had a limited impact on lone parents who were highly motivated to find work, although there were isolated examples that the service had encouraged some customers to undertake a more active job search following their WFI. It was reported in these cases that it was the encouragement and reassurance of the PA that had boosted the customer’s confidence and motivation to find work.\textsuperscript{lxix}

Research in 2004 found that for other lone parents, such as those with very young children, the WFI had a positive impact in encouraging them to consider work in the medium term, when their children started school. These parents especially were positive about the reassurance, understanding and lack of pressure to return to work that they received from their PA.\textsuperscript{lxxx}

...although a higher percentage of lone parents said that the WFI had not increased their confidence, made them feel more motivated to find work or left them more hopeful about the future...

In a survey conducted in 2004, 68 per cent of lone parents reported that the advice they received had not left them feeling more confident about finding work, and fifty-five per cent of lone parents said that the WFI had made no difference to how hopeful they felt about the future. Around half (54 per cent) said that the meeting had made no difference to their motivation to find paid employment, and fifty-three per cent of lone parents felt that it was not a good time to have their WFI.\textsuperscript{lxxi}

For lone parents who had made it clear that work was not appropriate for them at the time, the WFI had a limited impact. But some of these customers had been reassured by the FA that they would receive their benefit and as such had time to consider their options. In this way, they perceived that the WFI to be useful in gathering information about their options such as training for preparation for work in the future. Being informed about the NDLP meant that lone parents were more aware of the work related support available through Jobcentre Plus in the future.\textsuperscript{lxxii}

... although the extent to which lone parents considered work to be an option often depended on the options available to them and the time spent with their PA discussing them, as well as the rapport built between the two.

Research in 2004 found that the time spent discussing the different options open to lone parents and the range of services available was a key factor in whether or not lone parents considered work to be an option. Lone parents felt confident about returning to the service if they had built up a good rapport with their PA who, in turn, had been understanding about their circumstances. For some lone parents, this positive experience had made them think more actively about work or training for the future.\textsuperscript{lxxiii}
For some, the experience had changed their negative attitude towards the process of claiming benefit to a more positive one

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that similarly to jobseekers, some lone parents’ negative attitudes towards claiming benefits changed to a more positive one. However, there was no change with lone parents who did have previous experience of claiming benefits; they continued to find their PAs helpful and friendly and felt comfortable about making any necessary repeat claims.lxxxiv

6.13.3 People with health conditions and disabilities

Around seven in ten people with health conditions and disabilities felt that discussing work with their PA had been helpful, and around a quarter said that the WFI had made them feel more motivated to find paid employment...

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, 69 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities found their discussion about work matters with their PA helpful, and around three in ten (28 per cent) reported that the advice they received at the WFI had left them feeling more hopeful about the future.38 lxxxv

The survey also found that 25 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities said that the advice they had received from their PA had increased their confidence, and the same proportion (25 per cent) said that the advice they had received had made them ‘much more’ or ‘a little more’ motivated to find paid employment.

...however, the extent to which Jobcentre Plus had an impact on people with health conditions and disabilities’ attitudes and behaviour towards work varied...

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, 72 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities said that the advice they received had not increased their confidence about finding work. 60 per cent said that the WFI had made no difference about how hopeful they felt about the future, and 58 per cent said that the WFI had made no difference to their motivation to find paid employment.lxxxvi

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that the impact of the Jobcentre Plus service on the attitudes and behaviour towards work of people with health conditions and disabilities varied. The WFI had little impact for those with physical and mental health conditions who were currently employed and planned to return to the same job once they had recovered from their illness or injury, and this was usually made clear at the start of the WFI and, as such, a work-related discussion was not pursued.

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38 Pathfinder offices refers to Jobcentre Plus offices rolled out between October 2001 and March 2002 and Day 3 offices refers to those rolled out from June 2003 to October 2003.
The WFI also had little impact on those customers who were already motivated to find work, and those with long-term physical health conditions such as arthritis or back problems. Instead, the WFI encouraged them to continue on the same route, but some of these customers developed a greater awareness of different ways to approach job search activity. These customers were usually informed about a range of specialist services such as Job Brokers, training services, specialist DEAs, job point facilities and Jobseekers Direct. Some customers were particularly positive about Jobseekers Direct, where they could access vacancies without having to visit the jobcentre.

PAs did not explore alternative types of work with customers experiencing mental health conditions, and in these cases, the customer’s outlook towards work remained unchanged. Customers felt that if the PAs did not understand this, they were unlikely to be able to offer useful information and advice about work, and were concerned that PAs might try to push them towards inappropriate work.

Research also found that some attitudes changed for the better amongst customers who had initially felt that their illness or disability made work inappropriate. In some cases, these customers became more open to considering other types of work which might be possible despite the customer’s particular illness.

There was no evidence, however, that these customers sought or secured employment after the WFI. Instead, these individuals were motivated and confident that they could work in the future.

…around five in ten people with health conditions and disabilities felt that the timing of their WFI was inappropriate…

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, 56 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities felt that it was not a good time to have their WFI.

As is consistent with earlier research conducted in 2003, the 2004 research also found that some sick or disabled clients felt that the timing of the WFI was inappropriate and the information given to them by PAs was irrelevant as their situation prevented them from considering work. This mirrors evidence from the National LP WFI, and also similarly in the IB pilots where some customers who did not feel ready to take steps towards work considered the work focus to be inappropriate.

The latest evidence from the IB Pathways to Work Evaluation also suggests that some customers did not feel the provision was suitable for them and as such felt that they had not derived any benefits from their participation so far, or did not expect to benefit from future participation.

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39 Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
40 Findings from FPWD.
...however some found their negative attitude towards claiming benefit changed as a result of Jobcentre Plus.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that some customers with no prior experience of claiming health-related benefits had negative views of the process for claiming benefits. This could be influenced by the approach and attitude of some staff, for example, where the FA had not appeared interested in the claim or had not given an in-depth explanation of the process, customer had then felt uncomfortable claiming benefits.\textsuperscript{xcii}

As was consistent with earlier research, some customers felt that their experience of Jobcentre Plus was an improvement from that under the old benefits system. They found staff at all stages of the process to be helpful and friendly, and felt that they understood the individual’s personal circumstances. The new office environment also made people with health conditions and disabilities feel more positive about claiming benefits, due to the more relaxed, open plan layout of the office.\textsuperscript{xciii} (see Chapter 10)

The latest evidence from the IB Pathways to Work Evaluation supports this finding, as those who felt they had gained something from the experience were positive about their experiences, saying their confidence had improved, and it encouraged customers to regard work as a real possibility. Some customers were reassured when their PAs did not ‘push’ them into work, but instead made them aware of the options available when they did feel ready to work.\textsuperscript{41 xciv}

\subsection*{6.13.4 Carers}
\textit{Around six in ten carers felt that discussing work with their PA had been helpful, three in ten felt that the advice they received made them feel more hopeful about the future and 13 per cent said they felt more motivated to find paid employment...}

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, 60 per cent of carers found their discussion about work matters with their PA helpful, and around three in ten carers reported that the advice they received at the WFI had left them feeling more hopeful about the future (27 per cent). The survey also found that 17 per cent said that the advice they received from their PA had increased their confidence, and 13 per cent of carers said that the advice they had received had made them ‘much more’ or ‘a little more’ motivated to find paid employment.\textsuperscript{xcv}

\textit{...but some carers felt that Jobcentre Plus did not provide a helpful service...}

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, carers were the most likely of the non-JSA client group to say that the advice they received had not increased their confidence (79 per cent). The survey also found that 60 per cent said that the WFI had made no difference to how hopeful they felt about the future, and 57 per cent said that the WFI had made no difference to their motivation to find paid employment.\textsuperscript{xcvi}

\footnote{41 Findings from FPWD.}
Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found, however, that some carers experienced difficulties securing benefit payment, or left the Jobcentre Plus office with unanswered queries. In these cases, carers did not feel that Jobcentre Plus provided a helpful service.

Some carers appreciated the need to attend the Jobcentre Plus office in person as part of the process for checks to be made. However, a lack of information from the FA about their eligibility for benefit, or when customers could expect to receive payment made some carers less confident that Jobcentre Plus staff would be able to help them again in the future, and as such were less likely to return.

*...while around six in ten carers felt that the timing of their WFI was inappropriate...*

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, 63 per cent of carers felt that it was not a good time to have their WFI.

Research from 2004 found that carers’ perceptions of the appropriateness of attending a WFI also influenced how they felt about the usefulness of the service overall. Where some carers did not perceive the WFI to be relevant to their needs as they were not considering work as an option, they did not participate fully in the WFI. As such, Jobcentre Plus typically delivered little direct impact on carers’ behaviour in terms of work.

*...however, whilst there was little evidence that carers had moved closer to work, there were exceptional cases of carers being more active in their job search, or being disappointed that work was not discussed at the WFI.*

At the time of the research, there was little evidence that carers had moved closer to work. As is consistent with findings from 2003, it appears that in exceptional cases, a very small number of carers were more active in looking for work as a result of being informed about Permitted Work. Where PAs perceived that the caring responsibilities of a customer made work an inappropriate option, there were examples of customers appreciating this understanding and corresponding reassurance that the PA gave them. In highly exceptional cases, some carers were disappointed that there was no further discussion about the possibility of work; however, these customers did report that this would not stop them from returning to a Jobcentre Plus office in the future to explore the work related services available.
6.14 Partners of unemployed people

Despite exceptional negative reactions, the majority of partners (and claimants) were untroubled by their invitation to the WFIP

Despite a relatively small number of quite extreme negative reactions, the majority of partners (and claimants) were untroubled by the letter of invitation to the WFIP, with most expressing no more than curiosity about what exactly the WFIP would entail and attending the interview in that spirit.42

Once experienced, reactions to the WFIP were mixed, and the timing of the WFI was felt to be largely appropriate.

Interim findings from the research on WFIPs conducted in 2004, found that partners reactions to WFIPs were mixed, with roughly equal numbers expressing a positive response as a negative one. A similar number expressed a more neutral position.

The timing of the WFI, (26 weeks after the start of a claim) was acknowledged as being essentially arbitrary, but in reasonably good time in a lot of cases. The start of a claim often marks a major shift in the fortunes and incomes of a household which requires some time to assimilate. However, despite this, many partners at 26 weeks reported that they were still waiting on the claimant’s medical tests results or the stabilisation of a condition, before which they could not begin to contemplate work or consider what options were open to them.43

Attitudes towards advisers also appeared to be mixed, with most finding their PAs to be personable, friendly and helpful, and many said that they would be happy to revisit their PA or the office again in the future...

Most partners found their WFIP Advisers to be personable, friendly and helpful, and were pleasantly surprised that they were not pressured into undertaking anything against their wishes. The approach of the WFIPs were contrasted favourably with prior expectations, and, sometimes, also with previous experience of staff at the jobcentre.

The overall positive impressions of Jobcentre Plus contributed to many partners saying that they would be happy to revisit their Adviser and the office again if they needed help or advice about work in the future. It appeared that partners who felt that the non-work aspects of their circumstances and their longer-term options had been taken seriously were the ones who showed the most appreciation.44

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42 Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
43 Findings from FPWD.
44 Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
...whilst others felt that the meeting had been ‘cursory’ and, as such, partners felt their time had been wasted when they felt that no attempt was made to engage with the detail of their situation.

The main criticism of PAs were that WFIPs had been inappropriate, or a waste of time. Some felt that the meeting was too short and appeared to be ‘scripted’ with the Adviser showing a lack of empathy for the partner’s situation, or that it missed the target and prevented the partner discussing what they wanted to discuss most and, therefore, dashing high expectations of support and assistance.\textsuperscript{45 ciii}

There was evidence that the WFIPs were successfully stimulating discussion of work options within couples and households, especially where many partners and couples claimed an increased knowledge and awareness of the help and support available to them, however, employment remained a distant goal for the majority of partners.

As well as the small number of cases where partners had progressed onto the New Deal for Partners (NDP) or into training, there was considerable evidence of WFIPs successfully stimulating discussion and the reviewing of work options within couples and households. This resulted in a greater confidence about returning to work, even though individuals generally still remained some distance from the labour market.

Many partners and couples claimed an increased knowledge and awareness of the help and support available to them, as well as the express intention to use it at some point in the future. Improved motivation, self-confidence and optimism were also regularly asserted, and in some cases, there appeared to be evidence of activity following from them.

However, what was apparent from partners’ accounts of their thoughts and reactions to WFIPs was that employment was a relatively distant goal for the vast majority even of those who had positive attitudes and aspirations in that direction.\textsuperscript{46 civ}

6.15 Targets

It appeared that most staff felt under pressure to meet targets set for submitting customers to jobs or placing them in work; targets which staff felt were unrealistic.

Staff commonly felt under pressure to meet targets for submitting customers to jobs and placing customers into work, feeling that the targets set for both JSA and non-JSA customers were unrealistic.

This tended to result in low morale amongst staff, who felt they were working as hard as they could, especially where the number of PAs had been cut. It also had

\textsuperscript{45} Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).

\textsuperscript{46} Findings from FPWD.
implications on the quality of job submissions, as PAs were having to shift from quality to quantity in the hope that the number of job entries would increase.

However, there is an example of one office in which staff recognised that the new targets were very high but were positive about achieving them, and had effective managerial support.\textsuperscript{cv}

6.16 Monitoring PA meetings and the non-JSA Must Dos

There appeared to be little formal monitoring of PAs in Pathfinders, but staff from both Pathfinders and the new Day 2 offices were generally aware of the Must Dos.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 found that only some of the Pathfinder offices were PA Managers (PAMs) monitoring the delivery of WFIs using the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF).\textsuperscript{cv} However, research conducted in 2004, found that PAMs were routinely using the QAF for monitoring purposes.

Research from 2004 also found that generally there continued to be a good awareness of the Must Dos with PAs and their managers, although as is consistent with the earlier findings from 2003, the Must Dos were not always used on a day-to-day basis.\textsuperscript{cvii}

6.17 Specialist versus Generalist PAs

There was a mixed argument for the advantages and disadvantages for having either specialist or generalist PAs, i.e. specialists deliver a better service to customers, but offices find generalist teams easier to manage.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 found that in the Pathfinder offices observed, it was usual that PAs were specialists in the type of customers they saw, although they would see all customers in busy periods or if a particular PA was unavailable. There was an example of a Pathfinder office that had generalist PAs, that said they would have preferred to adopt a specialist model for delivering WFIs so that PAs could develop specialist knowledge with one particular customer group.

In some Day 2 offices observed, PAs tended to be generalist, although one PA manager reported that they would have preferred for PAs to be able to specialise more.

It was considered that there were pros and cons to both methods of delivery; a specialist team were seen to be able to provide a good depth of expertise and advice to customers, but a generalist team was perceived as practical and flexible and able to maximise the use of PA diary time.\textsuperscript{viii}
Evidence from the lone parent PA meetings evaluation suggests that customers liked specialist PAs, not just for their personal approach, style and manner but also for their specialist knowledge. There was clear evidence that a good personal rapport had been achieved between lone parents and their PAs, and, as such, there was a strong preference amongst clients to see the same PA at review meetings, where this occurred, customers felt there was less repetition and they felt more comfortable with someone who was familiar with their circumstances.\textsuperscript{ix}

However, PAs reported that they are increasingly required to leave work with lone parents to help out in other areas of the office, if temporary staffing shortages or work ‘peaks’ occur, and many felt that this was ‘diluting’ the specialist nature of their role as lone parent PAs.\textsuperscript{47}

### 6.18 References

\textsuperscript{i} Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey: Wave Two (due to be published summer 2005).

\textsuperscript{ii} Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Wave Four (due to be published spring 2005).

\textsuperscript{iii} Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

\textsuperscript{iv} Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey: Wave Two (due to be published summer 2005).

\textsuperscript{v} Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).

\textsuperscript{vi} Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

\textsuperscript{vii} Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

\textsuperscript{viii} Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

\textsuperscript{ix} Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

\textsuperscript{x} IB Reforms: The Personal Adviser Roles and Practices (November 2004).

\textsuperscript{xi} Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

\textsuperscript{xii} Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey: Wave Two (due to be published summer 2005).

\textsuperscript{xiii} Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).

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xxxiii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

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7 Mandatory Review and Trigger Meetings

- After the initial WFI, jobseekers are required to attend fortnightly signings and a WFI every 13 weeks. In addition to this, Jobcentre Plus has a review and trigger regime that enables continuing contact with those clients who are hardest to reach, such as carers and people on IB.

- Lone parents are required to meet an adviser six months after the initial WFI, then six months after the trigger and annually after that. The other inactive client groups are required to attend a review meeting every three years. In addition to these time-bound meetings, people claiming IB are also obliged to attend a trigger meeting if they have a personal capability assessment (PCA) and remain on benefit.

- As with the initial WFI, at the trigger and review meetings, the intention is that the PA explains the services available to the client in Jobcentre Plus, identifies barriers to employment and discusses ways of potentially overcoming them. The PA and client should agree and complete a Jobseekers Agreement (JSAg) for JSA clients, or a voluntary Customer Action Plan (CAP) for non-JSA clients. A job search can be conducted at the WFI if relevant. One of the purposes of the WFI is to encourage non-JSA clients to take up voluntary caselodging, the main source of which is New Deal provision, in order to help them find work or move closer to the labour market.

- This chapter focuses on the evidence from lone parent review meetings and trigger meetings for people with health conditions and disabilities.

7.1 Summary

- Jobseekers were most likely to say that they were made aware of future compulsory meetings, compared to much smaller proportions of non-JSA customers.

- Analysis suggests that a significant proportion of lone parents are not attending their six month review, although progress is being made. It also appears that a significant volume of people with health conditions and disabilities are not having a triggered WFI following their PCA.
• Review meetings have a greater work focus than initial PA meetings.

• Most advisers felt that six months was the optimum timing for the review meeting for new/repeat claimants, with 12 months as a reasonable interval before a mandatory review meeting for stock claimants.

7.2 Informing clients of mandatory review and trigger meetings

*Jobseekers were most likely to say that they were made aware of future compulsory meetings, compared to much smaller proportions of non-JSA customers.*

In a survey with clients conducted in 2004, 68 per cent of jobseekers reported that they were made aware of future compulsory meetings.\(^1\) Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 found that PAs tended to end the meetings with JSA customers by reminding them of the signing on process, of when they next had to come in and what they had to bring with them.\(^i\)

The 2004 survey also found that for non-JSA clients, the proportions were much fewer, with lone parents (51 per cent), people with health conditions and disabilities (38 per cent) and carers (26 per cent) being made aware of future compulsory meetings. The 2004 survey (Wave 2) also found that 52 per cent of lone parents in Pathfinder offices had been informed of the need to attend future compulsory meetings, compared to 36 per cent of lone parents in the 2003 survey (Wave 1).\(^{48}\}\(^iii\)

Qualitative research carried out in 2004 continues to find that few non-JSA customers were given details of further meetings that they were required to attend; some jobseekers were already aware of six or twelve month Restart interviews due to previous experience of the Jobcentre Plus process, and it appeared that PAs made some lone parents aware of the need to attend a further meeting in six months time. People with health conditions and disabilities were less aware of the mandatory requirement to attend trigger meetings, and carers’ awareness of the need to attend additional meetings was very limited.\(^iv\)

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\(^{48}\) Throughout the report from the client survey conducted in 2004, where comparisons have been made between Wave 1 and Wave 2, these refer only to Pathfinder offices in non-IB pilot areas.
7.3 Actioning of review meetings

Analysis suggests that a significant proportion of lone parents are not attending their six month review, although progress is being made...

Table 7.1 examines what events occur to lone parents six months after their initial WFI, when a repeat WFI is due. Although progress is being made, there is still a significant gap in arranging these triggers meetings.

The proportion of lone parents attending a WFI between four months and eight months from the initial WFI has been rising. In Jan to March 2004, 23 per cent of clients attended a WFI in this time, but this has now risen to 36 per cent. The proportion of clients having no further contact has been falling, which suggests improvements are being made.

Table 7.1 Lone parents attending a WFI between four months and eight months from the initial WFI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Attended</th>
<th>On New Deal</th>
<th>Exit</th>
<th>None</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan - Mar 04</td>
<td>6,400</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct - Dec 03</td>
<td>4,300</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>5,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan - Mar 03</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>2,600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...and a significant volume of people with health conditions and disabilities are not having a WFI triggered following their Personal Capability Assessment (PCA).

Table 7.2 shows that 18 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities having their initial PCA between July and September 2004 had a triggered WFI booked in the three months following PCA completion; whilst over 51 per cent do not have any activity and remain on benefit. However, the proportion being triggered has risen slightly and the proportion of clients having no further contact has fallen, which is encouraging.

Table 7.2 People with health conditions and disabilities having their initial PCA between July and September 2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WFI Booked</th>
<th>Deferral</th>
<th>On New Deal</th>
<th>Exit</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jul - Sep 04</td>
<td>3,400</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4,800</td>
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<td>Apr - Jun 04</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>500</td>
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<td>4,200</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul - Sep 03</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>6,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7.1 illustrates the extent to which PCA induced WFIs have varied over time, with the proportion having no further activity falling.
Key management indicators support this: It is a requirement that 90 per cent of review meetings have some action undertaken on them (the adviser must book, waive or defer the review meeting). The latest evidence available suggests that 70.8 per cent of review meetings meet this in May 2004, having risen from 65.5 per cent in April 2004. There are, however, known problems that may understate this proportion.

7.4 Work focus at Lone Parent Mandatory Review meetings

Review meetings may have a greater work-focus than initial PA meetings.

Evidence on review meetings in integrated offices suggests that there is more work focus in the six monthly and annual review meetings. Forty-nine per cent of respondents discussed NDLP at their meeting and just over a third (35 per cent) discussed childcare arrangements. Thirty per cent of respondents had undergone an in-work benefit calculation.

Review meetings were found to be particularly helpful when conducted by the same PA who delivered the initial meeting. However, annual review meetings were often not likely to be held with the same PA who had delivered the initial WFI, and this meant a new process of building up trust and rapport.

Many review meeting participants felt that their second meeting with an Adviser had been more productive than their original PA meeting. And some lone parents
who found the review meeting helpful said that they did not think they would have taken the initiative on their own to contact the PA again if they had not been obliged to attend this meeting.\textsuperscript{49, viii}

7.5 Attitudes towards timing of mandatory review meetings for lone parents

\textit{Most advisers felt that six months was the optimum timing for the review meeting for new/repeat claimants, with 12 months as a reasonable interval before a mandatory review meeting for stock claimants.}

Most advisers felt six months to be the optimum timing for the review meeting for new/repeat claimants, demonstrating support for the current system.

PAs considered twelve months as a reasonable interval before a mandatory review meeting for stock claimants whose circumstances were felt often to change little in this time. For new and repeat claimants, most advisers felt that a six monthly review would be a better interval, as their circumstances change very quickly. Advisers also felt that they would have preferred some form of deferment to put back the six monthly review meeting for those customers with serious health conditions.\textsuperscript{50, ix}

7.6 References

\textsuperscript{i} Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey: Wave Two (due to be published summer 2005).

\textsuperscript{ii} Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).

\textsuperscript{iii} Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey: Wave Two (due to be published summer 2005).

\textsuperscript{iv} Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published Spring 2005).

\textsuperscript{v} KMI from Jobcentre Plus Advisor site.

\textsuperscript{vi} Integrated Findings from the Evaluation of the First 18 Months of National Lone Parents Work Focused Interviews (March 2004).


\textsuperscript{49} Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).

\textsuperscript{50} Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
Mandatory review and trigger meetings

- Evaluation of the First 18 Months of Lone Parent PA Meetings: Findings from the Qualitative Research (September 2003).
8 Caseloading

- One aim of the WFI, as defined by the Jobcentre Plus vision is for PAs to encourage non-JSA customers to take up voluntary caseloading to help them find work, or move closer to the labour market. When monitoring Jobcentre Plus’s progress towards the vision caseloading is defined as New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) for lone parents and New Deal for Disabled People (NDDP) for disabled people.

- In addition to the New Deals, caseloading for customers with health conditions or disabilities can also be provided through or referral to a Disability Employment Adviser (DEA), and where this is not appropriate a customer can see their PA for further help and support. Carers, for whom there is no New Deal provision, should be caseloaded by their PA. In addition to the New Deals PAs also define caseloading as including: conducting job searches; conducting in-work benefit calculations; and promoting and referring customers to the services of specialist providers. There is evidence to suggest that follow up activity does occur outside New Deals.

- The introduction of the WFI has had a positive impact on caseloading to New Deals. Implementation effects and variation in district performance (see Chapter 2) negatively impacted on NDLP take up in Pathfinder districts as the Pathfinder Offices were rolled-out. Although PAs recognise the importance of caseloading (and their knowledge of and relationship with providers has improved over time), greater consideration should to be given to less job, ready clients (within and between groups) to meet the Jobcentre Plus vision. The continued roll out of Jobcentre Plus should assist this. In addition, the evidence indicates (also see staff training) that a better understanding of what services they could offer along with the confidence to challenge clients work assumptions and the removal of staff preconceptions (see WFI chapter) would further assist PAs to offer a caseloading service to clients. This appears to be an issue particularly for the sick or disabled group due to their diverse nature and the variety of specialist services on offer. Evidence from the evaluation of National LP PA meetings indicates other factors likely to impact on caseloading are increased workloads resulting in pressures in PA time, and poor note keeping.
8.1 Summary

- Caseloading is viewed by PAs as an important part method for achieving overall job submission targets. When monitoring Jobcentre Plus’ progress towards the vision caseloading is defined as NDLP for lone parents and NDDP for disabled people. However, PAs define caseloading more broadly, and varied in their approaches in promoting the programmes.

- As is consistent with earlier research, it appears that caseloading remains targeted at more job ready customers. Lone parents were routinely given information about NDLP during the WFI, although only a minority reported that the PA suggested further meetings.

- As is consistent with earlier research, discussion of further contact with customers on health and disability-related benefits, and promotion of the NDDP was more exceptional, and discussion of further contact with carers remained low. However, there is some evidence that customers deemed not ready for work at the initial WFI are re-contacted at a later date.

- In addition to discussion of NDLP and NDDP, there was evidence that PAs discussed more ‘informal’ caseloading with customers who were most job-ready or highly motivated to find work. In addition, customers from all client groups were typically given the PAs contact details at the end of the WFI.

- The impact of the introduction of WFIs can clearly be seen on movement into NDLP on a national basis, as can the impact of the introduction of Pathfinders on take-up in Pathfinder areas.

- The positive effects of the WFI process has an effect on caseloading to NDDP. Take-up rates have increased for integrated districts, with the most notable rise in the Pathways to Work districts. Evidence from the IB Pathways to Work Evaluation suggests that in the IB reforms districts, referrals to NDDP and PA knowledge of the Job Broker service is higher.

- It appears that there are small numbers of partners choosing to join the New Deal for Partners (NDP).

- The proportion of clients attending further PA meetings has been rising for lone parents and people with health conditions and disabilities, as have the proportion with a submission at these meetings, indicating a degree of work focus.

- The nature of caseload contact varied, and PAs used telephone contact or face-to-face meetings depending on several factors. There was considerable variation in the intensity of caseload support, depending on a range of factors. However, PAs felt that time constraints and a lack of available down time reduced their ability to carry out caseload activity. Although it appears that since the last round of research there has been progress where offices were taking, or planned to take measures to actually delivering more caseload meetings.
• The most common topic discussed at further voluntary meetings was prospects for/when work might be found. The main focus of non-New Deal caseloding was conducting job searches and in-work benefit calculations.

• Clients generally held positive views about the service they received and often found Job Brokers instrumental in raising low levels of confidence and self-esteem, although there were those that had reservations about Job Brokers’ success in finding them employment, or found that they had their own perceived barriers to gaining employment to overcome.

• There was mixed use of CAPs in caseload meetings.

• Since earlier research, Pathfinder offices had commonly developed links with NDDP Job Brokers and seemed to be more aware of the services provided by them. Relationships between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus-based staff, including DEAs, were an important aspect of NDDP, and despite initial reluctance from Jobcentre Plus staff to promote the Job Broker service, it appears that relations between the two have improved over time. It appeared that co-operation between the Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus-based staff was strongest in integrated offices where IB claimants routinely came into contact with Jobcentre Plus staff through attendance at a WFI, although some staff felt less enthusiastic about the role of Job Brokers.

• Job Brokers felt their freedom from association with the benefit system attracted people who would not otherwise have approached a traditional Jobcentre Plus programme, but it was also felt that some clients misunderstood the role of the Job Broker.

• Perceptions of the effectiveness of caseloding varied both across and within offices, with office managers and PA Managers feeling that they key to the success of caseloding was down to the level of PA activity, and perceptions of caseloding also varied among PAs. Some PAs had less positive views about caseloding, feeling that less was achieved through this process than was possible during the initial WFI.

8.2 The aim of caseloding for non-JSA customers

_Caseloding is viewed by PAs as an important method for achieving overall job submission targets._

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 found that caseloding is viewed by PAs as an important method for achieving overall job submission targets. They saw the initial WFI as an opportunity to build up a rapport with non-JSA customers, and future meetings were seen as the time when work would be discussed in more detail. This is consistent with research in 2004.
When monitoring Jobcentre Plus’ progress towards the vision, caseloading is defined as NDLP for lone parents and NDDP for customers on health and disability-related benefits. However, PAs define caseloading more broadly.

When monitoring Jobcentre Plus’ progress towards the vision, caseloading is defined as NDLP for lone parents and NDDP for customers on health and disability-related benefits. The 2003 research found that PAs defined the activities they undertook as caseloading as including: conducting job searches; conducting in-work benefit calculations; and promoting and referring customers to the services of specialist providers such as DEAs, New Deals and other organisations. In qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, staff consistently understood that caseloading was about maintaining regular contact with customers in order to provide ongoing support and to check customers’ progress towards employment, and was viewed by PAs as the primary method for helping customers towards work.

8.3 Encouraging caseloading

As is consistent with earlier research, it appears that caseloading remains targeted at more job-ready customers.

As is consistent with the 2003 research, qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that caseloading remains concentrated on the more job-ready customers. Emphasis was placed on caseloading those customers that PAs believed had good prospects for getting back to work, and who were ready to start looking immediately, rather than those who may need information and advice about work-focused services.

Research found that lone parents most commonly given information on NDLP were more job-ready customers; for lone parents who were not in a position to think about work, NDLP was given as something for those customers to think about for the future.

Lone parents were routinely given information about NDLP during the WFI, although only a minority reported that the PA suggested further voluntary meetings.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that lone parents were routinely given information about NDLP during the WFI, either verbally or in written form. This information tended to be for future reference where lone parents were likely to consider work in the future. However, a survey of customers conducted in 2004 indicated that only in a minority of cases, did PAs suggest further meetings with lone parents (39 per cent). Of these lone parents who had further meetings suggested to them by the PA, 24 per cent thought that the meeting was part of New Deal.
Discussion of further contact with customers on health and disability related benefits, and promotion of the NDDP was more exceptional...

Qualitative research from 2004 found that promotion of the NDDP to customers on health and disability-related benefits was rare. A survey of customers in 2004 indicated that 31 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities said that their PA had suggested further meetings, and of these customers, 12 per cent thought that these meetings were part of New Deal. Qualitative research conducted in 2004 showed that few customers were aware of the programme. Where they were, it was viewed as a resource for the future when their circumstances changed. As a result, there were very few examples of customers who agreed to attend further meetings as part of the NDDP.

The type of health condition being experienced, and customer and PA perceptions of when the customer would be able to consider work as an option, were key factors involved in the decision as to whether customers received information about the NDDP. Customers for whom work was an option in the medium- to longer-term were more likely to receive information about NDDP than more ‘job-ready’ customers. Those who were deemed by PAs to be job-ready in the short-term, (i.e. they had short term illnesses where chance of recovery was clear e.g. broken limbs) were given information about Jobcentre Plus job search support such as Jobseekers Direct and Job points rather than external agencies/NDDP.

...whilst discussion of further contact with carers remained low...

Around one in five (19 per cent) carers reported that their PA suggested having further voluntary meetings. Of these carers who had further meetings suggested to them by the PA, 6 per cent thought that the meeting was part of New Deal (please note, although there is no New Deal for carers, they can join NDDP or NDLP).

...however, there is some evidence that customers deemed not ready for work at the initial WFI, are re-contacted at a later date.

Although research indicates that PAs tend to caseload those deemed to be ready for work, qualitative research in 2004 indicates that some offices have a policy of re-contacting less job ready customers at some point after the initial WFI, in order to see if their circumstances have changed. However, the extent to which this follow up occurred is not clear.

PAs varied in their approaches to promoting the programmes.

Qualitative research with staff and customers in 2004 found that PAs varied in their approaches to promoting the programmes. Some PAs described the overall programme while others focused on individual services available such as job search support, training or in-work benefit calculations (IWBCs). NDDP research suggests that what clients were told about Job Brokers in gateway interviews, WFIs or interviews with DEAs, depended on assessments made by staff about people’s needs for support, readiness for work, and their own views on local Job Broker services. Often, customers were given a leaflet or list of Job Brokers in their area and it was then
up to the customer to make contact if, and when, they were interested. Recent changes to frontline guidance regarding NDDP has provided advisers with greater scope and incentive to directly refer customers to Job Brokers – the success of this initiative will be reviewed in forthcoming research.\textsuperscript{51 xiii}

\textbf{In addition to discussion of NDLP and NDDP, there was evidence that PAs discussed more ‘informal’ caseloading with customers who were most job ready or highly motivated to find work.}

For customers not interested in joining a New Deal programme, or for carers, where there is no New Deal provision, PAs offered what they regarded as ‘informal’ caseloading support. This included additional face-to-face and telephone contact. Customers who were offered this support tended to be the most job ready or those who demonstrated a high level of motivation to find work, since PAs perceived this group to need little support to move into employment. However, there are also examples of informal caseloading being offered to customers who are a long way from being job ready, particularly those claiming health-related benefits where their health condition makes it unclear when work would be an option. PAs reported they would contact customers at a later date when it may be clearer as to the timescale that they could consider work as an option.\textsuperscript{xiv}

There were some exceptional examples where jobseekers were offered informal contact with the PA who conducted their WFI such as returning to have a more comprehensive job search conducted. This contact was offered to customers who had a clear job goal where PAs were confident there would be vacancies and customers demonstrated significant motivation to get a job.

\textbf{In addition, customers from all groups were typically given the PAs contact details at the end of the WFI.}

Qualitative research with staff and customers carried out in 2004 found that non-JSA customers were typically given contact details for the PA, and told that they could re-contact them at anytime if they had any other queries or their circumstances changed and/or they were ready to consider work.\textsuperscript{xv} This appears to be similar to evidence from the 2003 research.

Interim findings from the research on WFIPs, conducted in 2004, suggest that most Advisers routinely closed WFIPs by inviting partners to re-contact them in the future if they changed their minds and were seeking work.\textsuperscript{xvi}

\section{Take-up of NDLP}

Evidence from integrated findings of the National LP WFi\textsuperscript{s}\textsuperscript{52} suggests that there were considerable numbers of lone parents who had either discussed further meetings at

\textsuperscript{51} Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).

\textsuperscript{52} Previously referred to as ‘National Lone Parent PA Meeting’.
their initial WFI, planned to have such meetings, or would have liked more contact, but had not gone on to attend any form of additional voluntary meeting. There was also a significant group of customers who had been looking for work at the time of their initial WFI and had continued to do so over the next 18 months, but who did not attend voluntary meetings or join NDLP in this time. It was felt that there had been missed opportunities in the WFI process with these clients.\textsuperscript{53 xvii}

The impact of the introduction of WFIs can clearly be seen on movement into NDLP on a national basis, as can the impact of the introduction of Pathfinders on take-up in Pathfinder areas.

Since the introduction of WFIs in April 2001 the proportion of clients being caseloaded within six months of the initial WFI has been increasing. The rollout of Pathfinders also had an impact on take-up rates. Increasing from six per cent at the time of rollout to 12 per cent in March 2002. Take-up in Pathfinder areas has generally been above the other rollout stages. There has been a general upward trend in NDLP take-up since then.\textsuperscript{54}

NDLP take-up has been increasing since offices went live in March 2003. Take up rates increased from six per cent at the time of rollout to ten per cent. This rise however, occurred after a reduction, possibly associated with the disruption that rollout initially causes.

\textbf{Figure 8.1 NDLP take-up within six months}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{NDLP_take-up.png}
\caption{NDLP take-up within six months}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{53} Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).

\textsuperscript{54} ‘Other’ districts are classified as all districts excluding Pathfinders, Day 2 districts and Pathways to Work districts.
For lone parents with their youngest child aged below three years of age, the introduction of the Pathfinder offices had a positive impact of NDLP take-up. Take-up increased from four per cent at the time of rollout, to nine per cent by December 2001. The rollout of WFIIs on a national basis has had a similar step increase for all other rollout stages. Again, a significant reduction in rates occurred around the time of rollout.

Figure 8.2  NDLP take-up within six months – youngest child aged zero to three years

For lone parents with their youngest child aged over five years, NDLP take-up again saw a step increase with the introduction of WFIIs in April 2001 from eight per cent to 15 per cent, in Pathfinder offices and all other district types. Since the national rollout of the LP WFI process, Pathfinder take-up rates have generally been below other districts since rollout, possibly due to the disruption, although rates have since recovered. This may explain why performance has since increased, whereas the performance of integrated districts (who are subject to rollout) has been lower.
Day 2 offices have experienced poorer NDLP performance and this will be monitored closely.xviii

An assessment of the impact of an exercise whereby Lone Parent PAs were encouraged to caseload LPs onto the NDLP programme, found that there was a clear increase in NDLP take-up rate in the short-term (i.e. the proportion of clients enrolling on NDLP within one month of their initial WFI) following the initiative. The average take-up rate has increased from 7.3 per cent to 9.6 per cent. It was not possible to assess the long term impact (i.e. the proportion of clients continuing to enrol on NDLP).55 xix

8.5 Take-up of NDDP

The positive effects of the WFI process has had an effect on caseloading to NDDP. Take-up rates have increased for integrated districts, with the most noticeable rise in the Pathways to Work districts.

The proportion of clients caseloaded onto NDDP has been rising since rollout began in July 2001 in both Pathfinders and other integrated districts. At the time of integration, just 0.1 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities moved onto NDDP within six months of the claim start. Latest evidence suggests this to be nearly three per cent. Pathways to Work districts are more effective (although were also more effective prior to rollout), now caseloading six per cent of clients within six months.

55 Analysis from IAD OR.
Latest evidence of NDDP conversion to Job Entry currently stands at 52 per cent in Jobcentre Plus. Forty-two per cent of these jobs gained through an NDDP Job Broker are sustained for at least six months.

**Evidence from the IB Pilots research suggests that in the IB reforms districts, referrals to NDDP and PA knowledge of the Job Broker service is higher.**

The latest evidence from the IB Pathways to Work Evaluation suggests that referrals to NDDP and PA knowledge of the Job Broker service appear to be higher in the IB reforms districts. Use of the Job Broker service was found to be fairly common and IBPAs were typically confident that they knew what role Job Brokers were there to fulfil. However, IBPAs were typically referring those customers who were closer to work to Job Brokers, suggesting that as found in the Jobcentre Plus evaluation research with staff and customers, PAs appear to consider this provision more suitable for the more job ready customers.56 xx

Evaluation of NDDP in late 2002 suggests that the Jobcentre Plus points system should act to encourage co-operation by allowing Jobcentre Plus staff to claim entry points for Job Broker clients who go on to enter employment, as some Jobcentre Plus staff believed clients going to Job Brokers to be lost points, and that they were in direct competition. Such staff were less likely to recommend job ready clients to Job Brokers.57 xx However, recently introduced changes to guidance and the Job Entry points system – to be looked at in forthcoming waves of evaluation, is expected to resolve much of this problem.

56 Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).

57 Findings from FPWD.
8.6 Take-up of New Deal for Partners (NDP)

*It appears that there are small numbers of partners choosing to join the New Deal for Partners (NDP).*

Interim findings from the research on WFIPs, conducted in 2004, suggest that Advisers report only small numbers of partners were choosing to go onto the NDP programme, and this was borne out of interviews with customers.\(^{58}\)

8.7 Informal caseloading

*There is evidence of ‘informal’ follow up activity taking place outside the New Deals.*

As well as NDLP and NDDP activity, about 19 per cent of lone parents and 30 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities attended further meetings. The numbers will be lower for lone parents as they only cover the period before the first trigger meeting is due and for people with health conditions and disabilities, it is any meeting after initial WFI. The data cannot tell us what these meetings were, but 27 per cent of these lone parents had a submission on the same day, and 30 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities had a submission, which indicates a level of work focus.

**Figure 8.5 Proportion of clients having more than one WFI other than NDLP/NDDP**

Since customers from all groups were typically given their PA’s contact details at the end of the WFI, there were also examples of customers telephoning or visiting the

\(^{58}\) Findings from FPWD.
Jobcentre Plus office independently of initial contact from their PA. Lone parents in particular, appreciated the ability to see the PA when issues arose. These customers felt they established a rapport with their PA and viewed them as a reliable source of information and advice about a range of issues.\(^{59}\)

The proportion of clients attending further PA meetings has been rising for lone parents and people with health conditions and disabilities, as have the proportion with a submission at these meetings, indicating a degree of work focus.

Table 8.1 illustrates the activities of lone parents within three months of first contact. The proportion of clients with a PA meeting has increased in the quarters analysed. In Quarter One 03/04 10.4 per cent of lone parents attended a further meeting. This increased to 13.5 per cent in the first quarter of 2004/05. Also, the proportion of clients with no further contact has fallen.

**Table 8.1 Activities of lone parents within three months of first contact**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Follow-up PA meeting</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Exit</th>
<th>No initial WFI</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Join NDLP</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apr - Jun 03</td>
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<td>8.7%</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, the proportion of people with health conditions and disabilities having further voluntary (non-NDDP) contact has been increasing. In the first quarter of 2003/04, 7.6 per cent of clients attended a further PA meeting. This compares with 10.1 per cent of clients in the first quarter of 2004/05.\(^{60}\)

**Table 8.2 Further voluntary (non-NDDP) contact**

<table>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th>Exit</th>
<th>No initial WFI</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Join NDLP</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>1.1%</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{59}\) Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).

\(^{60}\) Analysis from IAD OR.
8.8 Nature and intensity of caseload meetings

The nature of caseload contact varied, and PAs used telephone contact or face-to-face meetings depending on several key factors.

Qualitative research conducted in 2004 indicated that the nature and intensity of caseload contact varied. PAs reported using telephone calls or face-to-face meetings or, in some cases, both modes of contact in delivering caseload support. Key factors that influenced the type of caseload contact used included:

- **Whether caseloading was part of a New Deal programme, or ‘informal’**.

  PAs were more likely to encourage customers to attend a further face-to-face meeting in the Jobcentre Plus public office when a customer had joined a New Deal programme. This type of contact was more effective in allowing the PA to explain the range of support available under the New Deal programmes.

- **The services offered to customers**.

  Job matching could be conducted in a number of ways. Some PAs used their downtime to look for suitable vacancies and would ring the customer if any appropriate jobs were found. However, for other customers, a job search was conducted if they attended a face-to-face meeting. Where other services, such as in-work benefit calculations (IWBCs) were offered, a face-to-face meeting was preferred as it eased explanations of the calculation. Similarly, access to some of the New Deal services such as the Adviser’s Discretionary Fund (ADF) and referral to training was more likely to be achieved through a face-to-face meeting.

- **The motivation and enthusiasm of the customer to move into work**.

  PAs tended not to invite customers for a face-to-face meeting if the customer was not interested in work in the short-term. For other customers who were highly motivated to move into work, PAs similarly restricted their contact to telephone calls as they were confident customers were undertaking their own job search activity and required little direct help from the PA.

- **The timescale in which customers would be able to consider work as an option**.

  Where customers were unlikely to consider work in the short-term telephone contact was undertaken initially to check whether a customer’s circumstances had changed and if they felt ready to think about moving into work.

There was considerable variation in the intensity of caseload support, depending on a range of factors...

Qualitative research in 2004 showed considerable variation across offices and individual PAs regarding the frequency of caseload support. A range of factors influenced the intensity of the support whether through New Deal or more informal caseloads. PAs generally determined the intensity of the contact based on their
assessment of its appropriateness given a customer’s circumstances. PAs, for example, were concerned not to pressure lone parents who had experienced a recent relationship breakdown. For carers and customers claiming health-related benefits, contact was less frequent where PAs felt it was inappropriate for customers to be considering work. The timescale for further contact with customers claiming health-related benefits was also determined by key events happening that may have changed their circumstances, such as an operation or the expiry of a sick note. More frequent contact was offered, however, where customers were interested in the services available through Jobcentre Plus or demonstrated a clear motivation to move into work.

...however, PAs felt that time constraints and a lack of available down time reduced their ability to carry out caseload activity.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that PAs felt that the time available to carry out caseloading was considerably reduced due to a lack of ‘down time’, and that there was a mismatch between the targets for job entries and the realities of the ability to deliver the support element of the vision.

This is also evident in the National LP WFIs. Where increased workloads have resulted in pressures on PA time, the PAs ability to ensure follow-up contact with clients or to contact caseloaded clients was affected. There is also evidence that some PAs are unable to build on previous meetings because notes are not kept. More recently, good practice of PAs has led PAs to record a much greater amount of information than in previous versions of LMS.

Although it appears that since the last round of research there has been progress where offices were taking, or planned to take, measures to actually deliver more caseload meetings.

Research conducted in 2003 found that more offices were making formal arrangements with non-JSA customers for PAs to re-contact them at a certain point after the WFI, but in practice this was patchy. Research in 2004 suggested that offices were, or planned to take measures to actually deliver more caseload meetings by setting aside specific resources to improve caseloading performance. These included recruiting casual staff to conduct the caseloading meeting; PAMs taking greater responsibility for caseloading; and PAs making more referrals to DEAs caseloads. However, it was not clear from customer evidence that this occurred in practice.

61 Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
8.9  Content of meetings

*The most common topic discussed at further voluntary meetings was prospects for/when work might be found.*

A survey of clients conducted in 2004 asked lone parents and people with health conditions and disabilities what they discussed at their further, voluntary meetings. The most common topic was prospects for work/when they might find work, with around six in ten reporting they discussed this. Half of people with health conditions and disabilities (50 per cent), and 41 per cent of lone parents discussed things that make it difficult to work, and half of lone parents, discussed benefits or financial help, although only three in ten (33 per cent) of people with health conditions and disabilities reported this. One quarter of people with health conditions and disabilities (24 per cent) discussed help or services relating to health or a disability, and a third of lone parents (32 per cent) discussed childcare arrangements. Other topics discussed included ways of finding work: types of jobs or particular jobs; specific job vacancies; work experience and skills; and training or education courses, with between 30 per cent and 40 per cent reporting they discussed these issues.\(^{62}\)

Qualitative research with staff and customers in 2004 suggests that initial NDLP meetings were generally about explaining the services available, while subsequent meetings could involve accessing the services, e.g. having an IWBC conducted and explained, arranging ADF support, making referrals to training or having job searches conducted and support given to make applications.\(^{xxvii}\)

*The main focus of non-New Deal caseloading was conducting job searches and in-work benefit calculations.*

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003, found that the main focus of informal caseloading activity was to conduct job searches and IWBCs for customers who wanted to move into work in the near future and who were nearly job ready. In some offices, PAs would also caseload and offer further help to customers who were not job ready, but who were interested in permitted work. There were some PAs who initially offered this as a face-to-face service, in order to build up a rapport with the client, but generally it was provided as a telephone service.\(^{xxvii}\) Qualitative research conducted in 2004, indicates that informal caseloading contact was often to check customers’ progress and to see whether additional support could be offered.\(^{xxix}\)

*Clients generally held positive views about the service they received and often found Job Brokers instrumental in raising low levels of confidence and self-esteem…*

Findings from the NDDP Extension suggest that people with health conditions and disabilities found the Job Broker service offered through NDDP to be accessible and

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\(^{62}\) Please note: Figures are not shown here for carers because of the small number of respondents.
the staff friendly and able to build clients’ confidence. This is supported by findings from the NDDP First Synthesis report where Job Brokers were often instrumental in raising frequently low levels of confidence and low self-esteem which were prevalent amongst clients in this study. For many clients, the Job Broker had been instrumental in providing assistance with job search techniques, completing application forms, and advising and supporting through the interview process.63 xxx

...although there were those that had reservations about Job Brokers’ success in finding them employment, or found that they had their own perceived barriers to gaining employment to overcome.

The NDDP Extensionxxx suggests that clients’ expectations that Job Brokers would offer more help with finding suitable jobs and ‘mediating’ with employers were often not met, and findings from the NDDP First Synthesis report found that registered clients also had their own perceived barriers to gaining employment.64

There was mixed use of Action Plans in caseload meetings.

Given the varying use of CAPS in initial WFls, their use in guiding the frequency and content of caseload meetings was also mixed. Where used, the short- and long-term goals included in CAPS were used as a guide to the number of times the customer would be contacted. The customer’s goals detailed in the plan also allowed PAs to tailor the content of the caseload meetings.xxxii

8.10 Relationship between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus

Evidence has shown that since phase two of the research with staff and customers, Pathfinder offices had commonly developed links with NDDP Job Brokers and seemed to be more aware of the services provided by them...

Evidence from the qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003, found that since phase two (2002) of the research, Pathfinder offices had commonly developed links with NDDP Job Brokers and, as such, seemed more aware of the services provided by them. Shared knowledge from more experienced staff to those newer to their roles also appeared to be an effective method of improving PA knowledge and confidence.xxxiii

...and relationships between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus-based staff, including DEAs, were an important aspect of NDDP, and despite initial reluctance from jobcentre Plus staff to promote the Job Broker service, it appears that relations between the two have improved over time...

Findings from the NDDP First Synthesis report confirmed that relationships between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus-based staff, including DEAs, were an important

63 Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
64 Findings from FPWD.
aspect of the NDDP, as Jobcentre Plus offices were an important route for people to Job Broker services. Jobcentre Plus staff and DEAs had an important role in informing people about the Job Broker service, and in return, Job Brokers accessed certain services for their participants, via Jobcentre Plus staff, notably DEAs. This included the Job Introduction Scheme, Work Preparation, and Access to Work. The research found that some progress had been made, where relations between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus staff including former BA staff, DEAs and Action Teams65 were said to have improved over time, especially where those relationships had not existed prior to the Job Broker service.66 xxxiv

…and it appeared that co-operation between Job Brokers and Jobcentre Plus-based staff was strongest in integrated offices where IB claimants routinely came into contact with Jobcentre Plus staff through attendance at a WFI...

Earlier findings from the NDDP Extension research found that the relationship between Jobcentre Plus staff and job Brokers had been somewhat mixed; co-operation with Job Brokers was strongest in Jobcentre Plus integrated offices where IB claimants routinely came into contact with Jobcentre Plus staff through attendance at WFIs.67

…although there were some staff who felt less enthusiastic about the role of Job Brokers.

Evaluation of NDDP in late 2002 suggests that the Jobcentre Plus points system should act to encourage co-operation by allowing Jobcentre Plus staff to claim entry points for Job Broker clients who go on to enter employment, as some Jobcentre Plus staff believed clients going to Job Brokers to be lost points, and that they were in direct competition. Such staff were less likely to recommend job ready clients to Job Brokers.68 xxx Qualitative research with staff and customers carried out in 2003 supports this, suggesting that the Jobcentre Plus points system also left some staff less likely to recommend ‘job ready’ clients to Job Brokers as they saw themselves as in direct competition with the Job Brokers and believed transferred clients to be ‘lost points.’ Also, where Jobcentre Plus staff had experienced or heard of a poor service from a Job Broker, it led to a reluctance to continue to promote the service. xxxvi

65 Action Teams offer targeted help in areas of high unemployment for people who find it difficult to get work because of where they live, their employment record, or personal circumstances, or because of discrimination on the grounds of their ethnic origin. They also work with local employers to break down any prejudice against their clients; offer in-work support; and encourage employers to consider family-friendly hours or align shift patterns to help them recruit and retain staff.
66 Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD).
67 Findings from FPWD.
68 Findings from FPWD.
However, recently introduced changes to guidance and the Job Entry points system—
to be looked at in forthcoming waves of evaluation, are expected to resolve much of
this problem.\textsuperscript{69}

\textit{Job Brokers felt their freedom from association with the benefit system
attracted people who would not otherwise have approached a traditional
Jobcentre Plus programme, but it was also felt that some clients
misunderstood the role of the Job Broker.}

Job Brokers felt their freedom from association with the benefit system attracted
people who would not have approached a traditional Jobcentre Plus programme.
However, all groups interviewed for this research viewed the programme title as a
deterrent to those in the client group who did not associate themselves with the
term ‘disabled’.\textsuperscript{xxxvii}

Also, findings from the NDDP First Synthesis report found that the term ‘Job Broker’
suggested to some clients that providers held lists of jobs that they allocate when this
was rarely the case. Job Brokers generally focus their efforts on helping and
motivating participants to apply for jobs through improving job search skills, etc. This
type of service was actually more suitable for NDDP registrants (of which there were
many) who did not wish their Job Broker to be in contact with their employer,
preferring to find their own employment, or not wishing their disability or health
condition to be disclosed to their employer, fearing stigmatism through association
with a ‘disability’ related programme.\textsuperscript{70 xxxviii}

8.11 The effectiveness of caseloading

Evidence shows that caseloading is effective in securing job outcomes. Latest
evidence suggests that, of lone parents who are caseloaded directly from the initial
WFI, 52 per cent achieve a job entry. Similar results are illustrated for people with
health conditions and disabilities. Of those clients who are caseloaded direct from
their initial WFI, 50 per cent of clients achieve a job entry. Studies show that the
average length of time off benefit for lone parents is three years, with an average
annual benefit saving of £3,000.\textsuperscript{71}

\textit{Perceptions of the effectiveness of caseloading varied both across and
within offices, with Office Managers and Personal Adviser Managers feeling
that the key to the success of caseloading was down to the level of PA
activity...}

Research with staff conducted in 2004, found that perceptions on the effectiveness
of caseloading varied both across and within offices. Office managers and Personal
Adviser Managers felt that they key to the success of caseloading was the PAs activity

\textsuperscript{69} Findings from FPWD.

\textsuperscript{70} Findings from FPWD.

\textsuperscript{71} Findings from FPWD.
in terms of job matching, building a rapport with customers and encouraging them to join a caseload in the first place.

...and perceptions of the effectiveness of caseloading also varied among PAs...

Perceptions of the effectiveness of caseloading also varied among PAs; they identified a number of key factors that they felt contributed to effective caseload support, including whether or not the customer was actively ready to job search; if a PA actively and regularly kept on top of their caseload and whether the caseload was of a manageable size; and the extent to which PAs prioritised and understood the purpose of caseload support.

Views on the effectiveness of caseloading tended to be linked with their overall views of caseloading as a process and the outcomes associated with caseloading. For some PAs, the effectiveness of caseloading was viewed solely in terms of job entries. In this context, it was felt to be effective for lone parents, people with health conditions and disabilities and carers who were highly motivated to move into work in the short-term. Caseloading was also effective for other customers in providing ongoing support that encouraged them to return to work, and for some, the rapport built between customers and PAs as a result of regular contact through caseloading, was recognised to have a positive effect on customers’ motivation to work.

...and some PAs had less positive views about caseloading, feeling that less was achieved through this process than was possible during the initial WFI.

However, other PAs had less positive views about caseloading as a process and felt that it was less effective. They felt that more could be achieved at the initial WFI, as once the customers left the Jobcentre Plus office they often lost the motivation the PA had instilled in them. Some PAs also felt that remembering the needs and interests of customers seen previously was difficult and, as such, would lead to a less effective service being delivered. Whilst some PAs felt that caseloading was an effective tool, its voluntary nature as well as the circumstances of some customers were felt to hinder an effective outcome.

The effectiveness of caseloading was felt to be undermined by a number of factors, such as PAs’ knowledge of services available to the customer; PAs who lacked confidence in providing information about New Deal programmes, in-work support and how to conduct IWBCs. Some PAs were also reluctant to do what they perceived as pressurising non-JSA customers into discussing work.
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9 Customer satisfaction

- This chapter outlines customer satisfaction with the Jobcentre Plus service. Jobcentre Plus have an obligation to provide a service to customers that responds to their needs, and it is, therefore, important to gain detailed information on customer satisfaction. In order to assess customer satisfaction across all aspects of Jobcentre Plus, qualitative and quantitative research was undertaken in 2003 and 2004. This research provided the basis for tracking over time how customer perceptions of the service change as Jobcentre Plus implementation is rolled out, helping to drive the process of performance improvement.

9.1 Summary

- Comparisons between the 2003 and 2004 Jobcentre Plus National Customer Satisfaction survey have shown, amongst other things, that the attitudes towards the service and office facilities had improved and the number of customers who felt like complaining, is down; of those who did complain, there was an increased satisfaction with the complaints process.

- Overall, satisfaction levels of Jobcentre Plus customers are comparable with satisfaction levels for respondents from legacy offices.

- In general, customers expressed high levels of satisfaction with the service they received, with mainly eight in ten reporting that they were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘quite satisfied’ with First Contact; around nine in ten saying that they were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘quite satisfied’ with the service they received from the FA; and seven in ten lone parents, and around six in ten of all other client groups reported that they were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘quite satisfied’ with the service received from the PA.

- There appeared to be a high level of customer satisfaction at First Contact, although there were some issues upon which customers wanted further clarification.

- There appeared to be a high level of satisfaction with the FA, although customers felt they would have liked more information on their benefit entitlement and when they could receive it.
There was a high level of satisfaction with the service from the PA, with non-JSA customers especially finding the PAs approachable and helpful.

However, there were some customers who felt less satisfied with the service, feeling that the WFI was neither useful or informative and some feeling that the timing of the WFI was inappropriate: 62 per cent carers, 56 per cent people with health conditions and disabilities and 51 per cent of lone parents felt that it was not a good time to have their WFI.

9.2 Changes between the 2003 and 2004 Jobcentre Plus National Customer Satisfaction surveys

Comparisons between the 2003 and 2004 Jobcentre Plus National Customer Satisfaction survey have shown, amongst other things, that the attitudes towards the service and office facilities had improved and the number of customers who felt like complaining is down; of those who did, there was an increased satisfaction with the complaints process.

It has been possible to compare the results of the current 2004 survey with those from the previous survey undertaken in 2003 in terms of certain questions to respondents who had been claiming for six months or more. These comparisons cover respondents nationally in both Jobcentre Plus integrated and legacy offices.

Key changes identified between 2003 and 2004 are:

- Awareness of the Customers’ Charter is down from 29 per cent to 26 per cent.
- The proportion of respondents who had felt like complaining during the previous six months is down from 14 per cent to 11 per cent.
- As a reason for feeling like complaining, staff attitudes remains predominant, but the proportion of respondents identifying it is down from 26 per cent to 19 per cent.
- The proportion of respondents identifying matters relating to benefit applications and payments as grounds for feeling like complaining is lower.
- The proportion satisfied with the complaints process is up from 32 per cent to 34 per cent and the proportion dissatisfied is down from 64 per cent to 55 per cent.
- Performance ratings on most aspects of Jobcentre Plus service and aspects of office facilities and environment are improved, especially on staff finding out needs and respecting privacy and on the extent to which the office is pleasant and welcoming, the amount of privacy in the office and help available for people who have difficulty with English.
There has been little change in overall satisfaction, but a small increase in the proportion ‘very satisfied’ might indicate a slight increase in the strength of satisfaction within the overall figure.\(^2\) 

9.3 Levels of customer satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus

**Overall, satisfaction levels of Jobcentre Plus customers are comparable with satisfaction levels for respondents from legacy offices.**

Findings from the Jobcentre Plus National Customer Satisfaction Survey 2004 suggest that the overall satisfaction levels of Jobcentre Plus customers (82 per cent) was comparable with the overall satisfaction level for all respondents (81 per cent), and the number of customers who felt like complaining from the Jobcentre Plus offices (12 per cent) was also comparable to those in legacy offices (13 per cent).\(^2\)

Qualitative findings that build on the Jobcentre Plus National Customer Satisfaction research in 2003 found that where a customers’ needs were relatively straightforward (e.g. IB or IS customers who have their benefit paid directly into a bank account or receive them in the post) they tended to have less direct contact with the service and be satisfied. Conversely, those with more complex, ‘non-standard’ needs tended to have more frequent contact, to report more problems with inconsistency and their needs not being met, and to be more dissatisfied.\(^3\)

The Jobcentre Plus National Customer Satisfaction Survey 2004 found that customers from Jobcentre Plus integrated offices were more aware of the Customers’ Charter (29 per cent) than customers in legacy offices (26 per cent), although the extent to which customers in integrated offices had felt like complaining was no different from the general picture.

Customers in Jobcentre Plus offices were more likely to cite problems with benefit payment (15 per cent, average 10 per cent) for wanting to complain. These customers were also less likely (29 per cent) to be satisfied with the process of complaining. However, Jobcentre Plus customers reported higher satisfaction levels (30 per cent) compared to those in legacy offices (25 per cent) with the outcome of the complaint.

Customers from Jobcentre Plus offices were more likely to say that the service had improved over the last 12 months than in legacy offices (30 per cent versus 25 per cent).\(^4\)

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\(^2\) Findings from Jobcentre Plus Analytical Division (JPAD).

\(^3\) Findings from JPAD.

\(^4\) Findings from Jobcentre Plus Analytical Division (JPAD).
9.4 First Contact

There appeared to be a high level of customer satisfaction at First Contact...

Recent findings from the Jobcentre Plus client survey found that around eight in ten customers were very satisfied or quite satisfied with First Contact; only people with health conditions and disabilities were slightly less satisfied, with around seven in ten reporting satisfaction with the First Contact service. There were some examples in which jobseekers were less happy with the service, although this was mainly due to the telephone manner of the FCO, or because the computers were down when they telephoned and their call was not returned as promised.

However, a recent report by the Citizen’s Advice Bureau on the effectiveness of Contact Centres claims that they are receiving increasing numbers of reports that phone contact with Jobcentre Plus offices may not work well for all claimants. The report suggests that ‘emphasis on telephone contact with Jobcentre Plus offices causes particular problems for people whose first language is not English, or who have poor basic skills or mental health conditions’.

...although there were some issues upon which customers wanted further clarification.

Recent findings from the case studies research found that specifically, customers across all client groups reported wanting more information on what benefits they were eligible to claim and the Jobcentre Plus process overall, i.e. the number of meetings they had to attend and how long these meetings would last. This information needs to be provided by FCOs to inform customers of what to expect. This would also give them the opportunity to consider their future aspirations and work goals prior to attending.

9.5 The Financial Assessor

There appeared to be a high level of satisfaction with the Financial Assessor...

Around nine in ten customers said that they were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘quite satisfied’, and generally felt that staff were ‘pleasant and friendly’ or ‘polite and helpful’.

...although customers felt they would have liked more information on their benefit entitlement and when they could receive it.

Recent case studies research found that customers across all client groups reported that they would like more information about how much benefit they could expect to receive and when they could expect to receive it. It was these questions that when not addressed by the FA were sometimes raised by the customer during the WFI.
9.10 Reception

Some of the larger public offices were using security guards to greet customers, and, although rare, there were some examples in which customers reported feeling intimidated by this.\textsuperscript{xii}

9.11 The Personal Adviser

\textit{There was a high level of satisfaction with the service from the PA, with non-JSA customers especially finding the PAs approachable and helpful.}

Around seven in ten lone parents were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘quite satisfied’ with the service from the PA at the WFI, and around six in ten clients across the other groups reported the same. Around 75 per cent of lone parents and jobseekers found the advice given to them by the PA at the WFI was ‘very helpful’ or ‘quite helpful’, and 68 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities and carers reported the same.\textsuperscript{xiii}

Some lone parents felt that the PAs were understanding and approachable, and those who had received support and advice felt that the meeting had been productive. Where PAs were open and listened to them, people with health conditions and disabilities felt that the PA had struck the right balance in discussing work, and, therefore, felt more comfortable about returning to Jobcentre Plus again to use the PA’s services. Carers who explained that work was not an option at the time of the WFI, found that PAs generally accepted this response and handled the situation sensitively.

Non-JSA customers who were interested in work, commonly expressed positive views towards the service, and said that they had received relevant, helpful information. Some found it useful to have the opportunity to talk about their situation and start to think about the future, and had been given encouragement to pursue long-term goals. Some were appreciative of the fact that they had not been ‘pushed’ into looking for work and others reported that their confidence had been boosted.\textsuperscript{xiv}

In National LP PA meetings, a positive word of mouth message about WFIs and NDLP was said to now exist in the community in some areas, although not everywhere to the same extent.\textsuperscript{xv} Most clients, regardless of individual circumstances or proximity to the labour market, gained something positive from the WFI.\textsuperscript{xvi}

\textsuperscript{75} Findings from the Family, Poverty and Work Division (FPWD)

\textsuperscript{76} Findings from FPWD.
9.12 Customers who felt less satisfied with the PA service at their WFI

*However, there were some customers who felt less satisfied with the service, feeling that the WFI was neither useful or informative and some feeling that the timing of the WFI was inappropriate.*

However, 62 per cent of carers, 56 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities and 51 per cent of lone parents felt that it was not at good time to have their WFI. xxi

Recent case studies research suggests that jobseekers’ experiences of WFIs were mixed. Whereas some found the WFI to be useful and productive, others found the meeting to be mechanistic, feeling that the meetings were not tailored to their needs or sufficiently detailed to be of any use.

Some non-JSA customers did not feel that the WFI was useful or informative. These tended to be carers with full-time caring commitments, or lone parents who were not interested in work at the time of their WFI. Some sick or disabled clients felt that the timing of the WFI was inappropriate and that it should have occurred at a later stage, and some reported that the PA had discussed work with them as tough it were an immediate priority, which they felt was inappropriate and left them feeling pressured into looking for work. xvi This mirrors evidence from the National LP PA meetings. Some customers who were interested in work were disappointed when the PA did not raise the subject of work, or the PA did not offer any, enough, or the right kind of information and support.

The case studies research also found that customers across all client groups felt that they would have liked their PA to have provided more detailed information on training and service providers, how to access these and their appropriateness to the individual customer.

Findings such as these have highlighted the amount of expertise that staff, particularly FAs and PAs, are required to have in order to carry out their role. (See Chapter 13)

The research also raises the question of whether Jobcentre Plus customers would be better served by the use of generalist or specialist FAs and PAs. xix (Please see Section 6.17). xx

9.13 PRA target

The Customer Service PRA Target measures performance against speed, accuracy and proactivity and rates the quality of the office environment. The 2004/05 target is a score of 81 per cent and the April to June 2004 national performance was 78.7 per cent. As Figure 9.1 illustrates, there seems to have been a dip in Day 2 performance relative to other districts during the rollout period, but recovery has since been made.
This trend is consistent with other evidence, such as that on Jobseeker and Lone Parent job entries.

**Figure 9.1 Customer service target**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apr to Jun 2002</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>Day 2 districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul to Sep 2002</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>Non-integrated districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct to Dec 2002</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan to Mar 2003</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr to Jun 2003</td>
<td>85%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oct to Dec 2003</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan to Mar 2004</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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xii. Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).
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xvii Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery (October 2004).
xviii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).
xix Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).
xx Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).
10 Office Environment

- This chapter focuses on the Jobcentre Plus office environment. As well as changes to the way in which customers claim benefits and to the help and support they receive whilst they are in receipt of benefits, the environment of public offices is markedly different to that of legacy offices. In particular, Jobcentre Plus offices are predominantly open plan, and the majority of interactions between staff and customers do not take place in a screened environment. Offices also provide children’s play areas, and vacancy boards have been replaced by job points.

- In general, both staff and customers expressed very positive views about the office environment. Staff felt the new offices were nicer places to work, and helped them to provide a more professional service to customers, and the majority of customers were satisfied with office environment, and felt it had improved over time. However, customers have expressed concern about a lack of privacy in the open plan environment.

10.1 Summary

- Generally, both staff and customers were positive about the Jobcentre Plus environment.

- Staff felt that the new offices were nicer places to work in, and that there was less confrontation, anger or frustration with customers, although ex-Social Security staff continued to be concerned about the threat of incidents in an open plan office. However, staff were generally positive about the use of security guards and Customer Contact Officers (CCOs).

- The majority of customers were very satisfied with the office environment in Jobcentre Plus offices, with customers, especially those claiming IB or IS benefits, feeling that the offices had improved over time.

- Some customers felt that the removal of screens was a positive change.

- Generally, customers reported that they felt safe in Jobcentre Plus offices, although attitudes towards the presence of security guards was mixed.

- Customers’ opinions on the new environment tended to depend on the different types of offices that they had experienced prior to entering Jobcentre Plus.
• It was especially important for IB customers and those with mental health conditions to feel secure and at ease in the Jobcentre Plus offices.

• Some customers found that disabled access was not available when they attended the office for their FA and/or PA meeting, and some customers were concerned about the lack of privacy due to the nature of the open plan offices or the positioning of the warm phones.

• Play areas were popular with lone parents, with around eight in ten saying that this facility had made their visit to the office easier.

• Generally, customers liked having the use of the Job points, saying that they found them to be user-friendly and made them feel ‘empowered’ to look for jobs themselves, although research conducted in 2004 found that use of the Job points was more mixed.

10.2 Staff views towards the environment

Staff felt that the new offices were nicer places to work in, and that there was less confrontation, anger or frustration with customers, although ex-Social Security staff continued to be concerned about the threat of incidents in an open plan office...

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 and 2004 found that staff felt that generally the new offices were much nicer places in which to work and helped them to provide a more professional service. Staff noted that there was less confrontation, anger or frustration with customers.¹

Staff safety research conducted in 2004 found that staff generally felt safe working in the Jobcentre Plus environment and value the welcoming, professional image of the new offices and the various safety measures put in place. Whilst staff recognise that the office environment has improved, where they worked before the rollout to Jobcentre Plus continues to influence their perceptions of safety within the open office environment. Ex-Social Security office staff continue to be anxious about the threat of incidents in an open office environment.² Qualitative research with staff and customers also found that some staff expressed minor concerns about the office environment, particularly around the lack of desk and storage space and the desk layout, insufficient seating for waiting customers and lack of furniture for staff.³

…although staff were generally positive about the use of security guards and Customer Contact Officers (CCOs).

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that staff in some of the larger public offices that were using security guards to greet customers, felt this had a positive effect on customers’ behaviour in that it calmed any stressed or anxious clients.⁴ The staff safety research, also conducted in 2004, supports this finding in that security staff were felt to provide a good deterrent to difficult customers.⁵ It was felt that their presence sent out the message that ‘nuisance’ behaviour would not be tolerated.⁶
10.3 Customer views towards the environment

The majority of customers were very satisfied with the office environment in Jobcentre Plus offices...

A survey with clients conducted in 2003 found that the majority of customers were ‘very satisfied’ or ‘quite satisfied’ with the office environment at Jobcentre Plus offices, although people with health conditions and disabilities were slightly less satisfied (74 per cent) compared to the other client groups where there was no significant difference between jobseekers (81 per cent), lone parents (80 per cent) and carers (79 per cent). It appears that customers who had a work-focused element to their WFI were also more likely to be positive about the office environment, indicating that a favourable impression of the Jobcentre Plus process tends to extend to specific issues like the office environment.\textsuperscript{vii}

...with customers feeling that the Jobcentre Plus offices had improved over time...

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 found that customers felt that the Jobcentre Plus offices had improved over time. They felt that it was a more welcoming environment, in conjunction with generally more helpful staff, whose attitudes towards the customer had changed for the better, which in turn impacted on the customer’s behaviour.

Research in 2004 found customers who offered a comparison between old and new offices typically commented that new offices were cleaner, and more modern than old offices. Old offices were often described as ‘dirty’ in comparison. Customers’ views of the office were usually made in combination with references to the friendliness of staff. Customers with no prior experience of the service sometimes noted that the office was not what they had expected.

This is supported by the latest qualitative findings building on the National Jobcentre Plus Customer Satisfaction research, where this view was most notable amongst IB and IS customers who had previously used Social Security offices, although there were those who felt that although the environment had improved, it had made no difference to the service provided.\textsuperscript{vii \textit{viii}}

...and some customers felt that the removal of screens was a positive change.

The 2004 research also found that some customers, across all groups felt that the removal of screens was a positive change, feeling that the atmosphere was calmer as a result, where in part customers did not have to shout at staff behind the screen in order to be heard. Both staff and customers also felt that the removal of the screen helped to remove the ‘them and us’ scenario created by the glass screens. However,

\textsuperscript{vii} Findings from the Jobcentre Plus Analytical Division (JPAD).
there were other customers who expressed concerns for the safety of staff members in the office given the removal of the screens and the more open plan office environment.

**Generally, customers reported that they felt safe in Jobcentre Plus offices...**

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004, found that in general, customers rarely felt unsafe in Jobcentre Plus offices, with the general atmosphere of the office environment affected customers’ perception of safety.

...although the attitudes towards the presence of security guards was mixed.

Research conducted in 2003 found that customers continued to find floor managers helpful, and were reassured by their presence. Research carried out in 2004 found that customers who were aware of the security guards welcomed their presence in the office, tending to feel safer as a result. A small number of customers, however, reported that security guards made no difference to safety. These customers tended to view the office as a pleasant or safe environment and had not witnessed any incidents.

Research in 2003 found that there were some examples in which customers reported the introduction of security staff made them feel ‘uneasy’ about handing over claim forms, and evidence from the 2004 research suggests that there were still customers who found a security guard’s presence in the office intimidating, feeling they were under suspicion and not trusted.

**Although customers’ opinions on the new environment tended to depend on the different types of offices that they had experienced prior to entering the Jobcentre Plus service...**

Qualitative findings that build on the National Jobcentre Plus Customer Satisfaction research found that customer opinion tended to depend on the different types of office experienced. For example, customers who had only experienced integrated offices were less likely to comment on aspects of the office environment. Many customers who had visited an integrated office acknowledged the pleasant environment, but variability in experiences of face-to-face contact with staff appeared to be as prevalent as in the other types of offices.

...and it was especially important for IB customers and those with mental health conditions to feel secure and at ease in the Jobcentre Plus offices.

However, qualitative findings that build on the National Jobcentre Plus Customer Satisfaction research found that the extent to which IB and IS customers felt comfortable and safe in offices was a key aspect to satisfaction, the pleasant environment in the new offices, whether integrated or improved jobcentres,

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78 Findings from the Jobcentre Plus Analytical Division (JPAD).
allowed customers to feel more secure and at ease. This was especially the case for IB customers with mental health conditions who tend to be more sensitive to their environment.\textsuperscript{79 xv}

10.4 Ease of customer access in Jobcentre Plus offices

*Some customers found that disabled access was not available when they attended the office for their FA and/or PA meeting...*

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003, found that in some cases, customers who struggle to use the stairs were directed to a meeting (either with an FA or PA) in an upstairs office with no disabled access and no alternative was offered. However, where delays occurred, which sometimes resulted in discomfort for people with severe health conditions or disabilities, Jobcentre Plus staff were reported seeking to make customers as comfortable as possible.\textsuperscript{xvi}

Research conducted in 2004 found that this was still an issue, where some customers with physical health conditions who experienced mobility problems and lone parents who attended with young children in pushchairs, were concerned because they were required to attend FA meetings and WFI that were not located on the ground floor of the building. In some offices, lifts were available but customers had to seek assistance from staff to use them, which individuals found inconvenient especially if they found it difficult to find a member of staff to help them.\textsuperscript{xvii}

10.5 Privacy issues in Jobcentre Plus offices

*...and some customers were concerned about the lack of privacy due to the nature of the open plan offices...*

A survey conducted with customers in 2003 found that a minority of customers said that their meeting/all meetings took place in a private room or office: jobseekers (14 per cent), lone parents (13 per cent), people with health conditions and disabilities (11 per cent) and carers (nine per cent). As such, views on the environment were more positive where customers reported having had their meeting(s) in a private room or office, or where the area where the meeting took place was sufficiently private.

In cases where customers reported not having a meeting in a private room, people with health conditions and disabilities and lone parents (both 40 per cent) were most likely to feel that the area was not sufficiently private, compared to jobseekers (34 per cent) and carers (32 per cent). The proportion of jobseekers (62 per cent) and carers (63 per cent) who felt that the area was sufficiently private were significantly higher than those for lone parents (57 per cent) and people with health conditions and disabilities (55 per cent). The findings also suggest that in two groups,

\textsuperscript{79} Findings from the Jobcentre Plus Analytical Division (JPAD).
customers with children were less likely to feel that the meeting area was sufficiently private: people with health conditions and disabilities (48 per cent with children versus 59 per cent without) and jobseekers (49 per cent with children versus 67 per cent without). xviii

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 supports the quantitative evidence that there were customer concerns over a lack of privacy. xix Research conducted in 2004 found that both staff and customers remained concerned about the level of privacy in an open plan office. Both were consistently concerned that other people could overhear their personal conversations that occurred in FA meetings and WFls. As was the case with previous research, customers tended to be unaware of the availability of the use of private rooms; this appeared to be because customers did not raise their concerns at the time of their meetings and as a result were not offered the use of a private room. xx

Qualitative findings that build on the National Jobcentre Plus Customer Satisfaction research found that some customers reported that the new open plan offices (not only the integrated offices) were confusing and that it was sometimes difficult to locate the enquiry desk and find out which part of the office to go to. 80 xxi

...or due to the positioning of the warm phones.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 show that some customers continue to be concerned about privacy issues and the positioning of the warm phones. xxi This evidence continues to support findings from research conducted in 2003 that found that the implications for FCOs where customers felt uncomfortable in revealing or discussing private personal details over the warm phones was that they might not obtain sufficiently detailed information to make an informed decision about the customer’s benefit entitlements or whether a customer was well enough to attend a WFl. xxi Nine per cent of customers overall had used Jobseekers Direct/Apply Direct through the warm phones (10 per cent of jobseekers and five per cent of inactive customers). xxiv

10.6 Jobcentre Plus customer facilities: children’s play areas

Play areas were popular with lone parents, with around eight in ten saying that this facility had made their visit to the office easier.

In a survey conducted with clients in 2003, lone parents were most likely to attend the office with children under the age of ten (49 per cent) compared to carers (33 per cent), jobseekers (32 per cent) and people with health conditions and disabilities (22 per cent). Customers with young children (i.e. those under five) were more likely to bring them into the office: lone parents (61 per cent versus 26 per cent of children between six and nine). xxv

80 Findings from the Jobcentre Plus Analytical Division (JPAD).
As such, 28 per cent of lone parents reported using the play area in the Jobcentre Plus office, compared to 22 per cent of jobseekers, 16 per cent of carers and 15 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities. 81 per cent of lone parents said that this facility had made it easier for them to visit the office.\textsuperscript{81 xxvi}

10.7 Jobcentre Plus customer facilities: Job points

\textit{Generally, customers liked having the use of the Job points...}

In a survey conducted with clients in 2004, most jobseekers said they had used a Job point at some time (88 per cent). However, the figures for the other client groups were much lower, with lone parents (47 per cent), people with health conditions and disabilities (43 per cent) and carers (30 per cent). However, as one might expect, use of Job points was focused on customers who were actively seeking work. The survey also found that jobseekers were more likely to use the Job points in Day 2 and Day 3 offices (both 91 per cent) than those in Pathfinder offices (83 per cent).\textsuperscript{82} The 2004 survey (Wave 2) also found that lone parents in Pathfinder offices were also more likely to have used a Job point (48 per cent) than those in the 2003 survey (Wave 1) Pathfinder offices (40 per cent).\textsuperscript{83}

The majority of customers who used a Job point reported finding them easy to use, with 81 per cent of lone parents saying they found them ‘very easy’ to use, followed by 78 per cent of jobseekers and 75 per cent of people with health conditions and disabilities. Carers were least likely to report that using the Job points was ‘very easy’ with 71 per cent.

\textit{...and research conducted in 2003 found that customers found Job points user-friendly and made them feel ‘empowered’ to look for jobs themselves...}

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003, found that, generally, customers felt that the Job points were user-friendly and efficient, and made them ‘empowered’ to look for jobs themselves. However, there were still come concerns; one particular frustration was when the Job points were not available due to the system being down; some customers disliked having to queue to use this facility; some felt that Job points were more restrictive in the kinds of jobs they showed than the old display boards; and some customers felt that they would have liked more help in how to use the Job points.\textsuperscript{xxvii}

\textsuperscript{81} Findings from the Client Survey: these figures were too small for analysis in the other three client groups.

\textsuperscript{82} Pathfinder offices refers to Jobcentre Plus offices rolled out between October 2001 and March 2002, Day 2 offices refers to Jobcentre Plus offices rolled out between October 2002 and March 2003 and Day 3 offices refers to those rolled out from June 2003 until October 2003.

\textsuperscript{83} Throughout the report from the client survey conducted in 2004, where comparisons have been made between Wave 1 and Wave 2, these refer only to Pathfinder offices in no-IB Pilot.
...although research conducted in 2004 found that use of the Job points was more mixed.

Research conducted in 2004 suggests that there was mixed evidence that customers actually used the Job points available. It appears that while all customers were aware of Job points, some customers did not find the facility effective for finding work. Some customers, from all groups, preferred the old system of cards, which they felt allowed them to search more flexibly for vacancies by looking across areas of work. Other customers were apprehensive about using new technology. xxviii

10.8 References

i Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).

ii Staff Safety in Jobcentre Plus Offices (due to be published winter 2005)

iii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).

iv Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

v Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).

vi Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

vii Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey (October 2004).


ix Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

x Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

xi Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).

xii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).

xiii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).


xvi Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).
Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey (October 2004).

Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).

Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).


Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Wave Four (due to be published spring 2005).

Wave 6 Pathfinder Exit Survey (November/December 2002).

Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey (October 2004).

Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey (October 2004).

Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).

Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).
11 Fraud, Error and Accuracy

- The introduction of Jobcentre Plus has led to some additional activity to work alongside existing programme protection procedures. The new elements of First Contact Officer, Financial Advisor, Personal Advisor and the Customer Management System (CMS) should help the department to move towards its PSA target to reduce losses due to Fraud and Error.

- The First Contact Officer (FCO) can increasingly reduce the scope for Fraud and Error by providing personal interaction that may reduce the opportunities for it to occur. FCOs work to ensure that benefit claim forms are completed properly before entrance to the Gateway with the help of the Customer Management System (CMS). The FCO is well placed to reduce the error component by complying with the scripted questions in CMS.

- The Financial Advisor role is designed to check the benefit claim for content and completeness, raising and resolving queries whilst the customer is present, gathering all evidence and verification to reduce the possibility of Fraud and Error. This ensures that claims are checked robustly with stringent application of all checks and evidence requirements. If the Financial Assessor is having an impact we may expect the volume of Gateway Interventions to fall.

- The Personal Advisor (PA) provides further personal interaction with customers which again may help to identify anomalies or deter fraudulent claims. Although the role is not designed specifically to deter fraudulent claims, further contact may prove valuable in this.

- The introduction of the Customer Management System (CMS) is designed to work alongside First Contact Officers and Financial Advisors to aid them in gaining the correct information from the customers. The system prompts the FCO to ensure that all necessary information is obtained and the claim form completed accurately.

- There are two further interventions that exist in both Jobcentre Plus and jobcentre offices. Gateway Interventions concentrate on claims most at risk of error or fraud, and are selected on a risk based methodology. If we are seeing some
degree of co-ordination between Gateway Interventions and the Work Focused regime we would expect to see these occurring in the office, on the same day as the initial WFI. Case Interventions again uses a risk based methodology, but verifies circumstances once the claim is underway. Again, if there is co-ordination we could expect to see Case Interventions taking place on the same day as a review meeting or just after, in the Jobcentre Plus office.

- Jobcentre Plus priorities for 2005 – 2008 include delivering business more efficiently and effectively to drive the highest levels of performance and productivity. The Jobcentre Plus Standard Operating Model (SOM) will define a standard approach for our business delivery including programme protection. In 2005/06 the approach to programme protection will change to emphasise process compliance (most Gateway Interventions and Case Interventions will in future be dealt with as core benefit processing) and customer compliance (interventions that do not form part of core processing).

11.1 Summary

- Small sample sizes have led to large uncertainties in the analysis so we cannot conclude whether the MVFE performance in the Pathfinder and non-integrated offices was significantly different. Although in the wider evaluation there is some indirect evidence that process and Gateway security have not suffered through the introduction of new procedures, there is not enough evidence to say conclusively whether this has been the case.

- Progress was evident in raising staff awareness and understanding of the potential circumstances of fraud and error, and the on the whole staff believed that they were effective in detecting fraud and error, and were keen to highlight the importance in the process of face-to-face contact with customers. However, staff also raised a number of issues that they felt would improve the detection of fraud and error.

- All Jobcentre Plus staff continued to recognise the importance of detecting fraud and error, however, in reality the extent to which fraud could be successfully defected depended on a number of factors.

- FCOs tended to look for fraud rather than error, and their ability to detect fraud depended on confidence in their knowledge of benefits.

- Office Managers and FAs continue to recognise the importance of detecting fraud and error, and as such are routinely checking claim forms and documentation to support claims. FAs were generally confident in identifying cases which required a GI, and especially felt that face-to-face contact at the FA meeting was a key tool for identifying fraud and error that might not emerge through other mean, although FAs confidence at addressing fraud and error was more mixed, due to the different ways of addressing these issues.
• PAs acknowledged the importance of detecting fraud and error, and tended to notice customers’ behaviour at the WFI or contradicting information given at different interviews as signs of potential fraud and error.

• Experienced FCOs had a good awareness of the circumstances that required a GI, but the processes followed once one was identified differed in practice, and some FCOs felt that a lack of time limited what they were able to achieve.

• The level of GIs has been decreasing whilst the hit rate (how many GIs resulted in a benefit change) has increased both in Pathfinder offices and nationally, suggesting better targeting of resources. However, there are concerns over the variations of recording GIs by FAs, in order to gain an accurate picture of the situation.

• Jobcentre Plus has made greater use of office interventions in place of home visits, with this efficiency more evident in Pathfinder offices.

• Data analysis shows that the GIs in Jobcentre Plus offices do not differ much in type or coverage from the national picture, even though they almost have blanket coverage by FAs. There is very little difference in the operation of CIs in integrated and non-integrated offices, the only exception being more office-based interventions occur in integrated offices. The quality of CIs and GIs conducted appear to be inversely proportional to the quantity. Whilst there appears to be no relationship between the volume of GIs and CIs conducted, there is a strong positive relationship between the outcomes of GIs and CIs.

• Whilst the Work Focused regime is almost universal, Gateway Interventions (GIs) take place for only four per cent of new customers. This percentage has been reducing. There does appear to be some co-ordination between work focused and programme protection activity at the point of claim.

• Overall, just seven per cent of all CIs where a PA meeting took place occurred in the office on the same day as the PA meeting (compared with 25 per cent for GIs). This shows that CIs and PA meetings are generally separate events.

Monetary Value of Fraud and Error (MVFE) has been falling nationally. Latest evidence shows that the loss stands at 6.4 per cent compared to the 2003/04 target of 6.9 per cent.

The proportion of benefit lost through fraud and error has been falling since 2002. The proportion peaked at 7.9 per cent in August 2002, and has fallen significantly since then. The latest evidence shows that 6.4 per cent is lost, 50 basis points below the revised target of 6.9 per cent.
11.2 Impact of integrated offices on the Monetary Value of Fraud and Error (MVFE)

*MVFE results are uncertain, but if anything the tentative signs are positive.*

In an attempt to establish whether integration has had any impact on MVFE, we took a sample based on IS and JSA cases. This sample was split into 4 groups: cases in Pathfinder offices before they were integrated; cases in Pathfinder when the became integrated; cases in non-Pathfinder areas before the same claim date; and cases in non-Pathfinder areas after this claim date. Levels of MVFE were estimated, alongside 95 per cent confidence intervals.84

The small sample sizes in Pathfinder areas has resulted in uncertain results. The only significant difference is found in the proportion of JSA claims being incorrect. This was found to be lower in Pathfinder areas than non-Pathfinder areas for claims made since integrated offices opened. This does not however lead us to conclude that integration has caused this reduction – it may have been the case that Pathfinder offices already had lower levels of Fraud and Error before integration, but the sample of older JSA claims is so small that this cannot be proven.

84 The figures produced here will not agree with those given in the National Statistics report as no attempt has been made to include the various adjustments used there. The comparisons between the four groups should be valid however.
Small sample sizes have led to large uncertainties in the analysis so we cannot conclude whether the MVFE performance in the Pathfinder and non-integrated offices was significantly different. Although in the wider evaluation there is some indirect evidence that process and Gateway security have not suffered through the introduction of new procedures, there is not enough evidence to say conclusively whether this has been the case.

11.3 Jobcentre Plus processes

11.3.1 The impact of Jobcentre Plus on eliminating fraud and error

Progress was evident in raising staff awareness and understanding of the potential circumstances of fraud and error...

Qualitative research conducted with staff and customers in 2004 found that progress was evident in raising staff awareness and understanding of the potential circumstances of fraud and error. All staff believed that their effectiveness in detecting both fraud and error was bound by certain factors including their levels of experience of both interviewing and seeking clarification from customers, the interview time available to them, and their knowledge of all the different types of benefit.

...and on the whole staff believed that they were effective in detecting fraud and error, and were keen to highlight the importance in the process of face-to-face contact with customers. However, staff also raised a number of issues that they felt would improved the detection of fraud and error.

Staff believed that they were effective in detecting fraud and error, although some would welcome the option to lengthen some interviews in order to probe customers...
further and seek clarification on discrepancies. Staff were also keen to highlight the importance of face-to-face contact with customers and the effectiveness of conversation at drawing information out of them. Staff also noted the value of seeing paper based documents which enabled them to see how customers filled in forms, in addition to computerised information.

Staff also suggested improvements that could be made to the fraud and error process, such as:

- ID cards with photographs for customers;
- additional and ongoing training in fraud and error;
- feedback from processing and Fraud teams which would inform FAs as to whether their referral had led to a successful identification of fraud;
- more simplified claim forms;
- FCOs to re-emphasis to customers the importance of taking all relevant and up to date information to the FA meeting;
- more guidelines to increase FA confidence to challenge customer statements.

11.3.1 The importance of detecting fraud and error

All Jobcentre Plus staff continued to recognise the importance of detecting fraud and error, however, in reality the extent to which fraud could be successfully defected depended on a number of factors.

Qualitative research conducted with staff and customers in 2004 found that all Jobcentre Plus staff continued to recognise the importance of detecting fraud and error. However, in practice, the extent to which staff were able to successfully accomplish this depended on several factors, such as knowledge of certain benefits (FAs), the confidence and ability to obtain information from customers (FCOs and FAs) and time constraints (FAs). As such, they found the detection of fraud much more difficult to fit into their roles and responsibilities, and there was to an extent, the assumption that fraud would be picked up by someone else. Errors, on the other hand, were systematically picked up through asking customers questions and through the claim check, which FCOs and FAs found was well within what they were already doing/delivering.

11.3.2 The role of the First Contact Office in detecting fraud and error

FCOs tended to look for fraud rather than error, and their ability to detect fraud depended on confidence and their knowledge of benefits.

FCOs discussed their role in terms of detecting fraud rather than whether/how they noticed any errors in customers’ claims, tending to base identification of fraud on suspicion.
However, FCOs’ confidence in identifying fraud and error varied; generally the uncertainty of identifying a fraudulent claim was down to a lack of knowledge on the rules and regulations of each benefit type, and as such being unaware that a customer had included incorrect information on their form.

Other reasons for FCOs’ lack of confidence in identifying fraud and error were lack of benefit knowledge; the fact that some found it difficult in following an interview script; insufficient training; the fact that clues given away by a customer’s body language could obviously not be detected over the telephone; that a number of factors had to be taken into account during a First Contact conversation and that an understanding that the Fraud team did not pursue certain suspicious calls/information led to a reluctance by the FCO to pursue these. As such, FCOs who were less confident about detecting fraud did not see it as a significant part of their role.

11.3.3 The role of the Financial Assessor in detecting fraud and error

Office managers and FAs continue to recognise the importance of detecting fraud and error, and as such are routinely checking claim forms and documentation to support claims.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that Office Managers (OMs) and Financial Assessor Managers (FAMs) continue to recognise the importance of detecting fraud and error and MVFE targets. FAs recognised the importance of their role as the first face-to-face contact that a customer had with Jobcentre Plus and the need to establish the customers’ personal circumstances to ensure that the customers’ forms and identification were correct.

Research from the client survey conducted in 2004 found that jobseekers (88 per cent) were more likely than the other client groups to have provided documentation in support of their claim, compared to between 81 and 83 per cent of other client groups. The survey also found that sick and disabled customers were more likely to have provided documents or information to support their claim if their first contact with Jobcentre Plus was via an enhanced Vantive site (89 per cent) compared to those whose first contact was via a Vantive site (80 per cent).

The 2004 survey (Wave 2) also found that carers were more likely to have provided documents or information in support of their claim (92 per cent) than those in the 2003 survey (Wave 1) at 78 per cent.

Research from the client survey conducted in 2003 found that a minority of customers were contacted about their claim after the meeting, and this applied to people with health conditions (21 per cent), lone parents (20 per cent), carers (13 per cent) and jobseekers (10 per cent).

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85 Throughout the report from the client survey conducted in 2004, where comparisons have been made between Wave 1 and Wave 2, these refer only to Pathfinder offices in non-IB pilot areas.
Research carried out in 2003 suggests that FAs routinely checked claim forms across all client types, and clients commonly reported that the FA had checked evidence that they had brought in to support their claim.\textsuperscript{viii} The 2004 research found that FAs and FAMs across all case study areas remained confident that they checked customers’ claims in line with the requirements of the Must Dos, especially ensuring that there were no outstanding queries or issues to be verified. Particular examples of areas that individual FAs noted checking with particular care included: capital questions relating to customers’ disclosure of income or assets; co-habitations, especially with lone parents; and unanswered questions, or if the FA had any reason to doubt information already provided by the customer.

FAs consistently asked for two forms of identification to verify customers’ identity; these were typically passports, driving licenses and birth certificates. FAs were also generally clear about the different types of documentation required by benefit type before claims could be processed.

\textbf{FAs were generally confident in identifying cases which required a GI, and especially felt that face-to-face contact at the FA meeting was a key tool for identifying fraud and error that might not emerge through other means...}

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2004 found that FAs were generally confident in picking up errors and identifying cases which required a GI. FAs used similar methods to detect both fraud and error by adopting a systematic approach to checking through information provided by customers in their completed claim forms. Time was a key factor in the FAs’ ability to complete detailed checks, and for this reason some were more confident than others. The FA meeting was also the main tool used by FAs to detect both fraud and error, where it was especially felt to be an effective means of eliciting and checking information from customers that may suggest fraud or error as such information may not emerge through other means. It was generally felt that the ability to do this improved with experience.

\textit{...although FAs confidence at addressing fraud and error was more mixed, due to the different ways of addressing these issues.}

Any errors detected in customers’ claim forms were corrected during the FA meeting with the customer which meant that claims could be processed more quickly and customers received their payments more promptly. However, FAs’ confidence at addressing the issue of fraud with customers was mixed and as such there were different ways of dealing with this, such as experienced staff who directly raised the issue with customers; those who explained to customers that the GI process was needed otherwise it could effect their benefit; and those who because they worked in an unscreened environment and as such were concerned for their safety did not raise the issue of fraud and error at all, rather asking the customer for clarification and then referring to colleagues in the fraud section if the situation was no clearer.

Some FAs acknowledged the role that FCOs played in the detection of fraud and error in that they were sometimes alerted to a potentially fraudulent claim by notes taken by the FCO and recorded on LMS.\textsuperscript{i}
11.3.4 The role of the Personal Adviser in detecting fraud and error

PAs acknowledged the importance of detecting fraud and error, and tended to notice customers’ behaviour at the WFI or contradicting information given at different interviews as signs of potential fraud or error.

Whilst PAs believed that picking up on errors and detecting fraud was important, they tended to regard it as an extra responsibility on top of their usual work, instead of a priority, and as such dealt with the issue much more informally than the FAs. PAs generally referred to ‘giveaway signs’ in customers’ behaviour at the WFI that would lead them to probe further for potential fraud or errors in their claim, such as inconsistencies in information given by customers at different interviews. In the instances of PAs suspecting fraud, they completed a QB21 form and referred the claim to their colleagues in the fraud department.x

11.3.5 Gateway Interventions (GIs)

Experienced FCOs had a good awareness of the circumstances that required a GI, but the processes followed once one was identified differed in practice, and some FCOs felt that a lack of time limited what they were able to achieve.

Experienced FCOs had a good awareness of the circumstances that required a GI. However, there was little consistency in the processes that FCOs followed once a GI had been identified both within individual and across offices. This was due to the different process used depending on the type of fraud, the understanding of the processes to use following the identification of fraud, and the time available to complete the necessary action. Some FCOs felt that a lack of time limited what they were able to achieve and so identifying GIs and other potential fraudulent claims was not always a priority.

The process that FAs followed once they identified a GI depended on local arrangements, but one example of ‘good practice’ in the detecting the need for a GI was in an office where FAs used an aide memoir called ‘Fast One’ which listed questions related to fraud and error and the potential need for a GI. However, the process followed across all offices by FAs once a GI had been identified depended on local arrangements.xi

The proportion of new clients that have had a GI has been falling, perhaps indicating effectiveness of the FA role.

Whilst the Work Focused regime is almost universal, GIs take place for only four per cent of new customers. This percentage has been falling both nationally and in Jobcentre Plus offices. At the beginning of 2002, just under 5 per cent of new clients within integrated offices received a GI, but this has now fallen to marginally over 3 per cent by the end of 2003. This reduction may be indicative of the effectiveness of the FA role in the verification and validation of benefit claims. There are other factors...
too: some GI activity is now part of the routine FA role, and therefore not necessarily recognised as a GI; and that Jobcentre Plus has cut down on GIs, as an efficiency measure, in anticipation of the rollout.

There is some variation across client groups with lone parents being the most likely to have a GI and jobseekers the least likely. However, jobseekers make up the absolute majority of all the GIs undertaken since jobseekers constitute a significant proportion of new customers.

**Table 11.1 Per cent of new customers having a GI**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Per cent of new customers having a GI</th>
<th>JSA</th>
<th>S&amp;D</th>
<th>LP</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_There does appear to be some co-ordination between work focused interviews and programme protection activity at the point of claim._

Overall, 43 per cent of GIs take place in the office, with the majority of GIs being conducted by a visit. There has however been an increasing trend of the proportion of GIs conducted in the office, with the proportion moving to over 50 per cent in recent months.

**Table 11.2 Proportion of GIs conducted in the office**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office based</th>
<th>JSA</th>
<th>S&amp;D</th>
<th>LP</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>55%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There does appear to be evidence of some co-ordination between the WFI and programme protection at the point of claim. 60 per cent of all GIs that take place in the office occur on the same day as a WFI.

_Although it is not possible to conclude that the gateway has got any more secure under Jobcentre Plus, we are confident that it has not deteriorated._

The analysis shows that there is little difference in the operation of Gateway Interventions between Jobcentre Plus offices and the national picture. It is not possible to conclude from the analysis that the gateway to benefit is more secure under the new Jobcentre Plus regime. However, using this analysis alongside the latest case studies research leads us to be confident that the new process has not led to a reduction in security at the gateway to benefit.
11.4 Case Interventions (CIs)

There is very little difference in the operation of case interventions in integrated and non-integrated offices, although more interventions are office based in integrated offices.

The proportion of claimants having a CI has fluctuated around 1.2 per cent in both Pathfinder and non-Pathfinder areas. The proportion fell on the initial rollout of Pathfinders, perhaps as a result of the industrial action. In Jobcentre Plus offices as a whole, three per cent of customers have a CI within six months of their claim start, with lone parents being the most likely client group.

Table 11.3 Per cent of claimants having a CI within six months

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JSA</th>
<th>S&amp;D</th>
<th>LP</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Per cent having a CI within six months</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This proportion has changed significantly before and after integration. Prior to integration, intervention rates varied from zero per cent to 3.7 per cent before, followed by varying between 0.6 per cent and 3.1 per cent post-integration.

There is very little difference in the operation of case interventions in integrated and non-integrated offices with the exception of the fact that more of the interventions are office-based in integrated offices.\(^{86}\)\(^{\text{xi}}\)

There appears to be little co-ordination between the new Jobcentre Plus regime and the operation of Case Interventions.

Table 11.4 Intervention method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention method</th>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Visit</th>
<th>Postal</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intervention method</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of case interventions take place as a visit (60 per cent). Only 17 per cent of case interventions take place in the office, and of these only 7 per cent took place on the same day as a PA meeting. This is indicative of a lack of co-ordination between PA meetings and CIs, and shows that PA meetings and CIs are generally separate events.

JSA Claimants are the most likely group to receive an office based intervention. Overall, 24 per cent of CIs were conducted in the office if the customer had a PA meeting in the period, compared to 14 per cent if no PA meeting took place.

\(^{86}\) IAD OR.
The clusters doing the least number of GIs and CIs tend to have the highest ‘hit rates’.

There appears to be a trade-off between the quality and the quantity of both GIs and CIs being conducted. Clusters that conduct a large volume of GIs and CIs tend to have the lowest hit rates (interventions resulting in a change of benefit type), with clusters doing the least GIs being the most successful.

Although only Pathfinders have been considered, there is no reason to expect the results to be much different to those nationally.87

11.5 Accuracy

Accuracy in dealing with IS and JSA claims has been falling.

The accuracy of dealing with claims for both IS and JSA has been falling. Against a target of 92 per cent, IS accuracy fell from 92.3 per cent in the year to March 2003, falling further to 89.8 per cent in the year to March 2004. Latest evidence (December 2004) shows that accuracy has recovered somewhat, at 91.7 per cent.

Accuracy in dealing with JSA claims has fallen from 93.3 per cent in the year to March 2003 to 91.7 per cent in the year to March 2004, against a target of 94 per cent. There has again been a recovery since then, with the latest evidence showing 92.8 per cent in the year to December 2004.

Although there is no evidence to suggest that the national reduction in accuracy is down to integrated offices.

The variation in IS and JSA accuracy performance amongst integrated districts is systematic of the variation across the business. Whilst it is too early to establish as a fact whether the new Jobcentre Plus processes are having an effect on accuracy levels per se, early analysis shows no particular national trend.

Some districts show a marked improvement in accuracy rates in comparison with (pre-integration) 2002/03 figures, whilst some show a marked decrease, despite having the same number of Pathfinder offices and ‘going live’ at the same time. The district level comparison is not valid given the large confidence levels at this level of detail.

There is no discernible pattern in the type of errors recorded against these districts over this period of time aside from where the introduction of Tax Credit has caused a new error category for some.xiii

87 Note on Gateway and Case Interventions in Pathfinder Clusters, IAD OR. May 2004.
11.6 References

i Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

ii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

iii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

iv Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

v Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey: Wave Two (due to be published summer 2005).

vi Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey: Wave Two (due to be published summer 2005).

vii Jobcentre Plus Service Delivery Survey (October 2004).

viii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers (October 2004).

ix Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

x Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).

xi Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Phase 4 (due to be published spring 2005).


xiii Accuracy Results in Rollout Districts, Ian Gibbins, IS Maintenance and Benefit Improvement Team, April 2004.
12 Staff Safety

- This chapter focuses on staff safety within Jobcentre Plus offices. Jobcentre Plus represents a radical departure in the delivery of welfare and employment services to people of working age, and changes have been made to the way in which people claim benefits, the help and support they receive whilst they are in receipt of benefits, and the environment of public offices. In particular, Jobcentre Plus offices are predominantly open plan, and it is envisaged that the majority of interactions between staff and customers do not take place in a screened environment. The introduction of the unscreened open-plan office environment was the subject of industrial action from the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) which represents Jobcentre Plus staff, who sought to obtain assurances that the removal of screens between customers and staff for most transactions would not compromise staff safety.

- Evidence up to November 2002 suggested that, compared to offices under the Employment Service/Benefits Agency regime, there were fewer reported attempted physical incidents and the same number of reported actual physical incidents in offices, but more reported verbal and ‘other’ incidents. In January and February 2004, an independent research organisation was commissioned by DWP to examine staff safety in Jobcentre Plus offices, in order to explore the impact of integrated offices, to examine the operation of procedures designed to ensure staff safety, and to better understand the possible triggers for incidents. This research does not suggest the introduction of the integrated office environment and the removal of screens has had a negative impact on staff safety.

12.1 Summary

- Staff generally reported feeling safe working in the Integrated Jobcentre Plus office environment, and valued the welcoming, professional image of the new offices and the various safety measures put in place. However, frontline staff were generally quite sceptical about managers’ commitment to staff safety.
Evidence indicates there is under-reporting of less serious incidents by staff. Barriers to reporting included a perceived lack of management support; time constraints, limited understanding of/or confidence in the reporting process; and a perception that reporting has little impact.

Issues related to ‘people’ (staff and customers), ‘process’ and ‘environment’ were key incident triggers. Of particular note are factors relating to the effects of administrative errors, insufficient information about their requirements being imparted to customers, and staff poor customers’ handling/communication skills. However, there is some evidence that improved customer service skills are having a positive effect on preventing staff safety incidents in integrated offices.

There was limited consistency in the operation of safety procedures, within and between offices, and staff were generally unaware of the content of safety guidance, or the content of Local Incident Management Plans. There was a general lack of confidence in the LIMP as an effective safety management tool.

Evidence from qualitative research commissioned by the Department to look at staff safety in Jobcentre Plus integrated offices has recently been received. Fieldwork took place during January and February 2004. It is important to note that measures have been taken since which address some of the issues that are outlined below.88

12.2 Staff views on staff safety

*Staff generally felt safe working in the new Jobcentre Plus environment.*

The latest staff safety research found that staff generally felt safe working in the Jobcentre Plus environment and value the welcoming, professional image of the new offices and the various safety measures put in place. Whilst staff recognise that the office environment has improved, where they worked before the rollout to Jobcentre Plus continues to influence their perceptions of safety within the open office environment. Ex-Social Security office staff continue to be anxious about the threat of incidents in an open office environment.1

88 For example, OHSD have developed and issued new Keeping Safe Training for all customer-facing staff; new Essential Health & Safety Guide for managers and for individuals; new Travelling and Working Off-Site Guidance; and have issued reminders to staff on incident management procedures via Newsletters and Technical Bulletins. OHSD have also delivered Health & Safety Briefing sessions to Jobcentre Plus regional management for cascading to individual districts regions by the business. In addition, OHSD are currently working on new Managing Health & Safety in Jobcentre Plus Operations framework, new assurance mechanisms for health and safety, and collection and collation of contextualised incident data to the field. Further details will be provided in due course. Please also note that recommendations from an independent review of CCTV and Panic Alarms systems were published in May 2004, and accepted by TU nationally. The Jobcentre Plus Design Manual has been updated accordingly, and will feed into the 04/06 design.
12.3 Customer views on office safety

Customers generally felt safe in Jobcentre Plus offices, and perceived the unscreened environment to be calmer.

Qualitative research with customers in 2004 found that, in general, customers rarely felt unsafe in Jobcentre Plus offices. Although some customers expressed concern for staff given the removal of screens, other customers felt the removal of screens was a positive change, feeling there was less aggression in the office as a result. The unscreened environment was perceived to be calmer, because customers felt they were treated with more respect, staff and customers being more polite to each other, and customers did not have to shout at staff at staff behind screens in order to be heard.ii

12.4 Incidents

Typically, staff in both integrated and legacy offices had experienced verbal incidents, although definition of these depended on their own personal tolerance level. Any attempted and/or actual assaults were considered serious.

Evidence from the latest staff safety research suggests that typically, in both integrated and legacy offices, staff had experienced verbal incidents, and their definition of these generally depended on their tolerance concerning unacceptable customer behaviour, particularly in relation to verbal abuse. However, any attempted and/or actual assaults were considered serious incidents.iii

Evidence up to November 2002 suggests that compared to BA/ES offices in Pathfinder areas prior to the launch of Jobcentre Plus, there were fewer reported attempted physical incidents and the same number of reported actual physical incidents in Pathfinder offices.

Evidence up to November 2002 suggests that compared to BA/ES offices in Pathfinder areas prior to the launch of Jobcentre Plus, there were slightly fewer reported attempted physical incidents (a mean of 2.4 per month, compared to 3.6 per month), and the same number of reported actual physical incidents (1.5 per month) in Pathfinder offices, but more reported verbal (28.9 per month compared to 41.6), and ‘other’ incidents (2.6 per month, compared to 0.8) in Pathfinder offices. We intend to monitor this and provide details of analysis from more recent data.
12.5 Incident reporting

*The reporting of incidents by staff varied considerably between offices, and sometimes within offices themselves...*

The latest staff safety research found that reporting of staff safety incidents varied across areas, and sometimes within offices themselves. Sometimes managers, senior staff, trade union and safety representatives would encourage staff to report incidents, but staff’s willingness and ability to do so still varied, due to a number of practical reasons and perceptions of the effectiveness of such action.

This was reflected in the repeated message from staff that safety incidents were under-reported, for all of the reasons described. Some staff estimated that half of all incidents went unreported.iv

...and perceptions of whether or not to report an incident varied greatly across all office and staff types, as well as the reasons upon which the decision would be based...

Perceptions of whether reporting incidents was voluntary or compulsory varied greatly across all office and staff types. Some staff felt the process was voluntary as it was down to individuals to decide on whether or not an incident merited being reported. Staff would base their decision on their interpretation of, and feelings about, the incident. Some staff supported voluntary reporting that was based on a personal interpretation of a potential incident, whereas others felt that it should be compulsory.

Frontline staff across all office types commonly said that the decision on whether or not to report an incident was dependent on how it affected them. In a few instances, staff referred to agreed definitions of what constituted unacceptable behaviour, but decisions to report were generally influenced by three factors: if the customer had become distressed by a process or system failure; whether customers had a history of incidents; and the likelihood of whether the customer would cause another incident in the future.v

...in addition it appears that management views on the importance of reporting incidents were mixed.

Management views on the importance of reporting incidents was mixed; in some cases there were mixed views within an office itself. In some offices, staff were actively encouraged to report incidents immediately after they occurred, and in some cases there was liaison with staff in deciding the most appropriate action to take following an incident.

Trade unions were viewed as playing an active role in encouraging the reporting of incidents on some integrated and legacy offices. If the member of staff involved was reluctant to take action, the Representative would try to get a witness to the incident to complete the necessary form. In other offices, security guards played an active role in encouraging frontline staff to report incidents.vi
12.6 Barriers to reporting incidents

Staff identified a range of different barriers to reporting incidents. A key barrier to reporting incidents was a lack of time to complete incident forms.

A lack of time to complete incident forms was a key barrier to reporting incidents. Some staff felt that having time to report an incident immediately after an incident was highly important. However, staff felt that they had insufficient time to complete incident forms, and therefore became selective due to the frequency of incidents and the fact that they could not record them all. This was felt particularly strongly by staff in high-incident offices. Frontline staff in both integrated and legacy offices felt that they would not be able to get time away from the public in order to complete forms. In some cases staff felt that they had insufficient management support for using their time to report incidents.

Staff perceived the forms to be very long and time-consuming, and this was possibly down to limited experience of completing them. Staff estimated that the forms could take 45 minutes to an hour to complete, although this was questioned by staff with health and safety responsibilities who reported that form F1\(^{89}\) took 10 minutes to complete, with form F2\(^{90}\) only slightly longer.\(^{\text{vi}}\)

Staff also cited a lack of encouragement/management support…

Staff across all offices felt that some managers tolerated bad behaviour rather than encouraging staff to report it. Some felt that this was a result of organisational culture, where both managers and staff expected to have to tolerate levels of abuse that other organisations would not. This resulted in under-reporting of incidents.\(^{\text{viii}}\)

…as well as a lack of confidence in the impact/outcome of the report...

Staff and managers acknowledged that some staff lacked motivation to report incidents, due to a limited understanding of, and confidence in, the aims, rationale and outcomes of the reporting process. It appears that some staff were not wholly confident about managers taking matters forward once incident reports had been completed. Some felt less motivated to report incidents because they had seen few changes made as a result of incident reporting in the past, and many were not certain about what happened to incident forms after they had given them to their managers.

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\(^{89}\) Form IF1 is used to report all incidents that involve either a customer, other member(s) of the customer’s household, or an unknown assailant(s). Form IF1 (verbal) is an abridged version of the IF1, which is used to report verbal threats or abuse to staff over the telephone.

\(^{90}\) Form IF2, parts 1-5 are completed by the line manager on receipt of either a completed IF1 or a third party referral (e.g. the police).
The staff safety research found that some staff felt that the outcomes of reporting were unsatisfactory. In integrated offices it was felt that customers who had been reported were still able to cause incidents, and may even behave worse if they were aware that they had been reported. Staff were uncertain about the usefulness of the banning a customer from the office, as this usually meant a lengthy legal process and was then only usually a temporary measure. However, some managers felt that there was a limited awareness and understanding among staff of the wider application of reporting outcomes.ix

…and a lack of knowledge/understanding of the reporting process…

It appeared that staff had a mixed understanding of the procedures and responsibilities for reporting incidents. Staff were aware that the onus was on the individual who experienced the incident to complete an incident form and submit it to a manager, and in some offices staff were aware that colleagues could complete witness forms. In an exceptional case, managers informed staff that they should complete forms for incidents experienced by colleagues, regardless of the seriousness of the incident.

However, there were some staff who reported being unfamiliar with the process of reporting and were even unsure where to find the forms.

…and some staff felt uncomfortable about reporting customers they knew, recording specific language of verbal abuse, and some staff even felt uncomfortable about reporting incidents as they perceived that to have experienced one was some sort of failure on their part.

In practical terms, staff pointed out that the forms assumed that staff knew the identity of the individual causing the incident; this was not always the case if the perpetrator was a household member of the claimant. In a few cases, staff felt that there was confusion over which reporting procedures should be followed along with the rollout of Jobcentre Plus offices.

A small group of staff felt uncomfortable about writing an account of incidents; defining and describing customers’ behaviour was often difficult as was recording specific words used during verbal abuse.

Staff also felt uncomfortable about reporting incidents because they saw it (or felt that colleagues might see it) as a failure to have experienced an incident. They also felt vulnerable to scrutiny as customers might see what staff had written about them (lined to data protection laws) and as incident reports were not confidential some staff were uncomfortable with the trade union having access to them.x

12.7 Incident triggers

The recent staff safety researchxi suggests that a range of factors may trigger incidents in offices. These can be broadly grouped as factors related to the environment, the Jobcentre Plus process and people (staff and customers). However, the distinction between them is not absolute, and how these issues interface and combine is key to understanding what may lead to staff safety incidents.
12.8 Environmental triggers

*Staff felt that the new offices were nice places to work in, and noted that there was less confrontation, anger or frustration with customers.*

Latest findings from the case studies research found that staff felt that the new offices were much nicer places in which to work and noted that there was less confrontation, anger or frustration with customers. Also, some of the larger public offices were using security guards to greet customers, whom staff felt had a positive effect on customers’ behaviour, by calming any stressed or anxious clients and also sending out the message that ‘nuisance’ behaviour would not be tolerated.xii

*However, environmental problems such as a lack of space and privacy for customers was sometimes a cause for concern.*

The latest staff safety research found that the close positioning of the desks resulted in a lack of private interview space, and this, along with the lack of privacy for customers using the warm phones, were observed to be potential incident triggers.

In some cases, hot weather or a lack of air conditioning were identified as incident triggers, as customers having to wait in hot and overcrowded waiting rooms could become bad tempered as a result.xiii

12.9 Process triggers

*The Jobcentre Plus process/system itself also holds the potential for triggering an incident. A key issue in integrated offices relates to customers not understanding the changes that have been introduced.*

The research found that money and delayed payments were the most significant process issues that could trigger incidents, especially where this involved customers with families, where their benefits were the only source of household income. Delayed payments were often worsened by off-site payment processing, where staff and customers could not always contact payment processing teams to check on the delay, or why a delay was occurring. Payment handling, such as refusal for crisis loans etc, was also a common trigger. Staff noted the potential for incidents when communicating unfavourable decisions and saying ‘no’ to customers.

The staff safety research also notes that factors related to ‘bureaucracy’ and ‘the system’ were also sources of frustration for customers, such as where customers had to call the Contact Centre, or what some staff described as customers being sent from ‘pillar to post’. Problems associated with customers waiting to be seen by staff, and waiting from money were also identified as sources of safety incidents.

The staff safety research found that problems associated with integrated offices often related to customers not understanding the new processes and the changes that have been introduced. For example, the research noted customer confusion with the introduction of Contact Centres, and the mandatory nature of the initial WFI, especially for IS and IB customers.xiv
12.10 Customer related triggers

*Staff perceived that customer behaviour could be influenced by a number of factors, from substance abuse, feeling disempowered about their situation or simply receiving an unfavourable decision regarding their benefit.*

Latest findings from the staff safety research found that staff felt there were several common customer triggers of unacceptable behaviour. This included the fact that customers could be influenced by external factors such as substance abuse, or mental health conditions. The research also suggests that incidents may result from customers feeling disempowered due to their need to claim benefits, and therefore anxious and distressed about their situation before seeing a member of staff. Also, there were customers anxious about money and then having to wait for/receive an unfavourable decision or be refused a crisis loan. As mentioned above, it was also found that incidents may arise from some customers not fully understanding the new Jobcentre Plus processes.xv

12.11 Staff triggers

*Issues related to staff themselves could trigger an incident. This included poor customer service, by way of an administrative error or issues related to a lack of staff within an office.*

The staff safety research found that issues related to customer service were a key problem, and staff with poor customer handling and communication skills were a potential source of incidents. Staff raised particular concerns about how some colleagues communicated with customers, as this had the potential to trigger incidents. Staff also did not always provide sufficient information to customers, to enable them to understand what was required of them, or to understand what was happening.

Staff also highlighted that administrative errors, either in processing or linked to customers attending key interviews, could lead to customers’ benefits being stopped. As such, staff were not surprised when this triggered an incident.

The research also suggests that staffing levels could potentially contribute to the risk of incidents where offices were understaffed or staff were on sick leave. This could effect waiting times, queues and congestion in the office. Too few FAs in some Jobcentre Plus offices meant that customers could not proceed to their WFI, or insufficient WFs were taking place; all of which meant increased waiting times either in the office or for a WFI appointment from the Contact Centre.xvi
However, there is evidence that improved customer service skills are having a positive effect on preventing staff safety incidents in integrated offices.

A key feature of Jobcentre Plus is the strong emphasis on customer service, and staff frequently stressed the importance of good customer handling skills, especially with regard to minimising the risk of potential incidents. This varied from a standard approach to responding to customers on a case-by-case basis. Some legacy Social Security staff and managers felt the presence of security screens meant staff were more likely to display poor customer service, as screens can be a hindrance in developing good customers relations. Staff in integrated offices especially emphasised the importance of being firm but polite with customers and demonstrating respect, and some staff indicated that an awareness of possible signs that a customer was becoming agitated, such as cues from their body language was another method of avoiding potential incidents.xvii

12.12 Incident handling

There was little evidence of staff using formal incident-handling procedures, as well as little evidence to suggest that managers were explicitly encouraging staff to handle incidents in a particular way.

The latest staff safety research found that there was little evidence of staff using formal incident-handling procedures; staff tended to rely on peer support and, to a lesser extent, managerial support to resolve incidents. Staff reported that they were generally aware of what was going on around them and would normally pick up on changes in tone or volume of colleagues’ conversations that might indicate a potential incident, offering support where this happened. There was mixed feeling amongst staff about managerial intervention, with frontline staff generally feeling that it was their personal responsibility to resolve incidents, although there were some staff who expected managers to get involved, finding it unhelpful when they did not.

There was little evidence of managers’ explicitly encouraging staff to handle incidents in a particular way. The most obvious managerial advice was for staff to remove themselves from a potentially dangerous situation and to telephone the police without hesitation. However, some managers believed that staff learned their own incident handling techniques through experience.xviii
12.13 Safety guidance

Although staff were aware of the existence of safety related guidance, staff had limited awareness of the content.

The latest staff safety research found that staff in both integrated and legacy offices, especially those in high-incident offices, were aware of the existence of safety related guidance on the intranet. However, it was rare for staff to have actually located the guidance, and exceptional if they had read it. Staff attributed this poor use of the guidance to a lack of time and the large volume of information sent to them on a daily basis. They generally viewed the guidance as something to refer to after a serious incident, and something that management should be knowledgeable about, rather than frontline staff.

This limited use or awareness of the guidance meant that in practice standard procedures for dealing with staff safety incidents were not being followed, with staff tending to respond to incidents on an ad hoc basis. They drew on previous experiences and relied less on support and guidance from senior staff.xix

The staff safety research found that where staff were aware of the guidance, some felt that certain parts were unclear, such as on unacceptable customer behaviour, and felt that this made it difficult to make decisions on whether or not to report a customer. Staff also felt that there was no distinction between how different types of incident would be treated – i.e. verbal as opposed to physical incidents.

Some managers criticised the guidance for being inaccessible and too lengthy, and understood that this is why some staff were not using it. Both managers and staff who were aware of the guidance suggested that it should be streamlined, be more precise and easier to follow. They felt that too much was left to staff’s discretion.xx

12.14 Local Incident Management Plan

Evidence from the staff safety research indicates that there is little staff awareness of the content of LIMPS, and managers lack confidence in it as a safety management tool.

Generally, managers, Nominated Safety Officers (NSMs)/Managers and TU H&S Representatives were aware of the Local Incident Management Plan (LIMP)91, although they usually lacked confidence in it, often regarding it as bureaucratic and

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91 Each office, whether legacy or integrated, should have the LIMP safety document. It should include roles and responsibilities in terms of safety, procedures in the case of an incident, e.g. who to inform and procedures for reporting after an incident for all staff types. The LIMP should be reviewed at six monthly intervals and following a serious incident. All staff should be aware of, and understand, the content of the LIMP.
irrelevant to activity on the ground. In the offices where a LIMP were absent, managers did not mention any plans to develop one for the same reasons.

It appears that there was little staff awareness of the content of the LIMP, despite managerial attempts to disseminate the LIMP through various methods such as e-mail, intranet, aide-memoire, circulated folder or presentation at a communications meeting. Management were aware that staff recollection of the contents of the LIMP were poor, and in practice offices rarely tested awareness and understanding of the LIMP. Offices are also required to review the LIMP regularly (every six to 12 months) and following any serious incidents. In practice, review and revision of the LIMP rarely occurred.

### 12.15 Risk Assessment

All the offices visited as part of the staff safety research had a Risk Assessment (RA) in place for the building, although only managers, Trade Union and Health and Safety Representatives (TU H&S), and Nominated Safety Managers (NSMs) were aware of the RA process.

All the offices visited as part of the staff safety research had a Risk Assessment in place for the building. However, only managers, TU H&S Representatives and NSMs were aware of the RA process. Managers in integrated offices generally knew more about the content of the RA than those in legacy offices. Frontline and non-advisory staff were generally unaware of how often an RA was carried out, what it involved and what could trigger revisions to an RA, and unless personally involved in its development, staff at all levels were typically unclear about the RA process. It appears that generally there was no dissemination of RAs, or consultation or feedback on progress against the recommendations.

RAs commonly failed to include some areas of the office such as interview rooms or outreach sites, and these gaps contributed to staff’s poor opinion of RAs, the view that they were bureaucratic and did nothing to improve safety for staff. Frontline staff partly questioned the effectiveness of the RA because they lacked confidence that managers would implement any necessary changes. It appears that managers were generally non-committal about the RA and did not encourage or actively integrate it into office systems and practise.

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92 In addition to the general Risk Assessment for all Jobcentre Plus offices, each office is required to develop a local Risk Assessment. It is intended that office managers, TU H&S Representatives and Nominated Safety Managers, and in some cases, Trillium, will take part in the development and regular review of this document. It is the responsibility of management to ensure that recommendations are followed up and acted on.
12.16 Customer care and customer handling training

Staff commonly received some sort of training on handling difficult customers, although many felt it was not particularly timely, and access to such training varied amongst staff...

Staff had commonly experienced some sort of training in handling difficult customers, though many struggled to remember the details and content of the courses as they had happened some time ago. In rare instances, Jobcentre Plus staff and new recruits had heard of, or attended training on incident handling procedures and reporting.

Frontline staff new to DWP generally accessed training as part of their induction, as did internal staff transferring from a processing to a frontline role. However, other than a minority of staff (including Visiting Officers), staff who had previously worked in legacy jobcentres and Social Security offices did not report that they had received any refresher training or Jobcentre Plus training when their office had rolled out to Jobcentre Plus.xxii

...although there was positive feedback where staff did receive training, although it was acknowledged that training was part of a wider range of skills that enabled staff to deal with difficult situations...

Overall, staff felt that the training they received was interesting and insightful, and appreciated its value in enhancing their coping mechanisms, although they felt they learnt everything they needed ‘on the job’. While staff valued training, and said that they would attend a mandatory refresher course or one that provided information about a specialist customer group, no one had actually requested or been recommended to do this. There was an overall belief by staff that training comprised only a small fraction of an adviser’s ability to calm a difficult situation and often it was a means to reinforce methods that individuals found effective.xxii

...and learning from each other’s experiences was thought to be one of the most valuable methods of learning...

Staff felt that it was important to have face-to-face training time, because they viewed discussing experiences and different approaches as providing the most valuable and applicable information. Experience was viewed as providing all the additional expertise necessary to cope with difficult situations.93

93 Staff Safety in Jobcentre Plus Offices (due to be published winter 2005)
...and management’s views on training were mixed, ranging from encouraging formal training courses for their staff to providing training for staff upon request.

While some managers were keen on formal training courses for staff, others were happy to provide training for those staff who requested it. Some managers recounted their own years of practical experience and believed that to be more valuable than any training course.xxiii

12.17 Roles and responsibilities

Generally, staff appeared to have a poor awareness of their own and that of other staff members’ roles and responsibilities for safety as set out in the guidance.

Staff were unaware of the details of the guidance that states that all staff are responsible for their own safety and that of colleagues by complying with health and safety procedures, specifically the LIMP. This meant that very few staff were clear about their responsibilities for their own safety; they based their perceptions of their responsibilities on common sense and experience rather than the content of the guidance or other safety documents.xxiv

However, evidence suggests that the introduction of integrated offices has impacted positively on staff’s awareness and ownership of their safety roles and responsibilities...

In legacy offices, staff awareness, practice concerning safety roles and responsibilities and ownership of safety responsibilities were poor; in Social Security offices, the presence of screens meant that less emphasis was places on personal responsibility and actions to ensure safety. In comparison, in integrated offices overall, staff were aware that they were in part responsible for their own safety. Staff placed considerable trust in their colleagues and felt a sense of responsibility to the people working around them. There was a greater understanding of mutual responsibility, especially peer responsibilities.

In Jobcentre Plus public offices, managers perceived that staff only put into practice their roles and responsibilities after a ‘semi-serious’ incident, reiterating the message that staff felt very positive about the friendlier environment. However, this sometimes led to complacency and poor implementation of safety practices. Incidents generally prompted compliance with safety procedures and improvements in practices which had become lax.

In Contact Centres, managers acknowledged that an essential role for FCOs was to prevent frustrations being carried over into the Jobcentre Plus public office where staff had face-to-face contact with customers.xxv
...and managers’ understanding of their roles and responsibilities regarding safety appears to be greater in integrated offices...

Similarly to staff views, it appears that managers’ understanding of their roles and responsibilities regarding safety differed between legacy and integrated offices. In legacy offices, managers were reassured that Trillium had responsibility for the RA, as they did not feel they had the training or experience to undertake what they considered to be a huge responsibility. Instead they took on the role of dissemination and raising awareness among staff. In comparison, managers in integrated offices perceived their role in terms of safety to be one of monitoring and enforcement.

Staff were uncertain about managers’ health and safety roles and responsibilities, although generally knew that managers were responsible for the building, staff and customers. Staff in integrated offices commonly pointed towards managers’ role in determining PV markers and writing to customers who had caused incidents. Although evidence suggests that staff in integrated offices have a more positive view of managers, staff commonly felt that managers were too removed from office activities to make a difference, and that they needed to have a greater presence in the office to be aware of the issues involved and have a role in influencing them.xxvi

...and there was more of a ‘working together’ perception of the TU and H&S Representative roles and management in integrated offices.

Integrated offices were more likely to perceive the role of the TU H&S Representative role as that of working alongside staff and management to resolve health and safety issues, and to some degree, frontline staff handed responsibility for personal safety over to TU personnel.xxvii

12.18 Potentially violent customers

Staff were generally dismissive of the usefulness of PV markers and the PV system...

Staff were generally dismissive of the usefulness of PV markers and the PV system because of the way the system works. They did not see the relevance of it for all staff such as those who worked on the reception, and also because of the level of administrative work it created. Other staff felt that the value of a PV marker was negated because they perceived that one could only be given once an incident had taken place. In any case, many staff did not feel that PV customers were responsible for incidents in their office, but felt that these were more down to unreported, regular, and unacceptable customer behaviour which was more of an issue than that of the behaviour of those marked as PV.

However, across all offices, some staff reported that they did not receive formal notification of new PV customers, whilst others noted that various formal and informal methods were used in their office to inform them of both new and existing PV customers. Some staff found that this information – whether formally or
informally – was insufficient. This is due to the impracticability of reading through a written list every time a customer came into the office (this was especially the case for FAs and Floor Managers), confidence in the regular updating of the list, and the fact that there was little consistency in the information on the lists, which varied by Jobcentre Plus office. Staff also recognised that reception staff were in a vulnerable position because they were greeting customers (new customers in particular) with no knowledge of their background or previous actions.xxviii

...and staff had mixed views on the effect that knowing a customer’s PV marking had on the way they dealt with the customer.

Staff had mixed views on the effect that knowing a customer’s PV marking had on the way they dealt with the customer. Some frontline staff preferred not knowing about a customer’s PV status, as they felt that this influenced an unusual manner towards the customer from the outset. Management agreed that this could potentially have a negative impact either for the customer or on the effectiveness of the benefit system. Other staff felt more vulnerable and treated all customers as though they might be PV, with their overall aim to avoid a negative reaction from the customer, although a smaller amount of staff assumed that an interaction with PV customers would be negative. Others were consistently more lenient with PV-marked customers as they wanted to deal with them quickly so that they would leave the office. This was sometimes at the expense of other customers who had been waiting longer. Many staff did not believe that it made any difference, as they were often unaware of customers’ PV status, possibly because they had not looked for the marker or had not been made aware of it.

The staff safety research found that frontline staff had the least understanding of the process used to identify customers as potentially violent (PV). Across integrated areas, frontline staff had varying levels of understanding of the PV identification process. Within integrated offices, Jobcentre Plus, public office staff were generally more aware than their Contact Centre colleagues. In non-integrated areas, staff who had been working in jobcentres and Social Security offices for some time had a reasonable understanding of the PV identification process.

12.19 Security guards

*Staff were generally positive about the use of security guards...*

The latest staff safety research found that staff generally felt that security staff provided a good deterrent for difficult customers, and that if safety incidents occurred, security staff would be on hand to help resolve situations or protect staff. Security guards themselves shared this understanding of their role, but some indicated that they would wait for a cue from the staff member before intervening.xxix
...and staff in areas where the replacement of Security Guards with Customer Contact Officers (CCOs) was being piloted felt that this had a positive impact on the level of staff safety incidents occurring in the office.

Staff in areas that were piloting the replacement of Security Guards with CCOs, whose function is to combine a security role with meeting, greeting and assisting customers) perceived that CCOs had a positive impact on the level of staff safety incidents occurring in offices. This was attributed to the fact that they were able to be more mobile around the office, their role enabled them to build up more of a rapport with customers, and that there were more of them. However it was felt that CCOs were only able to make an impact on minor to average disturbances (which nevertheless constitute the majority of incidents) and not more serious situations caused by a perceived ‘hard core’ of customers.  

12.20 References

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13 Staff Training

- This chapter focuses on staff training in Jobcentre Plus. The Jobcentre Plus service represents a radical departure in the delivery of welfare and employment services to people of working age. In order to ensure the delivery of the new regime meets the vision, and customers receive an optimum level of service, it is necessary to equip staff with sufficient skills to deliver the new service. The roll out of integrated offices was accompanied by a full training and development strategy, to ensure staff have the appropriate skills.

- Early evaluation evidence suggested that converting staff to new roles had not been accompanied by sufficient training, and that for staff to deliver the service according to the vision, a significant amount of training was required. In particular, First Contact Officers and Personal Advisors reported a need for training on how to deal with non-JSA customers, particularly those with health conditions, and a need for more information on the help and services available to customers. However, more recent evidence indicates that progress has been made in the ability of staff to deliver the vision.

13.1 Summary

- Research conducted in 2003 suggests that gains in staff experience have led to some progress towards delivering the Jobcentre Plus vision.

- Feedback on training in Contact Centres was mixed, and more recent research suggests that FCOs continued to feel that the timing of the training was inappropriate.

- FCOs found that benefits knowledge often seemed to result from experience rather than training, although the latest research findings suggest that further benefits training is required by FCOs.

- Since the last wave of research, FCOs appeared to be more aware of what happened in FA and PA meetings, although explanations provided to customers about this varied due to the pressure FCOs were under to answer the next call.

- Overall, FCOs made several suggestions for main areas of improvement in order to meet the vision.
• Research conducted in 2003 found that there had been progress in FAs’ confidence with checking claim forms, and on the job experience had led to FAs’ increased knowledge of all the Jobcentre Plus benefits, but research conducted in 2004 suggests that some FAs, especially those without a benefits background, felt that there were still some gaps in the training, and there was also an issue around the timing of some training.

• In initial issue for PAs delivering a work focused service in Jobcentre Plus was a lack of confidence in dealing with people with health conditions and disabilities: this was felt to have improved over time with PAs feeling more confident in dealing with non-JSA customers. However, some PAs remained uncomfortable discussing work with customers with severe health conditions. Some PAs felt that specific training was difficult to deliver as much is related to confidence and experience. However, it appears that some PAs felt more confident about giving non-JSA customers information about the help and advice available to them.

• The promotion of caseloading also depended on a good staff understanding of what they could offer to customers.

Research conducted in 2003 found that gains in staff experience have led to some progress towards delivering the Jobcentre Plus vision.

Early evaluation suggested that converting staff to new roles had not been accompanied by sufficient training, which had consequences for the quality of advice received by clients. However, qualitative research with staff and clients conducted in 2003 found that some progress has been made towards delivering the Jobcentre Plus vision, of which can be attributed to gains in staff experience.

Staff continue to report that some training came too early and was forgotten before it could be put into practice.

13.2 First Contact

Feedback on training in Contact Centres was mixed, and more recent research suggests that FCOs continued to feel that the timing of the training was inappropriate.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 found that in some Contact Centres, staff felt that the quality of training was improving, which was beneficial to new recruits. Others felt that the training was of poor quality. FCOs placed a considerable degree of emphasis on the necessity to learn ‘on the job’ either through formal shadowing of, or informal information exchange with, colleagues or through personal experience over time. Research in 2004 suggested that FCOs consistently reported new elements were being introduced to their role too rapidly and without the necessary training. As a result, they did not always feel equipped to deliver to the vision. With these findings in mind, it should be noted that fieldwork was conducted in different offices for the 2003 and 2004 research, which may explain why the 2003 research appears to suggest some progress that is not sustained in the 2004 research.
FCOs found that benefits knowledge often seemed to result from experience rather than training...

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 found that benefits knowledge often seemed to result from experience rather than training, and benefits training appeared to be delivered somewhat inconsistently across different offices. As was the case with earlier initial findings, generally staff did not feel that the benefits related training they had received was sufficiently detailed in order for them to perform their jobs effectively.

Typically, benefits training for FCOs concentrated on the five main Jobcentre Plus benefits, but there was evidence that the length and depth of what this training covered varied considerably. In particular, staff felt that they would have liked more detailed information on benefits other than JSA and Income Support.

...although the latest research findings suggest that further benefits training is required by FCOs.

Research conducted in 2004 found that offices were often organised in teams of mixed experienced and as such more experienced helped less experienced colleagues. However, staff from across all offices felt that further training was necessary in order to deliver the vision, particularly around the introduction of tax credits and some benefit types; in general staff felt that the benefit training that they received was insufficient. Despite some useful training courses on benefits, gaps in benefit knowledge were still reported, mainly around Bereavement Benefits and Carer’s Allowance (CA).

Staff continued to feel that following the introduction of tax credits refresher training is much needed, as for some FCOs, a significant period of time elapsed since their initial training. The expectation that staff who were trained could effectively cascade information to colleagues was a concern for some FCOs given the complexities surrounding tax credits. Staff would welcome refresher training delivered directly to all staff.

FCOs suggested a range of training methods that could be used to address training gaps including computer based training, learning through experience, intranet, and guidebooks. Whichever training method was chosen, it was felt by some that it was important to allow time to consolidate the training received. Some FCOs felt that the pressure of answering calls did not allow them this time.

Since the last wave of research, FCOs appeared to be more aware of what happened in FA and PA meetings, although explanations provided to customers about this varied due to the pressure FCOs were under to answer the next call.

Evidence from earlier research on the initial rollout stage found that FCOs felt that they needed more time for training on the Vantive system. By the time of the qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 found that generally FCOs were receiving basic computer training for the Vantive and LMS systems.
Research conducted in 2003 also found that some FCOs indicated that they felt less confident about explaining what would happen when customers attended their meeting at the public office, often because they felt that they had limited knowledge of what would be covered by staff in the FA and PA interviews. In such cases, FCOs said that they would like to undertake visits to public offices in order to address this knowledge gap.\[^{vi}\] Research conducted in 2004 found that whilst FCOs were aware of the purpose of the FA and PA meetings, observations revealed considerable variations in the explanations provided to customers about this at First Contact. FCOs explained that this was due to the pressure they felt under to take the next call thus limiting the time needed to ensure that customers understood the next steps.\[^{vii}\]

**Overall, FCOs made several suggestions for main areas of improvement in order to meet the vision.**

Research conducted in 2004 also found that the main areas of improvement cited by Contact Centre staff in order to meet the vision included improving FCOs’ benefit knowledge, particularly on Bereavement Benefits, CA and New Tax credits; and improving understanding of the public office and Contact Centre roles through job shadowing; and improved information technology – ability to co-ordinate appointment bookings through one computer system, such as the proposed move to CMS.\[^{viii}\]

### 13.3 Financial Assessor

*Research conducted in 2003 found that there had been progress in FAs confidence with checking claim forms, and on the job experience had led to FAs’ increased knowledge of all the Jobcentre Plus benefits...*

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 found that FAs in all Pathfinder offices felt confident in checking claim forms across all customer groups, which suggests progress since the last phase of research. Research conducted in 2004 found this still to be the case.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 found that FAs reported feeling more confident and knowledgeable across all the Jobcentre Plus benefits due to learning on the job or obtaining help and advice from more experienced colleagues. For some FAs knowledge gained on a day-to-day basis had plugged training gaps identified in earlier research.\[^{ix}\]

... but research conducted in 2004 suggests that some FAs, especially those without a benefit background, felt that there were some gaps in the training...

However, research conducted in 2004 found that some FAs, especially those without a benefit background, felt that there were some gaps in the training and information provided on certain benefits, particularly those felt to be more complicated such as IB and CA. FAs felt that this restricted their ability to give
customers more in-depth information and advice across the full range of benefits if required. The issue of not wanting to misinform customers still remained.

...and there was also an issue around the timing of some training.

FA confidence in providing information and advice on other issues such as new tax credits was mixed. FA staff in one Day 2 office received training on tax credits a year before it was required and had forgotten much of the information by the time it was needed. FAs who regularly dealt with lone parents were generally more confident with the child tax credits because they dealt with such claims on a day-to-day basis.

13.4 Personal Adviser

An initial issue for PAs delivering a work focused service in Jobcentre Plus was a lack confidence in dealing with people with health conditions and disabilities: this was felt to have improved over time with PAs feeling more confident in dealing with non-JSA customers...

Initial findings from the evaluation of Jobcentre Plus found that two of the main barriers to delivering a work focus for PAs were lack of confidence among PAs in dealing with people with health conditions and disabilities and carers, and a lack of knowledge of the help and services available. Qualitative research with staff and customers in 2003 found that some progress has been made. Generally, PAs felt confident in dealing with non-JSA customers as they had gained more knowledge and experience and had found more ways of approaching customers about work.

...although PAs remained uncomfortable discussing work with customers with severe health conditions.

However, latest findings from qualitative research conducted in 2004 suggest that some PAs remained uncomfortable discussing work with customers with severe health conditions, and PAs were also observed to make assumptions about customers’ barriers, such as childcare or caring responsibilities, which limited their engagement of customers in discussions about work.

However, staff felt that specific training was difficult to deliver as much is related to confidence and experience.

For carers and customers with severe physical or mental health conditions, staff acknowledged the need for more information and confidence in order to ensure these customers received the same level of service as other customers. Staff felt that specific training was difficult to deliver as much is related to confidence and experience. The increased specialisms in PA roles were viewed as one way to address this issue as well as good working relationships with other more experienced colleagues who can provide advice and support.
Some PAs felt more confident about giving non-JSA customers information about the help and advice available to them.

Qualitative research with staff and customers conducted in 2003 suggested that there had been some progress in giving non-JSA customers information and advice; some PAs felt more confident as they had gained more knowledge about the various organisations and services that they could refer customers to. Most Pathfinder offices had developed links with NDDP Job Brokers, and as such seemed more aware of the services provided by them. Shared knowledge from more experienced staff to those newer to their roles also appeared to be an effective method of improving PA knowledge and confidence. Some PAs had improved their knowledge as a result of specific actions, such as through the setting up of a non-JSA PA network to share knowledge and expertise. In one office PAs had attended a training event on intermediaries and making referrals. These measures had meant that some PAs seemed to have a better understanding of the reasoning behind conducting WFIs for non-JSA customers, when they could see that there was help that could be offered to them, although the extent to which information and advice was given to these customers very much depended on their personal circumstances. This continued to be evident in research conducted in 2004.

13.5 Caseloading

The promotion of caseloading also depended on a good staff understanding of what they could offer to customers.

Early evaluation evidence indicated that the confidence with which PAs promoted caseloading depended on their understanding of what they could offer to clients. Qualitative research conducted in 2003 found that progress had been made in the knowledge and confidence of PAs in giving customers information and advice on the help and services available, although research from 2004 suggests that the effectiveness of caseloading was still affected by PAs knowledge of the services available.

13.6 References

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xvii Delivering the Jobcentre Plus Vision: Qualitative Research with Staff and Customers Wave Four (due to be published spring 2005)
Appendix
Flow charts
Initial Work Focused Interview

Lone parents

First contact

Financial Assessor

WFI*

NDLP

Submission 2.6%

Placing <1%

Submission 0%

Placing 0%

Placing 3%

Placing 52%

People with health conditions and disabilities

First contact

Financial Assessor

WFI*

NDDP

Submission 0.9%

Placing <1%

Submission 0%

Placing 0%

Placing 5.6%

Placing 5%

Placing 50%

Others

First contact

Financial Assessor

WFI*

New Deal

Submission 2.5%

Placing <1%

Submission 0%

Placing 0%

Submission 5%

Placing 1.1%

Placing 0%

*Submissions and job entries for those having at least one WFI

Submissions occurring on the same day as first contact, or initial WFI

Placings counted are an individual's last placing in a spell, there is therefore some understatement of the amount of workfocus at the early stage relative to further out.
Lone parents

At six months, then 12 months, then annually

79-82%*

WFI

Submissions 15%

Placings 3%**

NDLP

Placings 38%***

* of those still on benefits after six and 12 months respectively

** Business Case Assumption

People with health conditions and disabilities

Every three years

Others

Every three years

* 41% six month review 43% annual