Experiences of lone parents from minority ethnic communities

Nick Pettigrew

A report of research carried out by BMRB Social, part of BMRB International on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions
We would like to thank Anja Nickenig and Elaine Squires, for their help, input and advice throughout the study. We are also grateful to our recruitment team, Margaret Otway, Harpal Dokal and Josephine King, who co-ordinated the dedicated group of recruiters who worked for BM RB on this project. Finally, we would like to thank all the respondents who participated in the study, both for the time they gave and for the openness with which they expressed their views.
The Author

Nick Pettigrew is an Associate Director within BMRB International, specialising in qualitative social research. Nick’s research interests include ethnicity, housing and benefits.
Contents

Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................... v
The Author ................................................................................................................................. vi
Abbreviations and acronyms ................................................................................................. vii
Summary ................................................................................................................................. 1

1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. ... 5
  1.1 NDLP .................................................................................................................... 5
  1.2 Child Support Agency ........................................................................................... 6
  1.3 Research objectives ............................................................................................... 6
  1.4 Methodology ........................................................................................................ 7
  1.5 Scope of qualitative methods ................................................................................ 7
  1.6 Sample ................................................................................................................. 7
  1.7 Report outline .................................................................................................... 10

2 Attitudes towards support, childcare and employment ................................................... 11
  2.1 Relationship with the NRP ................................................................................... 11
      2.1.1 Financial support from the NRP ........................................................... 12
      2.1.2 Attitudes towards the financial support of children ............................. 12
  2.2 Support networks ............................................................................................... 13
      2.2.1 Informal support networks .................................................................... 13
      2.2.2 Formal support networks .................................................................... 14
  2.3 Attitudes towards childcare ................................................................................ 15
  2.4 Employment history ............................................................................................ 16
  2.5 Attitudes towards employment ........................................................................... 17
  2.6 Barriers to employment....................................................................................... 18
      2.6.1 Practical barriers ................................................................................. 18
      2.6.2 Attitudinal issues ................................................................................ 19
      2.6.3 Childcare issues .................................................................................. 21
      2.6.4 Financial issues ................................................................................... 22
  2.7 Benefits of employment ....................................................................................... 23
  2.8 Chapter summary ............................................................................................... 23
Abbreviations and acronyms

CSR  Child Support Reforms
DWP  Department for Work and Pensions
ES   Employment Service
IS   Income Support
JSA  Jobseeker’s Allowance
NDLP New Deal for Lone Parents
NRP  Non Resident Parent
PA   Personal Adviser
Summary

Background to the study

There is little known about the reasons why minority ethnic lone parents are less likely than white lone parents to come forward for New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) and less likely to leave the programme for a job. In addition, there has been little research focusing on how minority ethnic lone parents view the Child Support Agency.

The Department, therefore, commissioned BMRB Social to explore minority ethnic lone parents’ views and attitudes towards child support and perceptions of their experiences of the Child Support Agency and NDLP.

Sixty-one interviews with lone parents were carried out. Interviews were sampled according to ethnicity (Black African, Black Caribbean, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi), interaction with the Child Support Agency, levels of participation in NDLP, number and age of children, educational qualifications, language, age, length of time on benefit, and location.

Background to respondents

Black lone parents in the sample were less likely to have been married and more likely to have children by different fathers than Asian lone parents.

Both black and Asian lone parents often had no contact with the Non Resident Parent (NRP) after the relationship had broken down. This was for three main reasons including: fear of the NRP; after having suffered an abusive relationship when living with the NRP; because the NRP was living abroad and had never returned to the UK; and because the NRP had shown very little interest in the child’s welfare and the lone parent no longer knew where the NRP was living and did not have any contact details for them.

There was reliance, particularly from Asian lone parents, on using family members for support with childcare, especially when family lived close by. These lone parents often had some form of financial support from family members.
Attitudes towards support and childcare

Those who were not working generally believed that the financial support of children was the responsibility of both parents, but especially the father, with Asian lone parents in particular expressing this view. However, whatever the background there was often little expectation of financial and practical support from, and contact with the NRP.

There were strong feelings about the provision of childcare from both black and Asian lone parents. Childminders were felt to be unacceptable, providing a poor environment and a poor level of care and stimulation. Nursery provision was more acceptable, providing a more stimulating environment, and more educational content. Those lone parents that did not want anyone else outside of the family looking after their children tended to be from Asian backgrounds.

Feelings of isolation were reported as a result of not having been in the country for very long, mobility problems, lack of family living in the area, and lack of support from ex-in-laws.

The non-English speakers in the sample were often reliant on local community centres and Asian women’s centres for advice, support and translation services. They often had very limited understanding of the services offered by the NDLP programme, and communications received from the Child Support Agency. Those that had recently started living in the UK also had problems understanding the welfare state and the associated services offered.

Attitudes and Barriers to Work

Those Asian lone parents that had stopped working when they had married, believed it had not been culturally acceptable for them to work. Even with the father gone, there was a perception, especially from those from the Pakistani and Bangladeshi community, that it was still not culturally acceptable within their community to be seen to be working.

A number of practical barriers to employment were identified including lack of, or outdated, skills and qualifications, lack of work experience in the UK, mental and physical health problems, inability to speak English, travel costs, and availability of flexible and suitable jobs in the local area.

There were a number of attitudinal barriers to employment including a lack of confidence, particularly with regard to interview skills and speaking English, a limited range of jobs lone parents were willing to consider and a perception that it was not financially viable to work. Generally, lone parents did not believe there was, or had experienced any, racism on behalf of employers – it was their status as a lone parent which affected their prospects of getting work.

Childcare was viewed as one key barrier to employment, including: perceived high costs, a lack of availability and flexibility, a belief that the child was not old enough to be left in childcare, and from Asian lone parents in particular, an unwillingness to leave the child with anyone other than family.

NDLP

Amongst the non-English speakers and those lone parents with limited English skills, there was often a complete lack of, or very limited, awareness of the programme. Written communications had not been understood and lone parents were confused as to the nature of the programme. This was a major factor as to why non-English speakers did not attend the initial NDLP interview.
Support from family, friends and the older children was often a crucial factor on whether lone parents, from Asian backgrounds in particular, would attend both the initial NDLP interview and any subsequent decision to join NDLP. Negative feedback from family often led to them not taking up the initial invitation.

There were a number of other reasons why lone parents decided not to attend the initial NDLP interview including: not looking for work currently, negative views from other lone parents or family, a perception that help from the programme was not needed and a belief that the jobs at the Jobcentre were poorly paid and of low skill.

Reactions to the initial NDLP interview depended on how ‘job ready’ the lone parents were, and whether the types of jobs and courses offered were perceived to be suitable. Those that felt ‘ready for work’ were very positive about the in-work benefit calculation and the information on tax credits. ‘Work ready’ lone parents believed they were able to go to work because their children were older, they had more confidence, skills and work experience.

The ethnicity and gender of the Personal Adviser (PA) was perceived as unimportant by both black and Asian lone parents, as the advisers had shown understanding and sensitivity to the needs of the lone parent.

Those black and Asian lone parents that took part in NDLP were generally very positive about the programme, in particular the personal and financial support offered and the relationship with the same adviser.

Those that did not take part or dropped out of NDLP, felt the programme had not met their expectations in terms of the type of help and courses offered.

Those lone parents included within the sample that took part in NDLP, but did not find work, suggested a number of reasons for this, including a perceived lack of available, well paid and flexible jobs, deciding not to look for work and that the relationship with the adviser had not worked out very well.

Those lone parents who found work after taking part in NDLP, believed that the help offered had positively impacted on them finding work, especially the jobsearch help, and the funds provided to buy interview clothes and travel cards. It was also believed that the programme had resulted in an increase in confidence on the part of the lone parent.

**Child Support Agency**

There was little awareness of the role of the Child Support Agency, and confusion about the exact name of the Agency. Those claiming benefit were not aware that, as a condition of their claim, they would have to deal with the Agency. This was particularly the case for those with no, or limited, English skills and those who were recently arrived in the UK.

The black and Asian lone parents that dealt with the Child Support Agency within the sample were generally quite negative about its role. Staff were felt to be slow, unresponsive, unfriendly, and unhelpful to their situation or their queries.

Information about NRPs was felt to be private and the Child Support Agency was believed to be too intrusive. In particular, the black lone parents in the sample with children by a number of different fathers stated that the Child Support Agency had been very insensitive in their dealings with them.
There was often disappointment expressed by black and Asian lone parents with the outcome of their case, and unhappiness with the lack of explanation given around the decision.

Those that refused to deal with the Child Support Agency suggested a number of reasons including: too formal an approach; poor attitude of staff; a perception that it would not be effective with the NRP; negative views about the Child Support Agency; threats of violence and repercussions from the NRP; the NRP was not in the country; and being disowned by family members if they dealt with the Child Support Agency.

Black and Asian lone parents that had had negative experiences of the Child Support Agency believed that the ethnicity and gender of the Child Support Agency staff should be matched to the lone parents. This was because the information being asked for was of such a personal nature.
1 Introduction

A large volume of research with lone parents has been carried out since the beginning of the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) programme with evaluations from the Employment Service (ES), which is now merged into the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). This research has shown that currently around 11 per cent of lone parents voluntarily come forward for an interview at a Jobcentre.

However, there is concern that higher proportions of minority ethnic lone parents do not take up this invitation. Of those that do come forward for an interview, approximately the same proportion take part in NDLP as white lone parents. Despite this, white lone parents are more likely to get a job through NDLP than minority ethnic lone parents.

The DWP recognised that there is little known about the reasons why minority ethnic lone parents do not come forward for NDLP. The Department therefore wishes to ensure that the service it provides is able to meet the needs of lone parents from minority ethnic groups.

DWP commissioned BMRB Social to conduct research amongst lone parents from minority ethnic groups to see how they participate in NDLP.

The Department has also previously commissioned research into how lone parents interact and view the Child Support Agency. However, there has been little research focusing on how minority ethnic lone parents view the Agency. As part of the same study, therefore, the Department commissioned BMRB Social to explore minority ethnic lone parents’ views and attitudes towards child support and perceptions of their experiences of the Child Support Agency.

The NDLP programme and the role of the Child Support Agency are discussed in more detail the sections below:

1.1 NDLP

Introduced in July 1997, NDLP is one element of the Government’s ‘Welfare to Work’ agenda. It is a voluntary programme, which aims to encourage lone parents to improve their prospects and living standards by improving their job readiness and by taking up and increasing paid work.

All lone parents who are not working or working fewer than 16 hours a week are eligible to join NDLP. Lone parents can attend an initial NDLP interview with a Personal Adviser (PA). From this meeting they can decide whether they want to join the NDLP programme or not.
PAs offer lone parents a package of advice and support, tailored to meet their individual needs including: job search assistance; in-work benefit calculations; childcare; training and education arrangements; personal plan preparation; and the provision of in-work support services.

From April 2001, all lone parents making a new or repeat claim for Income Support (IS) have been required to attend a PA meeting. These are mandatory for IS claimants and are aimed at encouraging people to join NDLP. However, as mentioned earlier, joining the programme is voluntary to all lone parents.

1.2 Child Support Agency

In April 1993, the current child support scheme was introduced using a standard formula that calculated maintenance payable by the ‘Non-Resident Parent’ (NRP). This is administered by the Child Support Agency who carry out assessments, and contact NRPs.

Although the service provided by the Child Support Agency is optional, lone parents in receipt of IS or income based Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA (IB)) are obliged to co-operate with the Agency.

A series of major reforms to the child support system are being implemented (mostly with effect from March 2003) as a result of the Child Support, Pensions and Social Security Act 2000. The goals of the reforms include making the system accessible, comprehensible and responsive to the parents concerned. Other objectives include increasing compliance and the administrative efficiency of the child support scheme.

1.3 Research objectives

The principal aim of this research was to explore and investigate how minority ethnic lone parents interact with the Child Support Agency and participate in NDLP.

More specifically, the objectives were to:

- explore the awareness and knowledge of the NDLP programme amongst minority ethnic lone parents;
- examine minority ethnic lone parents’ attitudes towards work or remaining on IS;
- explore minority ethnic lone parents’ attitudes towards the support systems currently available;
- examine whether there are different or more extensive barriers to participation in NDLP for minority ethnic lone parents;
- establish whether the current NDLP programme is able to meet the needs of lone parents from different minority ethnic groups;
- explore the awareness and knowledge of the Child Support Agency amongst minority ethnic lone parents;
- investigate the attitudes held by minority ethnic lone parents about child maintenance;
- examine attitudes towards the role played by the Child Support Agency; and
- explore the barriers towards complying with the Child Support Agency for lone parents from minority ethnic groups.
1.4 Methodology

The research adopted a wholly qualitative methodology. Sixty-one in-depth interviews were conducted with lone parents from minority ethnic communities.

Researchers from BMRB Social, trained in the techniques of non-directive interviewing, carried out all of the fieldwork.

Each in-depth interview was guided by the researcher using a topic guide, or aide memoir, which allowed for questioning that was responsive to the issues arising. Copies of the topic guide designed for this project can be found in the appendices to this report.

Fieldwork was conducted during April to September 2002. The interviews lasted between an hour and an hour and a half, and were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The verbatim transcripts were then analysed in detail.

1.5 Scope of qualitative methods

Qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, are ideal for exploring complex issues. Qualitative methods look to explore and understand, and to elicit a full range of possible answers. Quantitative research, on the other hand, looks to explore statistical relationships from the data.

Qualitative research utilises smaller samples that are chosen purposively to ensure that a full range of views are represented within the sample. Qualitative research uses a topic guide (please see the appendix), which allows flexible questioning in response to issues raised.

The findings from this study suggest a host of factors and influences that respondents discussed during the fieldwork that influenced their decision to participate in NDLP and their views about the Child Support Agency.

Such points would not have been so readily accessible using other research methods such as quantitative surveys. However, the research was not looking to produce statistics, but to identify the range of views, opinions and experiences of lone parents from different minority ethnic groups and to make comparisons with the views of white lone parents using the existing research available. Further quantitative research would be needed to measure the extent of the views described in this report.

1.6 Sample

There were a large number of important variables to consider for this study. However, the sample was chosen so as not to be representative, but to ensure a range of different experiences of NDLP and interaction with the Child Support Agency was included. Quotas were therefore set on ethnicity, interaction with the Child Support Agency, levels of participation in NDLP, age of children, educational qualifications, language, age, length of time on benefit, and Labour Market.
The key sampling variables were:

**Ethnicity:**
- 20 Black Caribbean;
- 12 Black African;
- 16 Indian;
- 6 Bangladeshi;
- 7 Pakistani.

**Interaction with NDLP:**
- 39 had never participated in an initial interview;
- 8 had declined to join the NDLP caseload;
- 3 had joined but dropped out of NDLP;
- 3 had participated in NDLP and had got a job;
- 8 had participated in NDLP and had not got a job.

**Interaction with Child Support Agency:**
- 15 had voluntarily contacted the Child Support Agency and were not claiming benefits;
- 18 had fully co-operated with the Child Support Agency;
- 11 had refused to co-operate with the Child Support Agency;
- 17 do not remember contact with the Child Support Agency.

**Age of respondent:**
- 17 were under 30;
- 44 were 31-55.

**Age of children:**
- 19 had children under 5;
- 20 had children between 5-10;
- 22 had children between 11-16.

**Educational qualifications:**
- 31 had no qualifications;
- 16 had some qualifications;
- 14 had high qualifications.
Language:
- 8 interviews with non-English speakers – the languages were Mirpuri, Bengali and Urdu. Four of these interviews were carried out by interviewers from the same cultural background as the respondent and who spoke these languages. The remaining four were carried out using interpreters.

Length of time on benefit:
- 6 had been on benefits less than a year;
- 20 had been on benefits for between 1-5 years;
- 16 had been on benefits for over 5 years.

Location:
- 14 interviews were carried out in the Midlands;
- 34 were carried out in London;
- 13 were carried out in two different areas in Northern England.

Sex of Lone Parents:
- 60 lone parents were female;
- 1 was male.

Different locations were chosen, as the areas where lone parents live can affect access to available jobs, in addition to services such as transport and childcare.

Information was also collected in the interviews on issues such as health of respondent and children, additional training after leaving full-time education, sources of income such as work or benefits, household tenure, and marital status.

Names and addresses of respondents were generated from a number of sample sources including:
- Income Support (IS) records;
- NDLP database;
- NDLP postal survey.

However, a number of problems were encountered with these sample sources including no or wrong telephone numbers, lone parents no longer living at addresses specified, and lone parents having been coded wrong on the records, database and survey. There was also variation in when respondents had been on the NDLP programme – participation ranged from a number of months to a number of years ago.

Some types of respondents were not accessible through any records, such as all of those who voluntarily approached the Child Support Agency. As a consequence, these respondents were recruited through freefind methods, such as door knocking and stopping people in the high street. Given some of the problems with the sample, freefind methods were also used to ‘top-up’ on some of the other quotas specified, in particular those that refused to co-operate with the Child Support Agency, and those that had participated in NDLP, but not got a job.
Lone parents stopped through freefind methods were asked a series of questions contained within a recruitment questionnaire to check their eligibility for the study and whether they met the quotas specified, such as whether they participated within the NDLP programme, or had voluntarily approached the Child Support Agency. There is little difference between the data generated by respondents recruited through freefind methods or through sample as long as care is taken to ensure that respondents meet the quotas and criteria specified, and correctly recruited.

No interviews were carried out with white lone parents as part of this study. However, findings have been compared throughout the report with two studies:


1.7 Report outline

This report is divided into four sections following this introduction. The next section examines lone parents’ attitudes towards, and relationship with the NRP, including the financial support received. It then goes on to explore attitudes towards support networks, childcare and employment.

The third section of the report focuses on minority ethnic lone parents’ experiences and awareness of NDLP. Reactions to being invited for the initial interview are explored along with the reasons why lone parents decide to join or not join the programme. The experiences of those who took part in the programme are examined along with suggestions of how the programme could be improved.

The fourth section of the report explores lone parents’ views and experiences of the Child Support Agency including their knowledge and awareness of its role, and their experiences of dealing with the Child Support Agency. It also focuses on the reasons why lone parents voluntarily approach the Child Support Agency, as well as why some lone parents refuse to deal with the Child Support Agency. It examines lone parents’ reactions to the outcomes of their cases and concludes with suggestions as to how the Child Support Agency could improve its service to minority ethnic lone parents.

Finally, the main findings from the research are drawn together, pointing out the main differences and similarities between minority ethnic lone parents and white lone parents.
2 Attitudes towards support, childcare and employment

This section of the report explores various attitudes held by lone parents, including their views towards, and relationship with, the NRP and what financial support they receive from the NRP. It then goes on to examine attitudes towards the financial support of children and what support networks, both formal and informal, lone parents rely on. Attitudes towards childcare and employment are explored along with perceived and actual barriers to employment. Finally, the perceived benefits of employment are considered.

2.1 Relationship with the NRP

The black respondents in this sample were less likely to have been married in the past and more likely to have children by different fathers, compared with the Asian lone parents. Black lone parents who had been born and lived in the UK all their lives had often been lone parents for a long time in comparison with the Asian lone parents.

Asian lone parents in this sample had usually been married to the children’s father. On some occasions, they had been married in their country of origin and come to the UK to live and then the relationship had failed.

However, whatever the background of the lone parent there was often little expectation of support from the NRP, both on a financial and practical basis.

Both black and Asian lone parents often had no contact with the NRP after the relationship had broken down. This was for three main reasons:

- **Fear of the NRP.** There were situations described where the NRP had been violent, alcoholic or taking drugs when living with the lone parent, resulting in the lone parent having to suffer years of abuse. Once out of this relationship, these lone parents did not want any more contact with the NRP, even if this meant they were suffering financially. Wikeley et al (2001) also noted that violence was a factor in a significant minority of cases and was a key trigger into lone parenthood.

- **The NRP was living abroad** and had never returned to the UK. The NRP may have never been in the UK at all, with the lone parent having come to the UK on their own, or from the country of the NRP when the relationship had broken down. There were also situations described where the NRP had been deported from the UK.
The NRP had shown very little interest in the child’s welfare and the lone parent no longer knew where the NRP was living and did not have any contact details of them. Wikeley et al (2001) reported that between 40 and 50 per cent of separated parents have no contact whatsoever with their ex-partner.

Other lone parents reported more limited contact with the NRP either on the telephone or face to face, with some ongoing relationships still in place with the children. There were also instances reported where contact with the NRP declined as the children had got older.

2.1.1 Financial support from the NRP

Across the sample and ethnic background, there was little financial support from the NRP with often none expected.

Lone parents from all ethnic backgrounds reported that the NRP historically was quite unreliable when it came to maintenance or Child Support Agency payments, which often led to disillusionment with the Child Support Agency and the ‘system’. This is similar to the findings of Wikeley et al (2001) which found that just over a quarter of Parents with Care (PWCs) acknowledged receiving payments prior to the involvement or the Child Support Agency. See Chapter 4 for more information.

Lone parents from all ethnic backgrounds reported more ad-hoc payments, with money received for the children on birthdays or at holiday times. Sometimes the NRP would help with the provision of food, nappies and children’s clothes when needed. There were also instances of more practical support such as looking after children or taking them to school, or seeing them at weekends.

2.1.2 Attitudes towards the financial support of children

Those who were not working generally believed that the financial support of children was the responsibility of both parents but especially that of the father (all but one of the lone parents in this study were female). This compares with Wikeley et al (2001), which noted that a clear majority of NRPs and PWCs felt that responsibility for financial support should lie with parents, with only a tiny minority asserting that this should be a Government responsibility alone.

Lone parents, especially those from Asian backgrounds, talked about the roles of a mother and father in a family. In such a family, it was the father’s role to financially provide for the children by going out to work, and the role of the mother was to look after the children.

Where this support was not available from the father then it was felt that the responsibility passes to the Government. However, it was pointed out that this was not the case in their home countries and so lone parents recently arrived from abroad, particularly appreciated the financial support on offer.

‘If you think about it, it’s actually not the government’s responsibility. The government in Pakistan certainly wouldn’t help us if we were in this state, so we would starve. So actually, it’s quite nice of the Government to help take on some responsibility.’

(Pakistani, Northern England, non English speaker, age 30+, no qualifications, three children, no family locally, never worked, in UK less than six years)

However, amongst Asian lone parents in particular, there were expectations of financial help from other family members, in particular brothers and fathers. This financial help could be in the form of ad-hoc payments or money paid regularly. For example, one Indian lone parent reported attending meetings of her family several times a year, where her brothers would listen to her situation and decide how much money to give her.
Despite this, views were expressed, especially by Black Caribbean lone parents, that lone parents should not be relying on the state for financial help, particularly in the long term. They wanted to get off benefits and into work as soon as possible.

It was also reported, particularly by Asian lone parents, how in the past they had expected the father to provide financial support for their children but becoming a lone parent had created a change in attitudes. They now felt it was partly their responsibility, along with the Government.

The black and Asian lone parents within in the sample, who are in work, perceived that the financial support of the child was their own responsibility, although help was wanted from the Government in terms of the cost of childcare, which was felt to be very high.

2.2 Support networks

This section of the report examines the support networks that lone parents utilised, including more informal networks such as family and friends, and formal networks such as community organisations and other agencies.

2.2.1 Informal support networks

Lone parents, in particular those from the Asian community were often reliant on family members such as parents, siblings, uncles, aunts and cousins for support with childcare, as well providing more emotional support for the lone parent and the children.

Lone parents often had support networks of friends and neighbours, as well as other lone parents from their background. Having other lone parents as friends was felt to be extremely important especially as childcare issues and contact with the NRP could be discussed, and lone parents could provide each other with emotional support. The Black Caribbean lone parents reported having many female friends, who were lone parents like themselves, whereas, in comparison, Asian lone parents knew of relatively few people who were lone parents from their background.

‘I have got lone parent friends…..We go out for a day or something with the kids, so yes I have a few friends who are lone parents and are very very good and understanding, very sympathetic because they’re probably going through the same lifestyle as I am and I have married friends as well with families who sympathise with me and look after me when there’s a need.’

(Indian, Midlands, age 30+, high qualifications, one child, no family locally, previously worked)

However, feelings of isolation were reported by both the black and Asian lone parents in the sample. This was for a number of reasons including:

• **Length of time in country** – Lone parents recently arrived from countries such as Monserrat, Somalia and Pakistan were included in this study. These lone parents had not been in the UK for very long and had arrived here without their partner or knowing any relatives or friends. They did not know many people either from their own, or other backgrounds, and because of childcare responsibilities did not get the opportunity to get to know people. They believed they had little knowledge of ‘how things worked’ in the UK, which resulted in them feeling isolated from accessing services and the rest of the community. Even if they could get childcare support, they did not know of places where they could go and meet other people and had very limited awareness of formal support groups.
‘Somehow I seem not to have the confidence I would have liked to have, or I had when I came here, for whatever reason, as I said the cultural differences here. I’m so fearful that I’ll fail at things because I simply don’t know the system as well as it would have been if I was at home, holding my own, so there’s always this sense of would I be able to cope, would I be able to manage, simply because the settling in process is still going on.’

(Black Caribbean, Northern England, Age over 30, High qualifications, One child, No family locally, Previously worked, In UK less than six years)

- **Mobility.** There were reported physical health problems such as diabetes, stomach disorders and bone diseases, meaning that it was difficult often venturing outside much or very far. This also acted as a barrier to employment.

- **Lack of support.** Those lone parents, especially from Asian backgrounds, that reported having relied on their husband’s family for childcare and support when still in a relationship, believed they now had very little support from this side of the family, as they were now separated or divorced. There were also lone parents that did not have any family living close by, which meant they had to pay for childcare whenever they wanted to go out, or go to work.

  ‘I am quite isolated. I don’t have no one to look after the children. And if someone looks after the children then I have to pay them. There is no family network of support.’

  (Black African, London, age 30+, some qualifications, three children, no family living locally, in part-time work)

- **Cultural factors.** Asian lone parents pointed out that it was quite unusual to be a lone parent in their community, which sometimes resulted in negative reactions from other members of their community. One Indian lone parent for example talked about how her in-laws had described the lone parent as bringing ‘shame’ on their family and they wanted nothing further to do with her, or the children.

2.2.2  **Formal support networks**

Across the sample, there was little awareness of, or contact with formal networks, although there was occasional use of organisations such as Gingerbread. Asian women’s centres and local rights centres were also used for advice and support, and views tended to be positive about these centres.

Contact with solicitors and social workers tended to occur when the lone parents’ relationship broke up. There was also reported contact with organisations such as the Samaritans or their local priest when in need of emotional support.

For the non-English speakers in the sample, there was some use of support workers, although these lone parents were often reliant on local community centres to interpret for them, and read information sent to them. They often used children and friends to interpret for them when dealing with English speakers outside of the community centres.
2.3 Attitudes towards childcare

Minority ethnic lone parents, especially Asian lone parents, often depended on extended family members and on some occasions the eldest child for childcare provision. Those that relied on family members felt it had the following advantages:

- Cheaper than commercial childcare.
- Children would be happier with someone they knew.
- They could trust their families to look after the children better than people working in childcare.

Childminders were often felt to be unacceptable by both black and Asian lone parents, as they were believed to provide a poor environment and a poor level of care and stimulation. This was sometimes the result of previous bad experiences with childminders but also a perception gained from other lone parents in their community and negative media stories - ‘I’ve seen it on TV, they are cruel to them.’ These findings echo those of Dawson et al (2000) which found that lone parents’ reluctance to use non-parental childcare ‘had clearly been aggravated by media horror stories of accidents occurring to children whilst they were in the care of nannies, carers or childminders’.

‘I’ve never gone to work leaving my child with a childminder. Whenever I’ve wanted to go to work, I’ve found family members and I have to take her there. I wouldn’t want to use ... child minding facilities, we have a few local ones in my area and I find the kids are very riffraff type of kids go there and there’s no culture within the context of the child minding. There’s no creativity, all they do is run around, scream around all day long and somehow I never wanted my child to be in that environment. ‘

(Indian, Midlands, age 30+, high qualifications, one child, previously worked)

The ethnicity of the childminder was not felt to be a mitigating factor in views about childminders – indeed, there were reported problems with childminders of the same ethnic background as the lone parent.

‘No, the first child minder I left my daughter at six months, she was an Indian lady, I wasn’t happy with her. I left my daughter for three weeks and she was covered in a nappy rash, she would not change her nappies, she would not dress her up, she would not feed her, she would not clothe her properly, because when I used to go and pick her up at 4 o’clock she could hardly cry because she must have been crying all day and she could hardly cry.’

(Indian, Midlands, age 30+, no qualifications, two children, family live locally, previously worked)

Nursery provision was felt to be more acceptable than childminders, providing a more stimulating environment, and more educational content. In particular, the staff at nurseries were felt to have better qualifications for looking after children.

‘We see [childminders] on TV news they hit children and next minute you’re taking them to court... In nursery you’re paying them and they know that you’re paying them they look after your kids better than what a child minder might do.’

(Black African, London, age under 30, no qualifications, two children, no family locally, previously worked)
‘I don’t think she would have been stimulated enough. How many children are [childminders] allowed to have? Two children? Three children? What can they do with them? Leave them in a playpen all day? I wanted my daughter to be stimulated, for her to learn, for her to develop properly, and I felt she would only get that in a nursery.’

(Black Caribbean, London, age 30+, some qualifications, one child, some qualifications, family live locally, previously worked)

The prime consideration for nursery providers was that they offered a stimulating and caring environment, and the ethnicity of the childcare provider was not generally felt to be important to lone parents within this study.

However, there were exceptions to this. For example, one Pakistani lone parent was very religious and only wanted her child cared for in a Muslim nursery. One Black Caribbean lone parent had strong political views about ethnicity, and only wanted her child looked after and educated with other black children. Conversely, an Indian lone parent pointed out that childcare providers of the same background as herself might be negative towards her because of her status as a lone parent.

### 2.4 Employment history

The research sample was diverse. Purposive sampling was used to include respondents with varying qualifications, and this was reflected in respondents’ experiences of employment. The sample included:

- **Lone parents who had never worked.** These tended to be Asian lone parents who had married or had their first child at a young age:

  ‘When I first came to England, I didn’t even know what it was to go out to work. We lived in an extended family system – mother-in-law, father-in-law, husband’s brothers and sisters, the whole family. My husband would go out and earn money and bring it home. And besides, the family didn’t like the idea of women going out to work.’

  (Pakistani, Northern England, age 30+, no qualifications, five children, family live locally, previously worked, in UK less than six years)

- **Lone parents who had not worked either since marriage, or the birth of their first child.** This group included Asian lone parents that had stopped working when they had married, as it was not seen as culturally acceptable for them to work. Where these lone parents had worked they had in the main worked in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs such as cleaning or factory work.

- **Lone parents who had worked since the break-up of their marriage but had felt compelled to give up work because they felt it was not financially viable for them to continue, or finding local childcare had proved problematic.**

- **Lone parents currently in work or on training courses to help them get a skilled job at some point in the future.** Training courses that lone parents had taken, or were taking, included varying levels of computer courses from basic operation through to more advanced computer courses such as Internet design and use of Office packages. Other courses mentioned included nursery teaching, food and hygiene, fashion design, social work and hand and nail manicuring.
2.5 Attitudes towards employment

Five distinct groups of lone parents were identified in terms of their attitudes towards work. These were:

- **Those not interested in working**: These lone parents, particularly those from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds, believed it was important for children to have a mother, whose prime role was to look after children rather than go to work. It was not seen as acceptable within their community to go out to work, as it was believed that there would be a lack of supervision for the children, and that people within the community would have negative reactions to women who went out to work. This group also felt that they would be unlikely to find a job that they were qualified to do that paid sufficiently, or fitted around times when the children were at school. These lone parents also wanted to ensure they were around to have control over the children and to make sure they behaved and acted appropriately within their community.

  ‘If they are to go astray, they’ll think my mum’s at work I can do what I like. That’s how children’s minds work. I wouldn’t know if they are at school or not, but if I was at work, I wouldn’t be able to. It’s important in our community to save face. I don’t want that sort of disgrace. People will point the finger at me and say ‘why was she in such a hurry to go off to work anyway.’

  (Pakistani, Northern England, non-English speaker, age 30+, three children, no qualifications, no family locally, never worked)

- **Those who were interested in gaining employment**, but felt they were unable to work currently because of illness or because they felt that the children were too young. There was great variation across the sample in terms of how old the children should be before the lone parent would consider returning to work. However, Asian lone parents tended to state older ages of their children when it would be acceptable for them to go to work, in comparison with black lone parents. For example, one Pakistani lone parent stated she would not start to think about work until her children had reached 16, whereas a Black Caribbean lone parent from London, believed she would start looking for work as soon as her youngest child started primary school.

- **Those who were interested in finding employment**, but were yet to do so because of perceived lack of available or suitable jobs. They were looking for jobs in their area through a number of sources including using their NDLP adviser as well as asking employers directly, such as in retail outlets, whether there were any jobs available. Other methods of jobsearch included looking in the local papers, word of mouth through friends and relatives, and writing speculative letters to local employers. This group included both black and Asian lone parents.

- **Those who were currently working full time**. Those working full time were in a diverse range of occupations including working for public sector organisations such as local authorities, in nursing and care occupations, in hairdressing and in factory work. Full-time work was defined by these lone parents as working at least four or five days a week for at least five or more hours a day.

- **Those who were currently working part time**. These lone parents tended to work for only a few hours a week, as they felt any extra earnings would take them above the earnings disregard figure, and therefore there would be little financial benefit in working. This group would potentially work full time but only if the barriers to full-time work were surmounted, such as childcare and financial disincentives. As before, full-time work was defined by lone parents as working at least several days a week for at least a number of hours in the day. This group included both black and Asian lone parents.
These findings reflect those in Dawson et al (2000) which found that a spectrum of stance towards work across their sample, including the ‘confident work ready’; the ‘less confident work ready’; the ‘work hesitant’ and the ‘work resistant’. The report pointed out that the work resistant group tended to include Bangladeshi and Pakistani non-participants in NDLP.

2.6 Barriers to employment

A number of barriers to employment were identified from lone parents across the sample. These were both practical and attitudinal barriers and financial disincentives. Many of these barriers were similar to those identified in other research (Dawson et al, 2000). Lone parents often believed they faced a combination of these barriers preventing them from getting work.

2.6.1 Practical barriers

There were a number of practical barriers identified by black and Asian lone parents, which they believed prevented them from getting work. These included:

- **A lack of skills**, qualifications and experience to get employment. There were Black Caribbean lone parents in the sample, who reported leaving school early without any qualifications, because they had become pregnant or had associated with people who did not think that qualifications were important. Asian lone parents also described that, when younger, they had not seen the need for qualifications as they had expected to be in a relationship providing full-time care for the children. Both black and Asian lone parents also pointed out that they had not worked ever, or for a number of years, and that jobs tended to require experience.

  ‘Sometimes you ring them from there [Jobcentre], give you an appointment to go and see them. When you get in there, you might not get the job. They might be asking for two years’ experience. So if you came into the country six months ago, how are you going to get the experience?’

  (Black African, London, age under 30, two children, high qualifications, family live locally, previously worked)

- **Lack of relevant qualifications**. A perception that the qualifications possessed were for skills that were out of date or redundant. There was a belief that many of the jobs that were advertised in their local area and were worthwhile doing, required some level of skills or qualifications, especially in skills that would be needed in an office-based environment such as typing and operating packages on a computer.

  ‘I would love to go to work but I haven’t got qualifications to get the really good job. ... It’s only silly things like bar work, café work and I ain’t doing that so I’m not going back to work.’

  (Black Caribbean, London, age 30+, no qualifications, three children, family live nearby, limited work experience)

- **Lack of transferable skills**. Those that had lived abroad often believed that the skills and qualifications they held were not transferable to the UK labour market. For example, a lone parent pointed out that she had gained a number of qualifications from her school and college in India, but did not think that employers in the UK would recognise these.

- Those with **health problems** believed these were a factor preventing them from getting work. These included physical problems such as mobility issues, epilepsy and breathing difficulties as well as emotional issues such as stress and fear of crowds or open spaces. This reflects findings
from the NDLP evaluation (Dawson et al., 2000) which showed that health problems were widespread amongst lone parents and a major barrier to work.

- **No or limited English skills.** Those who did not speak English believed that this was a factor preventing them from getting work, as it meant that they could not attend interviews or had problems filling in forms. However, there were non-English speakers in the sample that were currently attending English lessons in order to rectify this, or were intending to do so in the future. Those with adequate spoken English, but with some problems reading and writing English, believed this could also be a barrier to work.

- **Travel issues.** Not wanting to travel far to any potential job was also mentioned as a barrier to work. Children were often settled in at schools, and lone parents did not want to spend time travelling to work, as they needed to drop their children off at school. It was also felt that the costs of travelling to work were too high, either by car or public transport, and also that the public transport links in the local area were poor.

### 2.6.2 Attitudinal issues

A number of attitudinal barriers to work were suggested by black and Asian lone parents. These included:

- **A lack of confidence** that skills and experience were suitable for getting employment. In particular, there were fears expressed about having to attend interviews and the impression that was given at interviews.

- **A lack of understanding of services.** Lone parents who were new to the country reported having little idea about how to go about applying for jobs, about having to attend interviews and filling in forms. They had little understanding of services such as the Jobcentre and how they could help, particularly if they had not understood the initial invitation for attending an NDLP meeting.

- A perception that firms within specific sectors, such as media or youth work, would not have **family friendly or flexible working practices.** Both black and Asian lone parents often considered applying for jobs in the public sector, or jobs where many other women work, such as hairdressing, because they felt they would have more flexible working practices.

- **Not wanting to take an unsuitable job.** Lone parents also had quite specific jobs that they wanted to do and there were a limited range of jobs they were willing to consider. They did not want to take ‘dead end jobs’ that had few career prospects. For example, it was pointed out that jobs available to those without experience or qualifications tended to be jobs such as cleaning, catering or work within factories that were poorly paid with little chance of career progression. In addition, these types of jobs often involved unsuitable hours. There were also lone parents who had occasionally unrealistic expectations of the types of jobs they would only work in, such as being a director in the film industry or a sound technician in a recording studio, but without having any relevant experience.

> ‘As long as it can open doors for me. I don’t want to be able to go to a job and I am having to stay at that level and not able to grow.’

(Black African, London, age 30+, some qualifications, two children, family live locally, previously worked)
Generally, black and Asian lone parents did not think racism on the part of employers was the main reason why they might be not be getting jobs. They felt that most firms had implemented equal opportunities policies, and given the large proportions of minority ethnic groups in their area, employed staff from many different communities. Similar findings were reported in Dawson et al, which found that ‘the majority of ethnic minority respondents did not feel their ethnic group was a barrier to employment or a factor that had any particular impact on their situation as lone parents.’

However, one lone parent within this sample reported thinking that racism may have played a part in the reason why she did not get a job, but was unsure whether this was actually the case.

’Sometimes, to be honest, I wonder. I had an interview about three weeks ago and everything was fine up until I went to the interview and it looked positive and they said they would get back to me… It took them three weeks to write back and say ‘sorry for all the trouble they put me through and they’ll keep my details on site’, and that was it. It sort of flashed a question in my mind. [There wasn’t] any reason I didn’t get it.’

(Black Caribbean, London, age 30+, some qualifications, two children, family live locally, previously worked)

Both black and Asian lone parents felt that sexism and ageism were more important issues as a barrier to employment:

‘There is a change coming. There was a lot of discrimination in the past but it’s all changing now, people are realising, they’re recognising it so much that the local government, local community people, local police are trying to change that so it will balance out.’

(Indian, Midlands, age 30+, no qualifications, two children, family live locally, previously worked)

Older lone parents tended to believe that age was also a barrier to getting employment. It was a commonly held belief that employers preferred younger people who had more up-to-date skills and experience and were more likely to be flexible in their working patterns.

‘Some of the firms – they’re looking for 16-30. What if they don’t like to employ anybody over 30. What if they’re looking for somebody single, not married… I think about stuff like that!’

(Pakistani, Northern England, age 30+, no qualifications, five children, family live locally, previously worked)

‘I haven’t been in work for a very long time, so there is a barrier, it’s very hard for them to see … they are looking for younger people for jobs.’

(Black Caribbean, London, age 30+, some qualifications, five children, no family locally, previously worked)

They felt that employers were often put off by the fact they were a lone parent rather than their ethnicity. Lone parents believed that employers would think that lone parents would not be flexible in the hours worked and would have to take time off at short notice to look after children when ill. Often this was a perception held by lone parents and not always borne out by experience. This finding was reflected in Dawson et al (2000) which pointed out ‘there was a fairly consistent belief across the sample that employers were uneasy about lone parents’.

However, there were reported instances of previous inflexible employers who had not allowed time off when children were sick or when the lone parent had to take them to school.
2.6.3 Childcare issues

Childcare was one of the key practical and attitudinal barriers to employment. Respondents had a number of concerns with regard to childcare.

- A belief that the child was not old enough to be left in childcare. There was great variation across the sample and between ethnicity as to what age it is appropriate to leave a child in childcare. For example, one Pakistani lone parent did not want to leave her children in any kind of childcare until they were in secondary school, whereas another felt they would be able to leave them in after school clubs or some other form of childcare once they started school. However, it was apparent that black lone parents were more likely to be prepared to leave their children in childcare at a younger age in comparison with Asian lone parents in this sample.

- Not wanting to use any kind of childcare at all. This was sometimes as a result of lack of trust of anyone else looking after their children, as well as a perception that children might be emotionally damaged after the break-up of the relationship.

  ‘I don’t trust anyone. No one will take care of them in the way that I will, not even their own aunt so I’m better off staying at home with them myself.’

  (Pakistani, Northern England, non-English speaker, age 30+, three children, no qualifications, no family locally, never worked)

- Perceptions of guilt if leaving children in childcare – ‘the children might feel it. They might say our dad has dumped us, and now so has our mum.’ By placing children in childcare, these lone parents believed they would not be able to see much of the children and have much less time with them.

- Not wanting to use non-family members for childcare arrangements. This was for a number of reasons including cost factors, and a dislike of more formal childcare arrangements such as childminders. In addition, it was felt by Asian lone parents in particular that only family members could be trusted to look after the children well. It was also believed that family members would provide more stimulation and a better standard of care than commercially available childcare, especially childminders.

- Cost. There was a belief that it would be difficult to afford suitable childcare if the lone parent was to find work. This was occasionally based on experience of searching around the local area getting costs of nurseries, but also based on discussions with other lone parents on the cost of childcare. Lone parents varied widely in their estimates of the cost of childcare and examples were given from £40 to £500 per month. When lone parents were talking about the costs of childcare, they did not tend to take into account the extra financial help available in covering childcare.

- Availability. It was sometimes believed that there was little acceptable childcare provision in the local area. This was exacerbated as childminders were not generally seen to be an acceptable means of childcare, with nursery schools the preferred choice of childcare provision. However, nurseries in the areas where the interviews were carried out were felt to be oversubscribed.

  ‘Who’s going to look after them? Around our area, we haven’t got no crèche where I could go. I don’t know how to type, I don’t know how to use a computer. If there was anything nearby, I could go, but only if they had a crèche so I could leave them there in the crèche.’

  (Pakistani, Northern England, age 30+, three children, no qualifications, family live locally, previously worked)
Dealing with difficult children. Those lone parents who stated that their children had behavioural difficulties or were extremely shy believed that their children would have real emotional problems in a nursery or childminder environment. There were also instances of children with physical health problems such as severe asthma, which was felt to prevent them from attending childcare.

The inflexibility of childcare and employment. It was considered that it was extremely hard to get hours of work within a job to fit around childcare, or getting a job where it was possible to take time off work when the child is ill. For example, one lone parent pointed out that the nurseries in her area were only open until 4pm, which would mean she would have to pay someone else to pick the child up and wait for her to get home from a job.

A belief that it was better to organise childcare before seeking employment, but that there were difficulties affording to do it this way – ‘If I’d done it that way, look for childcare, I wouldn’t have been able to pay for it, so it’s like a vicious circle’.

In only one instance in this sample was a fear of racism for the child expressed as a reason for not using childcare.

Previous research (Dawson et al, 2000) echoed a number of these barriers including cost, finding a job to fit round childcare, and attitudes to non-parental childcare in principle and with regard to the perceived quality of what is available, and health issues of children.

2.6.4 Financial issues

Those black and Asian lone parents that felt it was not financially viable to work believed that the jobs available in their area were low wage or part-time work only. Taking such a job would result in earning similar amounts of money to what was received on benefits. This was sometimes a perception on the part of the lone parent, although at other times it had been borne out by their experience of working where they had taken jobs which had left them little better or worse off. Varying amounts of earnings were given as to what would be a viable amount to earn, before it became worthwhile working.

‘It’s just the benefits system, you don’t get a lot of money, sometimes going into work you might not get enough money and it’s about money living in this world, you can’t pay bills without it, you can’t just say, you can’t go into a job and be underpaid. It’s all about if you are going to be better off, if I have to get up in the morning and you are only going to be ten pounds better off, it’s not worth it.’

(Black Caribbean, London, age 30+, some qualifications, five children, no family live locally, previously worked)

Advice had also been received from friends that the lone parent was better off on benefits. It was also felt that the in-work benefit calculation showed that the lone parent was better off on benefits, and in one instance where the adviser in the Jobcentre had told the lone parents not to take a job because they would lose out. Furthermore, there were often additional costs such as travel and childcare, which lone parents believed were not always taken into account in in-work calculations.

Concern was often expressed about the transition into work, focusing on the immediate loss of benefit and the delay in receiving salary. Lone parents also felt secure on benefits – they knew exactly what they were getting every month, and that it would be paid. There were concerns that wages might vary or there would be insecurity in their jobs. In addition, there was a perception that if they took a job and it did not work out, they would not be allowed to go back on benefits.
The payment of rent was considered to be the most important factor in respect of lone parents’ financial considerations. Claiming Housing Benefit was felt to be a secure benefit and moving into work would mean they would have to pay the rent for themselves. Lone parents were worried that if the job did not work out, or did not pay enough to cover the rent, they would end up in arrears.

2.7 Benefits of employment

Although concerns were expressed about employment, those not in work recognised that employment had a number of benefits. There was a perception that, although jobs were often low paid, lone parents might eventually move into jobs with higher pay, and ultimately be better off than on benefits.

Those that reported feeling quite isolated recognised that they would be able to meet and mix with different people at work. Getting work would also increase perceptions of independence, as lone parents would not have to rely on the state to provide for the children. Such comments came from Black Caribbean respondents in particular:

‘I think ‘don’t rely on the bloody state’. If you can do it, go ahead and do it because at the end of the day, it’s not worth you sitting on your arse and waiting every week for you to change your book, waiting for your giro to drop through your door. I’ve been there and it’s not nice. When you’ve got your independence, it makes you feel good. Puts you in a better frame of mind as well.’

(Black Caribbean, London, currently working, age 30+, some qualifications, one child, family live locally, previously worked)

Dawson et al (2000) indicated similar benefits of employment including increased money, self-fulfilment, social contact, occupation of time and dislike of living off benefits.

2.8 Chapter summary

Black lone parents in the sample were less likely to have been married and more likely than Asian lone parents to have children by different fathers. They also have been more likely to be lone parents for a long time in comparison with Asian lone parents. There were examples of both black and Asian lone parents who had suffered abusive relationships and did not want any contact with the NRP, or had lost touch with the NRP. There were lone parents within this sample who reported that the NRP was living abroad.

Those who were not working generally believed that the financial support of children was the responsibility of both parents, but especially the father. Lone parents of Asian backgrounds particularly expressed this view. However, whatever the background of the lone parent, there was often little expectation of financial and practical support from, and contact with, the NRP. Lone parents, especially those from Asian backgrounds, were often reliant on family members for both financial and practical support with the children.

There were strong feelings about the provision of childcare. Childminders were felt by both black and Asian lone parents to be an unacceptable form of childcare, providing a poor environment and a poor level of care and stimulation. Nursery provision was more acceptable, providing a more stimulating environment, and more educational content. However, there was also unwillingness from some Asian lone parents to leave the child with anyone other than family.
Those black and Asian lone parents that reported feeling very isolated believed there was a number of reasons including not having been in the country for very long, mobility problems and a lack of support from ex-in-laws. The non-English speakers in the sample were also quite isolated and were often reliant on local community centres and Asian women’s centres for advice, support and translation services.

Those lone parents, particularly those from Asian backgrounds that had stopped working when they had married, had done so because it was not culturally acceptable for them to work. Even with the father gone, it was perceived that it was still not acceptable within their community for them to work.

A number of practical barriers to employment were identified by black and Asian lone parents including perceived lack of, or outdated, skills and qualifications, mental and physical health problems, inability to speak English, travel costs, and the availability of flexible and suitable jobs in their area. Many of these barriers are similar to those identified by other studies of lone parents.

There were a number of attitudinal barriers to employment including lack of confidence, particularly with regard to interview skills, a limited range of jobs lone parents were willing to consider and a perception that it was not financially viable to work. Generally, black and Asian lone parents did not believe there was, or had experienced, any racism on behalf of employers – it was their status as a lone parent which affected their prospects of getting work.

Views about childcare were one of the key barriers to employment, including perceived high cost, lack of availability and flexibility, a belief that child was not old enough to be left in childcare, and an unwillingness to leave the child with anyone other than family.
3  New Deal for Lone Parents

This section of the report focuses on minority ethnic lone parents’ experience and awareness of the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) programme.

Reactions to being invited for an initial interview are explored as well as the reasons why minority ethnic lone parents either decide to join or not join the programme. Finally, the experiences of those who took part in the programme are examined along with suggestions from minority ethnic lone parents on how the programme could be improved.

Because of limitations of the sample a range of lone parents were interviewed including those who had only attended a compulsory PA interview in the past month, through to those who had been on the programme four or five years ago. This meant that lone parents who had been on the programme a number of years ago often had difficulties in recalling the specific effects of the programme. However, it meant that for the most part, voluntary NDLP meetings were discussed rather than compulsory PA meetings.

3.1  Awareness of NDLP

There were mixed views from black and Asian lone parents who had used Jobcentres in the past. Those that had had positive experiences described staff as helpful and friendly - ‘If you go down they have everything; what you can learn, new jobs, you can do voluntary work, you can do any training, any courses, all sorts.’ The reasons for using Jobcentres in the past had been to search for jobs, get course information and attend English lessons.

Despite this, there were reported negative experiences in the past, especially with unhelpful and ‘obstructive’ staff, and a perception that many of the jobs offered in Jobcentres were poorly paid and unskilled.

Awareness of NDLP came from a number of sources including:

- television adverts;
- leaflets and posters in Jobcentres and at bus stops;
- letters being sent about the programme;
- being told about NDLP by staff when visiting Jobcentres;
- word of mouth from other lone parents.
3.2 Reactions to invitation

Those lone parents, who were already looking for work and using the Jobcentre, did not receive an initial invitation to take part. They had been in the Jobcentre and seen posters on NDLP and arranged an appointment for later on in the week. These lone parents tended to be quite proactive and had often overcome barriers to work.

However, for other lone parents, the initial invitation to an NDLP meeting had a number of effects:

- those lone parents who had awareness of the programme from other sources, felt they would not have proactively contacted the Jobcentre to arrange an appointment, without a letter;
- the letter acted as a stimulus to ‘kick-start’ thinking about work and training in the future;
- a belief that the letter implied the initial meeting was compulsory, even on occasions when this was not a condition of claiming benefit and was in fact an invitation to a voluntary NDLP meeting. This could sometimes cause concern and worry for the lone parent;
- reactions to the initial invitation often depended on the reaction of family and friends and when they were positive about the potential of the programme this had ‘rubbed off’ on the lone parent. This support from family, friends and the older children was often a crucial factor on whether the lone parent would attend both the initial NDLP meeting and any subsequent decision to join NDLP, particularly for the Asian lone parents within the sample.

3.2.1 Understanding and awareness of programme

There was often a complete lack of awareness of what the initial NDLP meeting and the programme would involve, especially from the non-English speakers and those with limited English. Communications had not been understood and lone parents were confused by what the programme was, what would be discussed during the programme and initial meeting, and the difference between the NDLP programme and the initial NDLP meeting.

For example, there were non-English speakers in the sample who reported not understanding the initial invitation letter about the programme and so did not go along to the interview. Other misperceptions from both the non-English and English speakers included:

- a perception that Child Benefit was increased on joining the programme;
- a belief that the meeting and joining the programme was compulsory;
- a belief that it was an initial meeting prior to being made to go on a training course on subject matter that the lone parent was not interested in;
- a belief that the NDLP scheme was only for those with younger children i.e. those under 5 years old as it only provided help with childcare for children that were not in school

Asian lone parents, in particular, wanted more personal contact about the programme and what the initial NDLP meeting involved. There was a perception that a telephone call would have been a better approach than a letter, or could have been made alongside a letter as they would have been able to ask questions about the programme and had their fears allayed.

Dawson et al (2000) also reported that lone parents’ understanding of what NDLP would entail, prior to a meeting, was usually limited, with some confusion of NDLP with other programmes, sources of help and courses. Despite this, it seems that lone parents within this study have much less awareness and understanding of the programme prior to attending a meeting.
3.3 Attendance at initial NDLP interview

3.3.1 Those that attended

There were a number of reasons why black and Asian lone parents decided to attend the initial NDLP interview. These included:

- They were already looking for work and believed that the programme would provide additional help in doing this.
- They wanted to stop claiming benefits and be able to support the children themselves rather than relying on state benefits.
- To obtain information on training schemes.
- To explore the options surrounding childcare and the financial help available for childcare.
- To explore information on in-work benefits.
- A belief that attendance at the initial NDLP meeting was compulsory and if the lone parent did not attend they would lose their benefits. For some within this sample, this was the case, as it was a mandatory condition of claiming IS and they were attending a PA meeting, rather than an NDLP meeting. However, for others it was based on a misinterpretation of the literature sent through the post, and they were attending an initial NDLP interview which was in fact voluntary.

These expectations were echoed in Dawson et al (2000) which found that lone parents hoped to get general advice and help on being a lone parent, help in finding suitable work for lone parents, help with childcare, information on training, and advice and reassurance from a Personal Adviser.

3.3.2 Those that declined

The primary reason why lone parents, in particular the non-English speakers and those with limited English, declined to go along to the interview was because of a complete lack of awareness of what the NDLP meeting and the programme would involve. Communications had not been understood and lone parents, therefore, decided not to go along.

There were a number of further reasons why lone parents decided not to attend the interview. These included:

- Not looking for work currently or in the near future – these lone parents wanted to concentrate on looking after their children, which they saw as a full-time job. This mainly included Pakistani and Bangladeshi lone parents who felt it was not culturally acceptable within their communities for them to work.
- Negative views from other lone parents in both the black and Asian communities who had attended the initial meeting and not believed it had been very useful.
- Discussing the invitation with parents, siblings and children who felt they should not go along to the interview. This view was expressed by Asian lone parents in particular, these lone parents were not always able to give reasons why their family believed they should not go.
- Lone parents who felt they had sufficient skills and information sources to search for the type of work they wanted and therefore did not think that help from the programme would be needed. This view was expressed by black lone parents, in particular, who had previous experience of working.
A belief that there was no point attending as the lone parent was secure on benefits which would not be stopped until the child reached 16. This was expressed by Black African and Asian lone parents in particular.

A perception that the jobs available at the Jobcentre were poorly paid and of low skill, and would not result in any more money than currently received on benefit. This was allied to the belief that by going along to the meeting, the lone parent would be forced into a job they did not want to do, or felt that they were unsuitable for. This view was expressed by those who had previous work experience and did not think there were suitable jobs at the Jobcentre, or had negative preconceptions of Jobcentres and the programmes offered:

‘Because in the Jobcentre, people are sometimes forced to get a job. You go first time and someone gives you a job [of] £3 an hour, £2 an hour. That’s why I don’t want to go to any Jobcentre.’

(Indian, Midlands, age 30+, NDLP – not attended initial interview, no qualifications, two children, limited work experience)

A perception expressed by those with physical health problems that the Jobcentre was too far away and difficult to get to.

Previous poor experiences with Jobcentre staff not being able to understand the lone parent and not providing any assistance. For example, one Bangladeshi lone parent recounted how she had tried the Jobcentre in the past but there were difficulties in communicating, as she did not speak English. She therefore did not feel there would be any point in attending the interview, and did not know that interpreters could be provided.

Misperceptions and misunderstandings about the nature of the programme and the initial NDLP interview and the reason for this:

‘Well they talk about your money, could get certain amount of money, if you’re working, the less you are working the more they top it up, something like that. You have to have more children, like me I’ve only got one at the moment, I won’t be able to get that much, with more children the more benefit you get.’

(Black Caribbean, London, age under 30, NDLP – not attended initial interview, one child, no qualifications, limited work experience)

Dawson et al. (2000) carried out research with non-participants and found reasons for non-attendance included a lack of interest due to poor health, caring responsibilities for others, not having received an invitation for NDLP, and a confidence that work would be found without recourse to the programme. However, although most of these reasons are included within this study, it is apparent that lone parents within this sample described a wider range of reasons for non-attendance.

3.4 Reactions to the initial NDLP interview

Reactions to the initial interview was subject to how ‘job ready’ black and Asian lone parents were. This was dependent on a number of factors:

- Whether the lone parent had experience of work in the past and was used to working particularly when bringing up children. This was particularly the case for the black lone parents within this study, who had tended to have worked in the past.
The age of the youngest child. The Black Caribbean lone parents in this sample that had children who were teenagers felt their children were more able to look after themselves and needed less supervision. However, Bangladeshi and Pakistani lone parents were less likely to describe themselves as job ready as they wanted to look after their children, who also tended to be younger in this sample.

Whether the lone parent felt confident in their ability to re-enter the work environment and juggle the demands of work and caring for the children.

Whether the lone parent had confidence in their language skills, which they felt would mean they were able to get a job.

Those that considered themselves ready for work were very positive about the in-work benefit calculation, the information on Tax Credits and the information on courses available.

There were two reactions to the in-work benefit calculation:

- It allayed the fears that, by working, the lone parent would end up being worse off than on benefits. There was also appreciation that there were benefits, such as the Working Families’ Tax Credit that could help if they gained work.

- A perception that it was not worth working for so little money - ‘you don’t want to go to work for a little bit of money, you want to be a bit more better off at work’. Despite this, lone parents reported that there was no pressure in the initial interview to gain employment.

It was appreciated that interpreters were offered to those with limited or no English, and there was often some surprise this service was available. However, one non-English speaker reported an occasion where an interpreter was not available, and therefore English was used in the interview. She tried to understand as best as she could but felt she had got very little out of the interview.

Black and Asian lone parents generally felt the length of the initial NDLP meeting was about right, although in some cases they wanted longer interviews to discuss issues in more detail. The initial meeting was seen as an opportunity to get to know the adviser and go through options about work and training. It was pointed out that advisers did not pressurise lone parents into joining NDLP but merely set out the possible benefits that joining the programme could entail.

However, some black lone parents reported disliking having to wait for the initial interview to be arranged and then at the Jobcentre waiting for the arranged appointment - ‘I wasn’t happy because I had to wait for two weeks and I was eager’.

Those black and Asian lone parents that reported being nervous about attending the Jobcentre and being forced into doing something they did not want to do, often took a friend along or had someone waiting for them while they attended the interview.

Similar findings were highlighted in Dawson et al (2000) which found that advice on in-work benefits was thought to be good, and that better-off calculations were thought to be a useful resource.

### 3.4.1 Reactions to Personal Advisers

Both black and Asian lone parents were positive about the Personal Advisers they saw in the initial and subsequent interviews. Advisers were felt to be sensitive and understood the needs of lone parents. Being friendly was also seen as particularly important – advisers were also described as ‘laid back’, not minding having children attend the interview, and having an ability to relate to lone parents. It was considered important that the advisers made no attempt to push lone parents into work or into jobs.
they did not want to do, but were also realistic about the range of jobs in the local areas given the qualifications of the lone parent.

Both black and Asian lone parents reported that if their adviser was not available they would come back again another time rather than see a different adviser, as they had developed such a good relationship.

‘The lady that I had was excellent. She really really helped me. She gave me lots of information, told me things that I was entitled to which I didn’t know. And she was also looking for work for me… She made you feel welcome. She made you feel that you wanted to go back and get information and she didn’t make it boring. She made it quite interesting actually… She wasn’t nosy either.’

(Black Caribbean, London, took part in NDLP programme but did not gain employment through programme, although currently working, age 30+, one child, some qualifications, family live locally, previously worked)

The ethnicity of the PA was perceived as unimportant, especially as the advisers had seemed so understanding and sensitive to the situation of the lone parent. Furthermore, it was felt that the advisers in their area were used to seeing other lone parents from minority ethnic backgrounds and therefore had an understanding of the cultural traditions of the community. For example, one Indian lone parent reported how her adviser knew of local problems within the community that were occurring at that time and was able to talk about it.

‘No, I’m not fussy, as long as I’ve got someone who is welcoming, friendly, easy to talk to, I’ve got no problems, it doesn’t matter what nationality you are.’

(Black Caribbean, Northern England, NDLP – not attended initial interview, age 30+, one child, some qualifications, family live locally, previously worked)

It was also stated that advisers did not enquire too much into details of lone parents’ personal lives, but would sit and listen if this was raised by the lone parent. This was appreciated by those lone parents who felt embarrassed about talking about the reasons why they had become a lone parent.

Dawson et al (2000) echoed these findings describing that a ‘large proportion of ethnic minority respondents were positive about their adviser.’ Dawson also found that lone parents across the sample ‘praised the advisory system for making someone available with whom they could discuss a wide range of options and issues. However, Dawson also pointed out that advice on job search activity was thought to be disappointing with many of the lone parents within their sample as it consisted of general exhortations to work rather than information about specific vacancies or help with redirecting careers.

3.5 Those that declined to join NDLP

Eight of those in the sample went along to the initial interview but declined to join the NDLP programme afterwards. The following reasons were suggested by these lone parents:

- Despite having attended the interview, the lone parent was not ready to look for work at that moment in time due to some of the barriers described in the previous chapter. However, by attending the interview, they knew about the help that was available for them in the future, should this situation change, especially as their children got older and more capable of looking after themselves.
• The jobs available and the in-work calculation showed that they would only be better off by a few pounds a week or not at all. The lone parent therefore did not see the point of joining the programme and trying to get work.

• A perception that jobs available through the NDLP programme were unskilled and low paid. For example, one respondent wanted work in the Arts industry but felt that the jobs offered through the NDLP programme were only low skilled, clerical roles.

• The course that the lone parent was interested in was not currently available. There was a perception that there were a lack of diverse courses available, since courses were seen as only concentrating on certain types of job roles.

• That courses offered were not advanced enough and did not focus on issues such as business skills and running a business. Those with higher qualifications and previous work experience expressed this view in particular.

• The NDLP programme did not recognise or approve of the courses that the lone parent wanted to take.

3.6 Taking part in NDLP

Those that took part in NDLP tended to be very positive about the whole programme. The following factors were highlighted:

• The support given to build up the lone parent’s confidence was seen as especially important, in particular the personal help and support offered by advisers. Lone parents from all backgrounds felt that advisers ‘got the balance right’ by not prying into people’s personal circumstances with intrusive questions, but would listen if personal situations were raised by lone parents.

• The financial assistance offered during the programme was welcomed, such as bus fares to interviews, money for equipment to set up in business, money for suitable clothing, help with initial childcare fees and money for a London travelcard.

• Those who had difficulties filling in forms appreciated the help the PA gave with this, especially if they had limited English reading and writing skills. There were also lone parents who felt that, although they had adequate written English, forms were extremely difficult to fill in and could often cause anxiety.

• The one-to-one relationship with the same adviser was also seen in a positive light. Many lone parents disliked talking about very personal circumstances and building up a relationship with an adviser that they valued meant they could be very honest about their situation. Those that had a number of meetings believed that they had begun to trust their adviser and would be more likely to take on-board advice that was being offered.

• The practical support offered by advisers such as arranging interviews on their behalf, was welcomed. As mentioned previously, there were lone parents who suffered from a lack of confidence and so appreciated the adviser contacting employers and setting up appointments.
These positive outcomes were also highlighted in Dawson et al (2000).

Three lone parents had dropped out of NDLP in this sample. Generally it was felt the programme was a good idea in practice, but that it had not met their expectations in terms of the type of help offered and the courses available. The following reasons were suggested:

- **Ill Health.** For example, one Indian lone parent suffered from epilepsy, which had been getting steadily worse and meant that she could no longer leave the house. She therefore felt there was little point continuing to attend the programme as it would be impossible to get work.

- **Disappointment with the course attended as it was felt to be too simplistic.** For example, one Black African lone parent reported giving up her course half way through for this reason. She was disappointed that the adviser did not make contact to find out the reasons why she had dropped out of the programme and to see how she was getting along.

- **Disappointment about the range of courses on offer.**

- **A belief that there was no financial help for childcare while the lone parent attended a course.**

- **An expectation that by going on NDLP the lone parent would get a job straight away.** When this did not happen, the lone parent became disillusioned and left the programme.

- **Did not need the programme in the end, where the lone parent arranged to go on courses themselves or found work outside the programme.**

### 3.6.1 Outcomes after NDLP: not getting work

Eight of the lone parents included within the sample took part in NDLP, but did not find work. The following range of reasons were suggested, and did not seem to be linked to ethnicity:

- **The jobs that they were suitable for, and that were available at the Jobcentre, were too low paid to justify moving off benefits, after having carried out in-work benefit calculations.** However, in such situations it was pointed out that the Adviser had placed no pressure on them to take the job, which was welcomed by lone parents.

- **The lone parent was simply unable to find a job in the local area with the hours to suit, and was unwilling to consider going to work in another area, or changing hours specified, as these fitted around their children currently at school.**

- **Although the training and help was felt to be useful, a decision was made not to look for work at present because it was felt to be more important to look after children, until they were old enough to look after themselves.**

- **A child becoming ill.** For example, it was reported by a lone parent that one of her children had become very withdrawn and mentally ill. She therefore took the decision to postpone looking for work until after the child had got better.

- **Although the programme was useful it had not provided any training or courses on the career path that the lone parent wanted to take.** For example, one Black Caribbean lone parent in this study wanted to work in the beauty industry and therefore wanted to carry out a course in this area. However, her adviser had pointed out that there were none available as part of the NDLP programme.
• Ill Health preventing them from taking up work.

• Other lone-parent friends starting work and then having difficulties coping with the demands of working and looking after the children. As mentioned previously, there were lone parents who relied on other lone parents for support. One lone parent reported seeing her friend start work and getting extremely stressed about the demands of coping with both bringing up the children and a new job. Her friend eventually gave up work after a few months, which persuaded the lone parent not to look for work at present.

• Wanting to do some courses perceived as being outside the NDLP programme such as university courses and Access courses.

• In one case, the relationship with the adviser had not worked out as well as they had hoped and the adviser had not been very helpful finding them a job. In this situation, it was difficult to determine why the relationship had not worked out particularly well. There seemed to be disputes over times specified for appointments and large expectations of what the programme could offer, which led to the lone parent believing the relationship had become difficult.

Dawson et al (2000) also included a group of lone parents who had finished NDLP, but remained on IS. Dawson reported that dissatisfaction with NDLP was rarely an issue and that a large majority were content with the help they had received from the programme. However, the study also included lone parents who did not get work after the programme and criticised the advisers, resources offered by the programme and the range, types and quality of the jobs available.

3.6.2 Outcomes after NDLP: getting work

Three of lone parents in this sample had got work after taking part in the NDLP programme. These jobs were working within a restaurant, factory work, and working in a hospital with the elderly, and all had been started within the last year. At the time of the interview, all three lone parents were still in these jobs.

On these occasions, the jobs had not come through the adviser searching for jobs at the Jobcentre, but were instead found by the lone parent through their own jobsearch methods. However, NDLP was still felt to have benefited the lone parents in a number of ways, and been a contributory factor in getting the job, or at least helping to get a job sooner than they might have done without the programme.

This compares with Dawson et al (2000) which found that lone parents were complimentary about NDLP, if they felt it had played a significant role in the outcome, although there were a few that had achieved positive outcomes despite NDLP, which left them feeling negative towards the programme.

The benefits for the three lone parents in this study included:

• having an in-work benefit calculation to see if it was financially worthwhile applying for, and accepting the job offer;

• providing funds to buy interview clothes and travel cards to attend the interview;

• providing information on childcare in the local area and likely costs. In one situation, the adviser
was reported to have helped the lone parent find a suitable place in childcare;

- boosting the confidence of the lone parent through the meetings, attending the training courses on other subjects and meeting other people on the programme:

  ‘I did say that I’d never been to an interview before, I did say ‘I’m not very confident’, and she [PA] said, ‘I think you’ll do fine’. She said ‘I really do think you’ll do fine’. Now whether that’s because she spoke to me a few times and she could see it in me, I don’t know, but like I said she made me feel really comfortable. I was alright when I went to the interview.’

  (Black Caribbean, Northern England, NDLP attended and got job, age 30+, one child, no qualifications, family live locally, previously worked)

There was variation on when these lone parents obtained a job – one got a job within a few weeks of attending meetings with the adviser, another reported having been on the programme for a year. One lone parent reported meeting her adviser after starting the job to get further advice about when the in-work benefits would start to be paid. The adviser was reported to have reassured the lone parent and seemed really interested in the job and how the lone parent was finding the first few weeks.

3.7 Improvements/changes to NDLP

Both lone parents who took part in the programme and those that dropped out made a number of suggestions as to what further improvements could be made. It was apparent that some of these suggestions were currently available under the programme, although lone parents did not always perceive this.

- Although the range of courses offered was felt to be good, it was stated that there should be more offered in the areas of IT or business skills. There was a perception that the types and number of courses offered under NDLP were quite limited:

  ‘They can give advice and financial assistance, that’s it. I don’t think they have that much power themselves because I wanted to do some things that they can’t send me to do, so I don’t think that is good. It’s only what they want you to do; it’s only what’s in the government programme for them to do, so it’s not that helpful. But that’s the only other aspect of it that is not favourable.’

  (Black African, NDLP took part in programme and not got job. However had since gained employment, age under 30, two children, some qualifications, no family live locally, never previously worked)

- Those black and Asian lone parents that wanted to start their own business suggested they would have welcomed more advice and more advanced courses on how to become self-employed and setting up a business. For example, one Indian lone parent was considering setting up working from home as a machinist and wanted more information on this kind of role.

- Those who spoke little or no English wanted more help with their language skills on both an oral and written basis.

- Help with other basic skills such as mathematics.

- Although taking part in NDLP had helped lone parents with their lack of confidence, it was stated that actual courses in confidence building would have been even more beneficial.
Lone parents also felt they lacked relevant experience and felt that work placements or voluntary work would be useful. Help with interviewing skills would also have been appreciated.

Carry out more work with employers on the benefits of employing lone parents and encouraging them to pay lone parents ‘a decent wage.’

It was also suggested the advisers should emphasise more the help that can be provided with childcare, the availability of childcare providers in the local area and whether these providers are thought highly of.

Promoting voluntary work to lone parents more to help build up their skills and confidence.

Provide more training to advisers on the different type of lone parents and the sorts of career that are most suitable for them. It was also felt that Jobcentres should provide the advisers with more sources of information on jobs available.

Those that did not take up the initial invitation suggested a couple of changes that may have persuaded them to attend:

- Following up the letter with a telephone call explaining about the programme and its voluntary nature, especially as there were problems understanding the letters sent - ‘that could make a difference as well, because with letters you just put them in the bin and forget about them’.

- Although advisers can offer home visits, there was no awareness of this amongst those lone parents in this sample who felt unable to leave their homes or travel far due to illness.

3.8 Chapter summary

There was often a complete lack, or very limited awareness, of the programme amongst black and Asian lone parents, especially the non-English speakers. Written communications had not been understood and lone parents were confused as to the nature of the programme and the initial NDLP meeting.

Support from family, friends and the older children was often a crucial factor for the Asian lone parents in particular, on whether to attend the initial NDLP meeting. There were a number of other reasons why lone parents decided not to attend the initial NDLP meeting including not looking for work currently, a perception that help from the programme was not needed and a belief that the jobs at the Jobcentre were poorly paid and of low skill.

Black and Asian lone parents’ reactions to the initial NDLP meeting depended on how ‘job ready’ the lone parents were, and whether the types of jobs and courses offered were perceived to be suitable. Those that felt ‘ready for work’ were very positive about the in-work benefit calculation and the information on tax credits.

The ethnicity of the PA was perceived as unimportant, as the advisers had shown understanding and sensitivity to the needs of the lone parent, and were felt to be very friendly, open and personable.

Those that took part in NDLP were generally very positive; in particular about the personal and financial support offered and being able to have a relationship with the same adviser. Those that did not take part or dropped out of NDLP felt the programme had not met their expectations in terms of the type of help and courses offered.
Those lone parents included within the sample that took part in NDLP, but did not find work, attributed this to a number of reasons including, a lack of available, well paid and flexible jobs; making a decision not to look for work; and because the relationship with the adviser had not worked out very well. Those that did find work while taking part in the programme attributed this to an increase in confidence, having funds to buy interview clothes, and the knowledge that they would be better off by working through the in-work calculations.
4 The Child Support Agency

This section of the report explores lone parents’ views and experiences of the Child Support Agency including their knowledge and awareness of its role, and their experiences of dealing with the Child Support Agency. It also focuses on the reasons why lone parents voluntarily approach the Child Support Agency, as well as why some lone parents refuse to deal with the Child Support Agency. It examines lone parents’ reactions to the outcomes of their cases and concludes with suggestions as to how the Child Support Agency could improve its service to minority ethnic lone parents.

4.1 Knowledge and awareness of the Child Support Agency

Across the sample, there was little awareness of the exact role of the Child Support Agency. However, often there was confusion about the exact name of the Agency even amongst those who had direct contact with it. For example, it was referred to as ‘Child Benefit people’ and the ‘DSS’. Despite this, lone parents were aware that the Child Support Agency required financial support from the NRP.

Both black and Asian lone parents claiming benefit were not aware that, as a condition of their claim, they would have to deal with the Child Support Agency, and this often came as a surprise to them. Information came through several sources including Jobcentre Plus, Solicitors, Community Centres and social/support workers.

Those that were new to the country felt they would have liked more information that the Child Support Agency would be contacting them and what this would involve, as they had great difficulties understanding the system. It was suggested that more information on the Child Support Agency should be given when making a claim for IS.

‘They just sent the form to say that everything is fine or whatever, but I never knew, that was something that was another cultural thing. I was living on Monserrat and the government there, we didn’t have a welfare state at that time, I was just a single parent and that was it… It just came as a bit of a shock, I suppose many other people would have found themselves in the same position as me, because if you bring up a kid on your own, like I was at home and then you suddenly get a pack of information that’s asking you all these questions, it was just new, it was just something I’d never come across before.’

(Black Caribbean, Northern England, Child Support Agency- co-operated, age 30 +, some qualifications, one child, no family living locally in UK less than six years)
At the time of the fieldwork (April 2002 to September 2002), there was no awareness within this sample of the forthcoming Child Support Reforms (CSR) that has been made to the Child Support Agency in March 2003. Furthermore, despite claiming benefits, there were lone parents within this sample that stated that they had never been contacted by the Child Support Agency. It was felt that in these cases the NRP was also claiming benefit.

4.2 Attitudes towards the Child Support Agency

Across the sample, there were often very negative perceptions and expectations of the Child Support Agency based on negative media stories and views from other lone parents. The Child Support Agency was believed to have been described in the media as ‘disorganised’ with a large backlog. There was also recall of media stories of NRP suicides and examples of where the calculations made by the Agency had been completely unjustified.

Those that had dealt with the Child Support Agency within the sample were generally quite negative about its role. It was felt to be intrusive looking into matters that was up to the partners to discuss - ‘it was nothing to do with them’. This compares with Wikeley et al (2001) which found that most PWCs were either pleased that the Child Support Agency had become involved with their case or, at worst, neutral.

‘And basically, I wouldn’t even want them to find him because it’s none of their business. It’s none of their business. It’s down to me and my husband to sort it out, not for a third party to interfere.’

(Black Caribbean, London, Child Support Agency- co-operated, three children, family live locally)

Those in employment perceived that child support was their responsibility and there was no need for the intervention of the Child Support Agency. The Child Support Agency was described as an Agency ‘of last resort’ used when all other methods had failed.

The bad publicity that the Child Support Agency had received from both the media and through negative views of others was often a deterrent to those who thought they should use it.

Lone parents on benefits tended to be quite unhappy about having to co-operate with the Child Support Agency, but did so as they feared their benefits being cut. There was a perception that the Child Support Agency are very aggressive when dealing with clients and this had alienated many people from wanting to co-operate with them from whatever community they came from. Those who had lost contact with the NRP thought there was little point for the Child Support Agency to get involved in the case because they would not be able to find the NRP.

There was some misunderstanding of the purpose of the Child Support Agency, as it was not felt to have the consideration of the best interest of the child as its main aim. Rather it was seen as an Agency, which was trying to reduce the amount the state paid out in benefit.

Reactions to the Child Support Agency were generally negative across the sample and the lone parents on benefit in this sample were generally unhappy about its involvement.
4.3 Voluntarily contacting the Child Support Agency

Fifteen of the interviews were carried out with those who had voluntarily contacted the Child Support Agency. These respondents tended to be in work and were often quite proactive individuals from both the black and Asian communities who had found out information from friends, colleagues and through the media on the Child Support Agency, and put in a claim. On some occasions, solicitors had contacted the Child Support Agency on behalf of the lone parent. This group tended to telephone the Child Support Agency rather than write, which reflects findings in Wikeley et al (2001).

Lone parents in this group reported a number of reasons for voluntarily contacting the Child Support Agency. These included:

- Feelings of anger towards the NRP: ‘I was so angry with him, I said do whatever you like. He is the father, get as much money off him as you can’.

- When the NRP had been contributing financial support, but had stopped, which meant the lone parent then approached the Child Support Agency.

- When the lone parent heard that the NRP had started work and thought that there should now be a financial contribution from the NRP.

- A belief that it was unfair that the NRP was not contributing to their child while the lone parent was out working trying to get enough money.

- A change in circumstances such as losing a job or health problems resulting in a need for extra money to help out with the child. However under the currently running scheme they would not have benefited if they were on IS.

4.4 Reasons for not contacting the Child Support Agency

Lone parents in this sample tended not to contact the Child Support Agency, and had waited until the Child Support Agency had got in contact with them. There were a number of reasons for this:

- As mentioned previously, there was limited knowledge of the role of the Child Support Agency and how it could benefit the lone parent.

- In some instances, the NRP was not actually living in the UK, and so lone parents did not think that the Child Support Agency would be able to make contact or follow up the claim with the NRP.

- The NRP was claiming benefits and so the lone parent did not believe that there was any point in getting in contact as the NRP would not end up contributing any money.

- There was an accurate perception that if the lone parent was claiming benefit then they were not entitled to receive any money from the Child Support Agency.

- Contacting the Child Support Agency was seen as ‘begging’, since it was felt that the father should give financial support on a proactive basis rather than being told to by a Government agency.

- Where the relationship with the father had been difficult and abusive and the lone parent did not want any more to do with them. They wanted to distance themselves from the relationship and approaching the Child Support Agency would bring these emotional memories back:
‘I had been in an abusive relationship years ago and I said that because of that abusive relationship I didn’t want to contact him at all. And I don’t know where he is.’

(Black African, London, Child Support Agency co-operated, some qualifications, one child, no family locally, not worked)

• There was also a perception that dealing with the Child Support Agency would be a long and bureaucratic process and therefore not worth the ‘hassle’.

There was often surprise for those that were contacted by the Child Support Agency because they were claiming benefits when contact came either by letter or a telephone call. This was often an upsetting experience, as they had little contact with the NRP and on some occasions did not know where they were.

4.5 Experience of the Child Support Agency

Those that approached the Child Support Agency on a voluntary basis were often unhappy with the service they actually received, especially over the telephone. Staff were felt to be slow and unresponsive to their situation or their queries, and were unfriendly, unhelpful and not very sympathetic.

It was perceived that the explanation of the process by which the Child Support Agency made their decisions was not very clear. The time taken to resolve a case was felt to be far too long with instances of up to 14 months before a decision was made. Lone parents also felt they had to do ‘all the chasing’ to find out what stages the decision was at.

There was resentment at having to speak to different staff on the telephone on every occasion, which meant that the lone parent could not build rapport and had to repeat information continually. Particularly highlighted were the lack of information that was given on the decisions that were made and the inconsistency of information from different staff.

Lone parents who had little or no English reading skills were not sure whether it was because they did not understand the letters received or because reasons were not given about the outcome. Wikeley et al (2001) on the other hand, suggested that there were relatively high levels of satisfaction with the clarity of letters.

The Child Support Agency were also felt too powerless to enforce payment. Staff were believed to be unmoving, or took an extremely long time, to follow up information provided by the lone parent, particularly when informed that the NRP was working illegally and claiming benefit, or even if the NRP had a change of circumstances. This was reported by lone parents from both black and Asian backgrounds.

‘And when I got round to the CSA after I found out he is working, they should have got to him straight away. I wanted them to get something out of him because he had a good four or five months when he was working, earning... They took their time in checking up on him, at least four to five months, and by the time they got back to me and wrote me a letter that they can’t get anything out of him – that it’s nil, nil, nil, that he’s claiming himself. So when I found out he is working, and I got back to them, they didn’t take much notice.’

(Pakistani, Northern England, Child Support Agency voluntarily co-operated, age 30+, four children, high qualifications, no family locally, previously worked)

One respondent felt that the reason the service she had received had been so poor was because of her background – ‘they must of thought she is Asian, let’s delay it, let’s leave her to it’.
Help from community workers or friends in filling in the forms for the Child Support Agency was often received by lone parents with limited or no English, because they did not understand the questions. However this could sometimes be quite difficult for the lone parents, as they disliked having to discuss such personal issues in front of someone, even if they were trusted contacts.

Those lone parents that reported having received home visits from the Child Support Agency were generally quite negative about the experience. The questions were seen as very personal and intrusive, and it was believed that staff did not have an appropriate manner and were not sensitive to their needs. However, they had agreed to a home visit because they were told if they did not do so, their benefit would be stopped. This compared with Wikeley at al (2001) which found that 84 per cent of PWCs reported that the staff member had been polite, with 71 per cent of PWCs agreeing that the interviewer had been tactful and sensitive.

‘She was kind of like a little bitch. Yeah, she had this attitude about her. When she said to me, ‘can we see her birth certificate’, I just gave her the normal one with her name on it and that. ‘No, no, no, we need to see the other one with all the details’ like my name, father’s name and all that. I thought, ‘you little cow, it’s ok, you go ahead because you’ll never find him anyway’.’

(Black Caribbean, London, Child Support Agency - co-operated, no qualifications, four children, family live locally)

‘They asked about her dad. I had to give them information, I had to give them her birth certificate and all that, just to see if they could find him in order for him to pay money. I thought, ‘you’re never going to find him anyway so it’s not worth it... but if you’ve got a man there to support you, if they can get the money out of them, then by all means.’

(Black Caribbean, London, Child Support Agency - co-operated, some qualifications, three children, no family locally)

4.6 Outcomes

There was often disappointment from black and Asian lone parents with the outcome of their case, which often led to feelings of anger about the Child Support Agency and the ‘system’. In most cases the father claimed not to be working so there was no payment received, which also contributed to negative perceptions of the Child Support Agency. Black and Asian lone parents often suspected the father had stopped working deliberately so as not to pay and was ‘working on the side.’

Lone parents were also unhappy with the lack of explanation given around the decision, especially when there was no payment due from the NRP, and had difficulties in understanding how decisions were arrived at. This is similar to other research findings which found that only about 25 per cent of lone parents reported that they understood the basis of the CSA maintenance assessment (Wikeley et al, 2001). Those with limited or no English skills were often unsure whether they did not understand the information they were given or whether this information had not been included in the first place.

‘Government to turn round and say he’s got no right to child maintenance, ... they’re just a waste of space I’m sorry to say. I was doing my post graduate studies at the time and I needed help... I needed help desperately but the government totally disappointed me, just let me down.’

(Black African, London, Child Support Agency- voluntarily approached, high qualifications, one child, currently employed, no family locally)
Lone parents were told that they could appeal against the outcome of their case if they wished, but believed, because the experience of dealing with the Child Support Agency had been so difficult and unpleasant it was not worth pursuing the claim. There were also examples where lone parents wanted to complain about the way in which the Child Support Agency had handled their cases but did not think it was worthwhile.

4.7 Refusing to deal with the Child Support Agency

Those lone parents that voluntarily approached the Child Support Agency and then decided not to carry on dealing with them did so, because they did not like their approach, as it was unfriendly and ‘aggressive.’ There was also the perception that the whole process took too long and it was better to contact the NRP directly.

‘My mum, when I told her what I was going to do, she was like no no no talk to him... that process would have been a lot quicker.’

(Black Caribbean, London, Child Support Agency- voluntarily approached, no qualifications, two children, family live locally)

Eleven lone parents in the sample were approached by the Child Support Agency and refused to deal with them. There were a number of different reasons given for this:

- The approach of the Child Support Agency was too formal and lone parents would rather approach the NRP for financial support themselves.
- A dislike of the attitude of Child Support Agency staff.
- A perception that the Child Support Agency would not be especially effective in dealing with the NRP.
- Negative views towards the Child Support Agency as well as a belief that dealing through the Child Support Agency would take too long. This was from both word of mouth amongst other lone parents and family and through negative press coverage.
- They did not want to bring up memories of their involvement with the NRP, as they believed they had put this often bad experience behind them.
- Information about NRPs was felt too private and the Child Support Agency was too intrusive. In particular, the black lone parents in the sample that had children by a number of different fathers felt the Child Support Agency was very insensitive in their dealings with them. This was in terms of the content of the questions asked and the manner in which they were asked.
- Threats, violence and repercussions from the NRP if they dealt with the Child Support Agency. Sometimes this was based on perceptions of how the NRP would react given previous experiences; on other occasions it was based on threats received when having contact with the NRP.
- The NRP was not in the country so there was believed to be little point dealing with the Child Support Agency.
- Dealing with Child Support Agency would cause difficulties in the relationship between the NRP and the PWC as well as the child.
- A belief that they were already adequately providing for the children and therefore did not want anyone else getting involved or having the NRP contacted.
A threat to be disowned by family members if the lone parent dealt with the Child Support Agency. This was because the provision of financial support was felt to be a private family matter and not for the state to intervene. This view was expressed by Asian lone parents.

Lone parents considered a number of factors on whether to co-operate with the Child Support Agency. For example, dealing with Child Support Agency may mean the NRP would no longer want to see the children, or may alienate the relationship between the child and father as the father would be angry with the process and take it out on the child. Conversely, others felt that the NRP might want to have more contact in return for the money received.

There was awareness of the sanctions to benefit if they did not comply with the Child Support Agency and indeed there were lone parents within this sample that had had their benefit reduced. However, these sanctions had not outweighed some of the reasons above for not dealing with the Child Support Agency, particularly any fears of threats from the NRP or where their family had not wanted them to deal with the Child Support Agency.

4.8 Suggested improvements to the Child Support Agency

Black and Asian lone parents suggested a number of ways in which the services offered by the Child Support Agency could be improved. A lot of these related to improving the attitude of staff, having one point of contact and being more responsive to the needs of lone parents. It was felt that there should be more explanation upfront, and stated more prominently that one condition of benefit would be that the lone parent would be contacted by the Child Support Agency. It was also felt that this explanation should point out what the contact would involve.

More proactive contact was wanted regarding the state of their case, perhaps a series of updates, with less bureaucratic procedures. They also wanted more emphasis placed on how the information would be handled by the Child Support Agency and the confidentiality it attached to the cases.

It was felt, particularly by those who were non-English speakers, that the Child Support Agency should offer more home visits to provide help with completing the form. There was general dislike of having to discuss personal or emotive issues on the telephone, especially if the lone parent had poor language skills.

The lack of continuity amongst staff was particularly problematic – it was felt there should be a dedicated case worker so there was no need to constantly re-explain issues. Staff should be more personable and more understanding of emotive situations and the questions they are asking of lone parents.

The lone parents that believed they experienced a poor service felt that the ethnicity and gender of the Child Support Agency staff should be matched to the lone parents. This was not the case with NDLP Advisers or those that believed they received a good service from the Child Support Agency. It was felt that the information being asked for was much more personal than that in an NDLP meeting and therefore it was felt that sensitivity and increased understanding of cultural issues was more important.

It was also felt that the Child Support Agency was a ‘toothless tiger’ with limited powers to enforce the NRP to comply with the outcome of the case. In particular, those lone parents who believed that the NRP had stopped working to avoid payments, suggested that NRPs should be penalised more perhaps by having money taken from their benefits. Wikeley et al (2001) also reported that only eight per cent of PWs agreed that ‘The Child Support Agency has acted quickly when the NRP has not paid enough maintenance.’
4.9 Chapter summary

There was little awareness amongst black and Asian lone parents of the role of the Child Support Agency, and confusion about the exact name of the Agency. Those claiming benefit were not aware that as a condition of their claim, they would have to deal with the Agency.

Those black and Asian lone parents that dealt with the Child Support Agency within the sample were generally quite negative about its role. Child Support Agency staff were felt to be slow, unresponsive, unfriendly, and unhelpful.

Those that believed the Child Support Agency was too intrusive in its dealings considered that information about NRPs was a private matter. In particular, the black lone parents that were more likely to have children by a number of different fathers compared to Asian lone parents in this sample, tended to feel that the Child Support Agency was very insensitive in their dealings with them.

There was often disappointment expressed by black and Asian lone parents with the outcome of their case who were unhappy with the lack of explanation given around the decision.

Those black and Asian lone parents that refused to deal with the Child Support Agency suggested a number of reasons including:

- Too formal an approach.
- Poor attitude of staff.
- A perception that it would not be effective with the NRP.
- Negative views about the Child Support Agency.
- Threats of violence and repercussions from the NRP.
- NRP was not in the country.
- Being disowned by family members if they dealt with the Child Support Agency as the provision of finances was felt to be a private family matter and not for the state to intervene.

Black and Asian lone parents felt that the ethnicity and gender of the Child Support Agency staff should be matched to the lone parents. This was because the information being asked for was of such a personal nature, that it would be better to talk to someone of their own background and sex. However, those that were happy with the service offered by the Child Support Agency did not make this suggestion.
5 Conclusions

It was apparent from the interviews that the issues and experiences described by minority ethnic lone parents were often the same as for white lone parents. This has been pointed out in previous research (Dawson et al, 2000) who stated that the ‘majority of minority ethnic lone parents interviewed did not feel their ethnicity had impacted on their situation as lone parents or employment chances, most thought of themselves as UK citizens on an equal footing with other lone parents.’ The report also pointed out that there was ‘little to suggest that the majority of ethnic minority participants had difficulties that differentiated them from the rest of the [white] sample’.

Similarly to other research with lone parents (Dawson et al, 2000), the NDLP programme was felt to be beneficial for those who went through the programme. It was seen as helping people into work, and encouraging lone parents who had not been previously looking for work. As with other research, lone parents who were near ‘job ready’ and had addressed the barriers preventing them from working, tended to get the most benefit out of NDLP. There were very few issues surrounding the ethnicity and gender of NDLP advisers. Both black and Asian lone parents did not think that racism was an issue within the workplace, it was more that their age and status as a lone parent that would be held against them.

Statistical surveys have shown that higher proportions of minority ethnic lone parents do not take up the invitation to NDLP. Many of the reasons for this were the same as for white lone parents, although there are some differences. Where the differences did occur it was a result of the following factors:

- **Language issues.** Those with no English or poor English language skills had no recollection and limited understanding of information being sent to them about NDLP and PA meetings, as well as the Child Support Agency. It was apparent that both Jobcentres and the Child Support Agency were missing an opportunity to engage with these lone parents and tell them about the services on offer. Lone parents did not know that an interpreter could be offered and previous poor experiences with Jobcentres could contribute to this perception. This is similar to the findings with minority ethnic non-participants (Dawson et al, 2000).

- **Length of time in country.** Those lone parents interviewed who were new to the country often had little idea of the concept of a welfare state and the services offered. They were therefore confused and upset when receiving communications from the Child Support Agency and also did not fully understand the concept of a PA meeting and NDLP.
Cultural differences. Amongst the Pakistani and Bangladeshi lone parents, there was sometimes an expectation within the community that women should not be working and looking after children at the same time. If women did go out to work, they believed that they would be thought badly of within their community. Although these lone parents were not well off, they often had additional financial support from other family members.

Perceptions of isolation were reported, in particular from Asian lone parents, who had little knowledge of the formal support networks and groups. The isolation of these lone parents increased when they did not have access to family members living locally. Access to more support would help increase their awareness of programmes such NDLP, childcare provision and the role of the Child Support Agency.

More personal contact may be better than an invitation by post for those who misunderstood the initial invitation to the NDLP programme. It would have the advantage of reassuring the lone parents and overcoming any negative views they have heard about the programme. It would also pave the way for any future contact between the lone parent and advisers. Attempts should also be made to provide initial invitations or perhaps make these phone calls in other languages, especially Asian languages and common languages of recent immigrants to the UK.

It was apparent that there were non-English speakers who used community centres and advisers to provide interpretation for them, and help them read written communications. More work should therefore be carried out with these centres advising them of what the programme can offer and that they may be asked to interpret communications about NDLP.

There were concerns expressed from both black and Asian lone parents about childcare, especially leaving their children at childminders, and a reluctance to use non-family members for childcare. This has been reported in other research but negative reactions to childminders were an especially strong factor here. This may need to be borne in mind by advisers when talking about childcare options.

Statistical surveys have also shown that white lone parents are more likely to complete the NDLP programme and get a job than minority ethnic lone parents. However, this research showed that many of the reasons for not getting work after NDLP were similar to white lone parents – there may be other factors such as the labour market in which minority ethnic lone parents live that are more important.

Although awareness of the Child Support Agency was low, it was felt to have a difficult role to fulfil. Respondents felt that the Child Support Agency should be advertised more to improve awareness of the role of the Agency. In particular, the attitudes of staff were felt be problematic, and there was felt to be a need to have staff who could empathise with the emotive situation that lone parents find themselves in. This is in line with other research findings with white lone parents (Wikeley et al, 2001).

However, lone parents in this study portrayed the Child Support Agency in a very negative light. This was because there seemed to be a range of issues that differentiated minority ethnic lone parents from other lone parents including:

- Cultural issues. There were instances where lone parents did not want to co-operate with the Child Support Agency because their family had threatened to ‘disown’ them if they did. Furthermore, there were lone parents who felt that the state should not interfere in financial matters.
- NRPs were not in the UK and therefore it was not seen as worth pursuing maintenance payments.

Conclusions
Black lone parents who had had children by a number of different fathers thought that the Child Support Agency were very insensitive in their dealings with them.

Black and Asian lone parents felt that the ethnicity and gender of the Child Support Agency staff should be matched to the lone parents. This was because the information being asked for was of such a personal nature, that it would be better to talk to someone of their own background and sex. However, those that were happy with the service offered by the Child Support Agency did not make this statement. The Child Support Agency may wish to investigate its ability to provide matched staff in terms of the people dealing with minority ethnic lone parents as the subject is so sensitive, there were great difficulties in talking about it in front of different, unhelpful staff each time.
Appendix – Topic guide

Lone Parents Topic Guide

Overall Aim: To explore and investigate how lone parents interact with the Child Support Agency and participate in NDLP.

More specifically to explore:

NDLP
• Awareness and knowledge of the NDLP programme amongst minority ethnic lone parents;
• Minority ethnic lone parents’ attitudes towards work, or remaining on ES;
• Minority ethnic lone parents’ attitudes towards the support systems currently available;
• Whether there are different or more extensive barriers to participation in NDLP for minority ethnic lone parents;
• Whether the current NDLP programme is able to meet the needs of lone parents from different minority ethnic groups;

Child Support Agency
• Awareness and knowledge of the Child Support Agency amongst minority ethnic lone parents;
• Investigate the attitudes held by minority ethnic lone parents about child maintenance;
• Attitudes towards the role played by the Child Support Agency;
• Barriers towards complying with the Child Support Agency for lone parents from minority ethnic groups.

1. Introduction
• About BMRB Qualitative
• About the research study: to explore lone parents’ views of NDLP and of the Child Support Agency
• Carried out on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions
• Describe who else we will be talking to: other lone parents in their area and three other areas
• Confidentiality
• Tape recording
• Interview length: around ninety minutes
• Incentive payment (explain that this does not affect their benefits)

2. Background
• Age
• Number and ages of children
• Length of time as a lone parent
• Marital Status
• Household tenure
• Educational attainment: qualifications gained
• Any additional training after leaving full-time education
• Ask respondent to describe their own levels of literacy and numeracy
• Sources of income:
  – Work
  – Benefits received
    – What are they making a claim for
    – Ease of making claim
    – Awareness of benefits available / past experience of making claims
• Do they receive any other money from other sources e.g. family, NRP(briefly)
• How would they describe their health
• How would they describe their children’s health

3. Support Networks
• Do their families live locally
  – Do they take any role in childcare
• Do they have friends in the local area
  – Are these friends lone parents as well
• Do they belong to any groups for lone parents
  – Views about usefulness
  – Do they share information with lone parents like themselves
  – What sorts of things do they share
• Views on childcare
  – Is this view shared by their family and friends/other people they know
• Views about the availability of affordable and suitable childcare in their area
4. **Employment History**

- Employment History
  - Have they worked in the past
  - What sorts of jobs
  - Have they worked since having children
    - Why did they leave their job
  - Have they worked since becoming a lone parent

- Do they currently work at all- full-time, part-time

- Reasons for not working
  - Probe on no need / partner working until separation
  - Illness or health issues (themselves, children, others)
  - Studying
  - Childcare responsibilities
    - How would they feel about leaving their children in childcare whilst working
    - Are there certain types of childcare that they would use
    - Is this available in their local area
    - Are there certain types of childcare that they would not use
    - Why
  - Perception of being better off on benefits
  - Confidence issues
    - Lack of skills
    - Probe on language, literacy and numeracy skills
    - Ability to work
  - Travel
  - Costs of moving into work
  - Fears of not managing financially

- **Views on working**
  - What plans if any in short term
  - Hopes / plans in longer term
  - How will these impact on the children
  - Do they feel they have the relevant skills for working
  - Would they feel confident/nervous about returning to work
  - Have they talked about working with anyone else e.g. family, friends
  - General views about lone parents working

- **Need for training**
  - What skills do they need for working
  - If so, what area / skill, to what level and why

- **Views about the local labour market**
  - Views about availability of jobs
  - Jobs with family friendly working practices
  - Perception whether firms are equal opportunity employers
    - In their area
    - For the types of work they would like to do

- **Past experience of Jobcentre/Government agencies**
  - If used in past, when and why
  - Resulting attitudes

- **If not ever used Jobcentre**
  - Views of Jobcentre and how it works
  - Perceived relevance and potential usefulness
5. NDLP

Introduce section: We are now going to talk about a government programme called the New Deal for Lone Parents (NDLP) that you may or may not have heard of.

- Awareness of NDLP
  - What do they think it is
  - Who is it for
  - What can it do
  - Is it for lone parents like themselves
  - How do they think other lone parents view NDLP
  - How do they think people from their area view NDLP

- Were they invited to attend an interview or required to go for an interview
  - What was their reaction to this
  - What did they think the interview would involve

- How were they invited
  - Probe on: Informed at Benefits Agency and time set up
  - Received a letter
  - Walked into Jobcentre

If did not attend initial interview

- Did they discuss this with anyone else
  - Probe on other lone parents
  - Family and friends
  - What was their reaction
  - How did this influence their decision not to attend
  - When did they decide not to go along
    - At what point did this occur, i.e. after receiving letter, talking it over with others
  - Why did they decide not to go along to the interview
    - Timing
    - Location of Jobcentre
    - Illness
    - Lack of understanding of the programme
    - Lack of understanding about the communications received
    - Views about whether they actually needed any help

- Perception that it was not useful for them
- Lack of childcare
- Language issues with adviser
  - Awareness of interpreters
  - Expectations of Government agencies

- What could have made them attend the initial interview
  - Probe on more information
  - On what PAs can offer
  - On training courses available
  - On job search help available
  - On childcare
  - Home visit
  - Different method of communication about interview e.g. telephone
  - Explanation in their language

- Would they attend an interview in the future

If attended initial interview

- Did they discuss this with anyone else
  - Probe on other lone parents
  - Family and friends
  - What was their reaction
  - How did this influence their decision to attend

- Reasons for attending
  - Probe on whether they thought the interview was voluntary or compulsory
  - Probe on other reasons

- How easy was the meeting to set up
  - Probe on times, clarity of communications

- Perceptions of the help and advice offered by Advisers
  - What was useful
  - What wasn’t, and why
View of approach taken by adviser
- How sensitive was the adviser
- How appropriate for interviewee’s circumstances
- Did the adviser understand their needs
- Did they understand what the adviser was talking about
- If necessary was an interpreter offered
  - If so would this have been useful
- How tailored was their approach
- How friendly/easy to take part in meeting
- Was language an issue; how was this addressed
- Was the adviser a man/woman
  - From their ethnic background
  - Would this have made any difference

If attended initial interview but did not go on to NDLP

- Did they discuss whether to go onto NDLP with anyone else
  - Probe on other lone parents
  - Family and friends
  - What was their reaction
  - How did this influence their decision not to go onto NDLP

- Reasons for not joining NDLP
  - Probe on
    - Timing
    - Lack of understanding of the programme
    - Lack of usefulness of programme
    - Lack of childcare
    - Did not want to go back to work
    - Language issues
    - Expectations of Government agencies

What factors that could have attracted them to participate in NDLP
- Probe on
  - Training courses
  - Help that PAs can offer
  - More tailored provision
  - If NDLP is not suitable for them now, would it be at some point in the future

Joining NDLP

- Did they discuss whether to go onto NDLP with anyone else
  - Probe on other lone parents
  - Family and friends
  - What was their reaction
  - How did this influence their decision to go onto NDLP

- What were their reasons for participating/continuing to participate in the NDLP programme

- What has happened to them while on NDLP
  - Help offered by adviser
  - Training and educational courses
  - How has met their expectations of the programme

- Views about help that has been offered by adviser
  - How has their relationship with the adviser changed if at all

- Views about training provision received

- Did they complete NDLP
  - Reasons for completing
    - Did they have any doubts they would finish the programme
  - If dropped out probe on reasons
    - Timing
    - Lack of usefulness of programme
    - Lack of childcare
    - Negative experiences with training providers, employers
    - Language issues
    - Expectations of Government agencies
- Views about other support and advice NDLP could offer particularly in terms of helping them back to work
  - What ideas do they have for helping lone parents like themselves
- Views about the training and educational opportunities available on NDLP
- Did they feel there were any issues of discrimination (e.g. by advisers, by training providers) whilst on NDLP

Completing NDLP
- What happened when they completed NDLP
- Did they get a job
  - What type of job
    - Is this the sort of work they wanted to
    - How did they get this job
    - Did they discuss whether to take this job with anyone else
    - Probe on other lone parents
      - Family and friends
      - What was their reaction
      - How did this influence their decision to take the job
    - Was it a direct result of NDLP
  - Are they still in the same job
  - Has the job met their expectations
- Views about whether there were any issues of employer discrimination when trying to get a job
- If they did not get a job
  - Reasons for this
  - Have they been looking for a job
  - Probe on
    - Employer discrimination
    - Lack of skills
    - Confidence issues
    - Lack of family friendly policies
    - Lack of appropriate work in area
  - How do they see the future in terms of work
- What was the impact of NDLP on their work plans if any

- Views about any other support and advice NDLP could offer to lone parents like themselves
  - Probe on particularly in terms of helping them back to work

6. Child Support

Introduce section: We are now going to talk about your experiences of child support and payments, sometimes referred to as maintenance. Re-emphasize the confidentiality of the interview.

- What do they know about the current child support systems in place
  - Views about current child support systems
  - Knowledge of whether receiving benefit meant they were required to deal with the Child Support Agency
    - Views about this
  - Knowledge about forthcoming reforms
    - Views about the reforms
- Views about maintenance and providing financial support for children
  - Whose role is to provide financial support to children
    - Probe on:
      - The Government/state
      - Taxpayers
      - Both parents
      - One parent only
      - Other family
    - Have they always held these views
    - If changed what impacted on these changed

7. Links with the NRP

- What links, if any, do they have with father of their children
  - What level of support does the father provide
    - Probe on financial issues
    - Probe on practical issues
    - How has this changed over time
Appendix - Topic guide

- Is this level of financial support based on
  - Voluntary agreements and payments
  - Is this in addition to maintenance payments paid under assumes from the Child Support Agency
  - Court orders (not a Child Support Agency assessment)
  - Get respondent to describe the process by which these agreements came about
    - Probe on length of time to resolve
    - Amicability of the arrangement
    - Involvement of other parties in the arrangement e.g. family, solicitors
- How much money is received from NRP
  - How reliably is this paid
  - Views about level of financial help from the father
- Do they receive any other forms of financial help with the children
  - Probe on family, friends
  - Why is this
- Do they receive any other forms of financial advice with the children
  - Probe on family, friends
  - Voluntary organisations
  - Why is this

8. Child Support Agency

- What contact have they had with the Child Support Agency
  - Who made the initial approach
    - Themselves/ Child Support Agency
  - If voluntarily
    - Why did they decide to do this
    - How did they know what to do
    - Did they get any advice on approaching the Child Support Agency
    - What did they hope to achieve
    - When did they decide to do this
  - If approached by Child Support Agency
    - Did they receive communication direct from the Child Support Agency
      - Was this understandable
      - Were they told the Child Support Agency would be in contact when making a claim for benefits
    - Ask respondent to outline in detail
      - Current state of their case
      - The history of claim
        - Including length of time it has taken to resolve
        - the outcome of claim
        - Any appeals by NRP
        - Views about maintenance calculated
        - How regularly does the maintenance come
        - Is this received by respondent or paid through the Department
        - Have they discussed their dealing with the Child Support Agency with anyone else
          - Probe on family
          - Voluntary groups

Those that refused to co-operate with the Child Support Agency

- Why did their decide not to co-operate with the Child Support Agency
  - Probe on
    - Lack of relevance to their situation
    - Lack of understanding of communications received
    - Lack of sensitivity shown on part of Child Support Agency
    - Privacy issues
    - Safety issues
  - What has happened with regard to their lack of co-operation with the Child Support Agency
    - Probe on reduction in benefit
    - Did they think they had good reasons for non co-operation with the Child Support Agency
    - Will they co-operate with the Child Support Agency in the future
    - What would need to change for them to co-operate with the Child Support Agency
      - Probe on communications
      - Attitude of the Child Support Agency
9. Dealing with the Child Support Agency

- Perceptions of the Child Support Agency
  - Probe on
    - Sensitivity
    - Responsiveness
    - Communications received
- How do they think other lone parents view the Child Support Agency
- How do they think people from their area view the Child Support Agency
- How they ever discussed the Child Support Agency with anyone else
  - Probe on other lone parents
    - Family and friends
    - What was their reaction
    - How has this influenced their dealings with the Child Support Agency
- How do they find dealing with the Child Support Agency
  - View of approach taken by Child Support Agency
    - How sensitive are the Child Support Agency to their needs
    - How appropriate for interviewee’s circumstances
    - Do they understand their needs
    - How tailored is their approach
    - How understandable are their communications
- Are there any barriers towards dealing with the Child Support Agency
  - Probe on language issues
    - Cultural sensitivities that may be involved
    - Getting information
    - Dealing with the same person
    - Methods of communication e.g. telephone, post
- How could the Child Support Agency encourage more lone parents like themselves to cooperate

10. Summary

- Interviewer summarises and checks learning with respondents:
  - Explanation / understanding of NDLP
  - Views about NDLP
  - Views about barriers to work
  - Views about child support
  - Views about dealing with the Child Support Agency
- Any other comments that interviewee wishes to make

THANK AND CLOSE
Conduct of the analysis

Material collected through qualitative methods is invariably unstructured and unwieldy. Much of it is text based, consisting of verbatim transcriptions of interviews and discussions. Moreover, the internal content of the material is usually in detailed and micro-form (for example, accounts of experiences, inarticulate explanations, etc.). The primary aim of any analytical method is to provide a means of exploring coherence and structure within a cumbersome data set whilst retaining a hold on the original accounts and observations from which it is derived.

Qualitative analysis is essentially about detection and exploration of the data. We ‘make sense’ of the data by looking for coherence and structure within the data.

Our analytical procedure works from verbatim transcripts (all interviews and mini-groups are tape-recorded in stereo) and involves a systematic process of sifting, summarising and sorting the material according to key issues and themes. We use a set of content analysis techniques, known as ‘Matrix-Mapping’, to ensure an optimum synthesis of findings from the verbatim data.

‘Matrix-Mapping’ begins with a familiarisation stage and would include both an executive researcher’s review of the audiotapes and/or transcripts. Based on the coverage of the topic guide, the researchers’ experiences of conducting the fieldwork and their preliminary review of the data, a thematic framework is constructed. The analysis then proceeds by summarising and synthesising the data according to this thematic framework using a range of techniques such as cognitive mapping and data matrices. When all the data has been sifted according to the core themes the analyst begins to map the data and identify features within the data: defining concepts, mapping the range and nature of phenomenon, creating typologies, finding associations, and providing explanations.

The mapping process is similar whichever of the above features are being considered. The analyst reviews the summarised data; compares and contrasts the perceptions, accounts, or experiences; searches for patterns or connections within the data and seeks explanations internally within the data set. Piecing together the overall picture is not simply aggregating patterns, but of weighing up the salience and dynamics of issues, and searching for structures within the data that have explanatory power, rather than simply seeking a multiplicity of evidence.

The key issues, and the features that underpin them, are then used as the basis for constructing an oral presentation and a written report. We use verbatim quotes to illustrate and illuminate the findings.

We have used, and refined, our analytical procedures over many years. They are highly respected by our government clients and are noted for their ability to extract the maximum information from qualitative data. Our methods are very robust and demonstrably able to stand up to public scrutiny. They have been used, for example, in the analysis of difficult and sensitive topics and have provided the analytical structure for many high profile pieces of work.
## Other research reports available

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Thirty Families: Their living standards in unemployment</td>
<td>0 11 761683 4</td>
<td>£6.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Disability, Household Income &amp; Expenditure</td>
<td>0 11 761755 5</td>
<td>£5.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Housing Benefit Reviews</td>
<td>0 11 761821 7</td>
<td>£16.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Social Security &amp; Community Care: The case of the Invalid Care Allowance</td>
<td>0 11 761820 9</td>
<td>£9.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The Attendance Allowance Medical Examination: Monitoring consumer views</td>
<td>0 11 761819 5</td>
<td>£5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Lone Parent Families in the UK</td>
<td>0 11 761868 3</td>
<td>£15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Incomes In and Out of Work</td>
<td>0 11 761910 8</td>
<td>£17.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Working the Social Fund</td>
<td>0 11 761952 3</td>
<td>£9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Evaluating the Social Fund</td>
<td>0 11 761953 1</td>
<td>£22.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Customer Perceptions of Resettlement Units</td>
<td>0 11 761976 6</td>
<td>£13.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Survey of Admissions to London Resettlement Units</td>
<td>0 11 761977 9</td>
<td>£8.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Researching the Disability Working Allowance Self Assessment Form</td>
<td>0 11 761834 9</td>
<td>£7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Child Support Unit National Client Survey 1992</td>
<td>0 11 762060 2</td>
<td>£15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Preparing for Council Tax Benefit</td>
<td>0 11 762061 0</td>
<td>£5.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Employers’ Choice of Pension Schemes: Report of a qualitative study</td>
<td>0 11 762073 4</td>
<td>£5.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
18. GPs and IVB: A qualitative study of the role of GPs in the award of Invalidity Benefit 0 11 762077 7 £12.00

19. Invalidity Benefit: A survey of recipients 0 11 762087 4 £10.75

20. Invalidity Benefit: A longitudinal survey of new recipients 0 11 762088 2 £19.95

21. Support for Children: A comparison of arrangements in fifteen countries 0 11 762089 0 £22.95

22. Pension Choices: A survey on personal pensions in comparison with other pension options 0 11 762091 2 £18.95

23. Crossing National Frontiers 0 11 762131 5 £17.75

24. Statutory Sick Pay 0 11 762147 1 £23.75

25. Lone Parents and Work 0 11 762147 X £12.95

26. The Effects of Benefit on Housing Decisions 0 11 762157 9 £18.50

27. Making a Claim for Disability Benefits 0 11 762162 5 £12.95

28. Contributions Agency Customer Satisfaction Survey 1993 0 11 762220 6 £20.00

29. Child Support Agency National Client Satisfaction Survey 1993 0 11 762224 9 £33.00

30. Lone Mothers 0 11 762228 1 £16.75

31. Educating Employers 0 11 762249 4 £8.50

32. Employers and Family Credit 0 11 762272 9 £13.50

33. Direct Payments from Income Support 0 11 762290 7 £16.50

34. Incomes and Living Standards of Older People 0 11 762299 0 £24.95

35. Choosing Advice on Benefits 0 11 762316 4 £13.95

36. First-time Customers 0 11 762317 2 £25.00

37. Contributions Agency National Client Satisfaction Survey 1994 0 11 762339 3 £21.00

38. Managing Money in Later Life 0 11 762340 7 £22.00

39. Child Support Agency National Client Satisfaction Survey 1994 0 11 762341 5 £35.00

40. Changes in Lone Parenthood 0 11 7632349 0 £20.00

41. Evaluation of Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance 0 11 762351 2 £40.00

42. War Pensions Agency Customer Satisfaction Survey 1994 0 11 762358 X £18.00

43. Paying for Rented Housing 0 11 762370 9 £19.00

44. Resettlement Agency Customer Satisfaction Survey 1994 0 11 762371 7 £16.00

Other research reports available
45. Changing Lives and the Role of Income Support 0 11 762405 5 £20.00
46. Social Assistance in OECD Countries: Synthesis Report 0 11 762407 1 £22.00
47. Social Assistance in OECD Countries: Country Report 0 11 762408 X £47.00
48. Leaving Family Credit 0 11 762411 X £18.00
49. Women and Pensions 0 11 762422 5 £35.00
50. Pensions and Divorce 0 11 762423 5 £25.00
51. Child Support Agency Client Satisfaction Survey 1995 0 11 762424 1 £22.00
52. Take Up of Second Adult Rebate 0 11 762390 3 £17.00
53. Moving off Income Support 0 11 762394 6 £26.00
54. Disability, Benefits and Employment 0 11 762398 9 £30.00
55. Housing Benefit and Service Charges 0 11 762399 7 £25.00
56. Confidentiality: The public view 0 11 762434 9 £25.00
57. Helping Disabled Workers 0 11 762440 3 £25.00
58. Employers’ Pension Provision 1994 0 11 762443 8 £30.00
59. Delivering Social Security: A cross-national study 0 11 762447 0 £35.00
60. A Comparative Study of Housing Allowances 0 11 762448 9 £26.00
61. Lone Parents, Work and Benefits 0 11 762450 0 £25.00
62. Unemployment and Jobseeking 0 11 762452 7 £30.00
63. Exploring Customer Satisfaction 0 11 762468 3 £20.00
64. Social Security Fraud: The role of penalties 0 11 762471 3 £30.00
65. Customer Contact with the Benefits Agency 0 11 762533 7 £30.00
66. Pension Scheme Inquiries and Disputes 0 11 762534 5 £30.00
67. Maternity Rights and Benefits in Britain 0 11 762536 1 £35.00
68. Claimants’ Perceptions of the Claim Process 0 11 762541 8 £23.00
69. Delivering Benefits to Unemployed People 0 11 762553 1 £27.00
70. Delivering Benefits to Unemployed 16–17 year olds 0 11 762557 4 £20.00
71. Stepping–Stones to Employment 0 11 762568 X £27.00
72. Dynamics of Retirement 0 11 762571 X £36.00
73. Unemployment and Jobseeking before Jobseeker’s Allowance 0 11 762576 0 £34.00
74. Customer views on Service Delivery in the Child Support Agency 0 11 762583 3 £27.00

Other research reports available
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>Experiences of Occupational Pension Scheme Wind-Up</td>
<td>0 11 762584 1</td>
<td>£27.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>Recruiting Long-Term Unemployed People</td>
<td>0 11 762585 X</td>
<td>£27.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td>What Happens to Lone Parents</td>
<td>0 11 762598 3</td>
<td>£31.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78</td>
<td>Lone Parents Lives</td>
<td>0 11 762598 1</td>
<td>£34.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79</td>
<td>Moving into Work: Bridging Housing Costs</td>
<td>0 11 762599 X</td>
<td>£33.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>Lone Parents on the Margins of Work</td>
<td>1 84123 000 6</td>
<td>£26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>The Role of Pension Scheme Trustees</td>
<td>1 84123 001 4</td>
<td>£28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
<td>Pension Scheme Investment Policies</td>
<td>1 84123 002 2</td>
<td>£28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>Pensions and Retirement Planning</td>
<td>1 84123 003 0</td>
<td>£28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84</td>
<td>Self-Employed People and National Insurance Contributions</td>
<td>1 84123 004 9</td>
<td>£28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85</td>
<td>Getting the Message Across</td>
<td>1 84123 052 9</td>
<td>£26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86</td>
<td>Leaving Incapacity Benefit</td>
<td>1 84123 087 1</td>
<td>£34.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87</td>
<td>Unemployment and Jobseeking: Two Years On</td>
<td>1 84123 088 X</td>
<td>£38.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>Attitudes to the Welfare State and the Response to Reform</td>
<td>1 84123 098 7</td>
<td>£36.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89</td>
<td>New Deal for Lone Parents: Evaluation of Innovative Schemes</td>
<td>1 84123 101 0</td>
<td>£26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>Modernising service delivery: The Lone Parent Prototype</td>
<td>1 84123 103 7</td>
<td>£26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>Housing Benefit exceptional hardship payments</td>
<td>1 84123 104 5</td>
<td>£26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>New Deal for Lone Parents: Learning from the Prototype Areas</td>
<td>1 84123 107 X</td>
<td>£29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93</td>
<td>Housing Benefit and Supported Accommodation</td>
<td>1 84123 118 5</td>
<td>£31.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>Disability in Great Britain</td>
<td>1 84123 119 3</td>
<td>£35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>Low paid work in Britain</td>
<td>1 84123 120 7</td>
<td>£37.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96</td>
<td>Keeping in touch with the Labour Market</td>
<td>1 84123 126 6</td>
<td>£28.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit delivery: Claimant experiences</td>
<td>1 84123 127 4</td>
<td>£24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>Employers’ Pension Provision 1996</td>
<td>1 84123 138 X</td>
<td>£31.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99</td>
<td>Unemployment and jobseeking after the introduction of Jobseeker’s Allowance</td>
<td>1 84123 146 0</td>
<td>£33.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>Overcoming barriers: Older people and Income Support</td>
<td>1 84123 148 7</td>
<td>£29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101</td>
<td>Attitudes and aspirations of older people: A review of the literature</td>
<td>1 84123 144 4</td>
<td>£34.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>102</td>
<td>Attitudes and aspirations of older people: A qualitative study</td>
<td>1 84123 158 4</td>
<td>£29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>ISBN</td>
<td>Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>103</td>
<td>Relying on the state, relying on each other</td>
<td>1 84123 163 0</td>
<td>£27.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>104</td>
<td>Modernising Service Delivery: The Integrated Services Prototype</td>
<td>1 84123 162 2</td>
<td>£27.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>105</td>
<td>Helping pensioners: Evaluation of the Income Support Pilots</td>
<td>1 84123 164 9</td>
<td>£30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106</td>
<td>New Deal for disabled people: Early implementation</td>
<td>1 84123 165 7</td>
<td>£39.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107</td>
<td>Parents and employment: An analysis of low income families in the British Household Panel Survey</td>
<td>1 84123 167 3</td>
<td>£28.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>Evaluation of the New Deal for Lone Parents: Early lessons from the Phase One Prototype Synthesis Report</td>
<td>1 84123 187 8</td>
<td>£27.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>109</td>
<td>Evaluation of the New Deal for Lone Parents: Early lessons from the Phase One Prototype Findings of Surveys</td>
<td>1 84123 3190 8</td>
<td>£42.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110</td>
<td>Evaluation of the New Deal for Lone Parents: Early lessons from the Phase One Prototype Cost-benefit and econometric analyses</td>
<td>1 84123 188 6</td>
<td>£29.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>111</td>
<td>Understanding the Impact of Jobseeker’s Allowance</td>
<td>1 84123 192 4</td>
<td>£37.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>The First Effects of Earnings Top-up</td>
<td>1 84123 193 2</td>
<td>£39.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>Piloting change: Interim Qualitative Findings from the Earnings Top-up Evaluation</td>
<td>1 84123 194 0</td>
<td>£28.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>Building Up Pension Rights</td>
<td>1 84123 195 9</td>
<td>£33.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>Prospects of part-time work: The impact of the Back to Work Bonus</td>
<td>1 84123 196 7</td>
<td>£29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>Evaluating Jobseeker’s Allowance</td>
<td>1 84123 197 5</td>
<td>£16.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td>Pensions and divorce: The 1998 Survey</td>
<td>1 84123 198 3</td>
<td>£36.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>Pensions and divorce: Exploring financial settlements</td>
<td>1 84123 199 1</td>
<td>£24.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>Local Authorities and Benefit Overpayments</td>
<td>1 84123 200 9</td>
<td>£26.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>Lifetime Experiences of Self-Employment</td>
<td>1 84123 218 1</td>
<td>£31.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>Evaluation of the Pension Power for you Helpline</td>
<td>1 84123 221 1</td>
<td>£28.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>Lone Parents and Personal Advisers: Roles and Relationships</td>
<td>1 84123 242 4</td>
<td>£29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>Employers’ Pension Provision</td>
<td>1 84123 269 6</td>
<td>£35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>124</td>
<td>The Changing Role of the Occupational Pension Scheme Trustee</td>
<td>1 84123 267 X</td>
<td>£25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125</td>
<td>Saving and Borrowing</td>
<td>1 84123 277 7</td>
<td>£28.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>First Effects of ONE</td>
<td>1 84123 281 5</td>
<td>£38.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>127</td>
<td>Why not ONE?</td>
<td>1 84123 282 3</td>
<td>£25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128</td>
<td>The British Lone Parent Cohort 1991 to 1998</td>
<td>1 84123 283 1</td>
<td>£34.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129</td>
<td>Housing Benefits and the Appeals Service</td>
<td>1 84123 294 7</td>
<td>£26.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130</td>
<td>Pensions 2000 (Attitudes to retirement planning)</td>
<td>1 84123 295 5</td>
<td>£33.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>131</td>
<td>Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Effects on Unemployed People</td>
<td>1 84123 289 0</td>
<td>£38.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>132</td>
<td>Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Employers’ Reactions</td>
<td>1 84123 290 4</td>
<td>£29.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Qualitative Evidence</td>
<td>1 84123 291 2</td>
<td>£30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Effects on Low Paid Workers</td>
<td>1 84123 292 0</td>
<td>£37.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>Earnings Top-up Evaluation: The Synthesis Report</td>
<td>1 84123 293 9</td>
<td>£27.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td>Modernising Service Delivery: The Better Government for Older People Prototypes</td>
<td>1 84123 300 5</td>
<td>£28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>The Verification Framework: Early Experiences of Implementation</td>
<td>1 84123 303 X</td>
<td>£27.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>Low-income families in Britain: Work, welfare and social security in 1999</td>
<td>1 84123 312 9</td>
<td>£53.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td>Recruiting benefit claimants: A survey of employers in ONE pilot areas</td>
<td>1 84123 349 8</td>
<td>£26.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>Moving towards work: The short term impact of ONE</td>
<td>1 84123 352 8</td>
<td>£27.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td>Incapacity Benefits and Work Incentives</td>
<td>1 84123 350 1</td>
<td>£28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>Cross-country comparisons of pensioners’ incomes</td>
<td>1 84123 351 X</td>
<td>£33.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>Evaluation of the New Deal for Disabled People Innovative Schemes pilots</td>
<td>1 84123 353 6</td>
<td>£36.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>Evaluation of the New Deal for Disabled People Personal Adviser Service pilot</td>
<td>1 84123 354 4</td>
<td>£44.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td>‘Well enough to work?’</td>
<td>1 84123 360 9</td>
<td>£31.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>Payments of pensions and benefits: A survey of social security recipients paid by order book or girocheque</td>
<td>1 84123 370 6</td>
<td>£34.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>147</td>
<td>Evaluation of the Minimum Income Guarantee Claim Line</td>
<td>1 84123 381 6</td>
<td>£27.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>148</td>
<td>The role of GPs in sickness certification</td>
<td>1 84123 389 7</td>
<td>£28.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>149</td>
<td>The medium-term effects of voluntary participation in ONE</td>
<td>1 84123 393 5</td>
<td>£34.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>Recruiting Benefit Claimants: A qualitative study of employers who recruited benefit claimants</td>
<td>1 84123 394 3</td>
<td>£25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151</td>
<td>Moving between sickness and work</td>
<td>1 84123 397 8</td>
<td>£37.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>152</td>
<td>National Survey of Child Support Agency Clients</td>
<td>1 84123 398 6</td>
<td>£39.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153</td>
<td>Families, poverty, work and care</td>
<td>1 84123 406 0</td>
<td>£38.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other research reports available
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>154</td>
<td>ONE year on: clients’ medium-term experiences of ONE</td>
<td>1 84123 407 9</td>
<td>£28.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>155</td>
<td>Barriers to employment for offenders and ex-offenders</td>
<td>1 84123 415 X</td>
<td>£53.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>156</td>
<td>Short term effects of compulsory participation in ONE</td>
<td>1 84123 416 8</td>
<td>£46.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>157</td>
<td>The Dynamics of Poverty in Britain</td>
<td>1 84123 417 6</td>
<td>£32.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>158</td>
<td>Outcomes for children of poverty</td>
<td>1 84123 418 4</td>
<td>£33.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>Self-Funded Admissions to Care Homes</td>
<td>1 84123 420 6</td>
<td>£35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>160</td>
<td>New Deal for Disabled People: National Survey of incapacity benefits claimants</td>
<td>1 84123 421 4</td>
<td>£33.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161</td>
<td>Low/moderate-income families in Britain: Work, Working Families’ Tax Credit and childcare in 2000</td>
<td>1 84123 426 5</td>
<td>£31.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162</td>
<td>Evaluation of the Capability Report: Identifying the work-related capabilities of incapacity benefits claimants</td>
<td>1 84123 437 0</td>
<td>£29.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>163</td>
<td>Employers’ Pension Provision 2000</td>
<td>1 84123 419 2</td>
<td>£36.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164</td>
<td>Low/moderate-income families in Britain: Changes in Living Standards 1999-2000</td>
<td>1 84123 438 9</td>
<td>£32.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>165</td>
<td>Low- and moderate-income families in Britain: Changes in 1999 and 2000</td>
<td>1 84123 452 4</td>
<td>£35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166</td>
<td>Delivering a work-focused service: Final findings from ONE case studies and staff research</td>
<td>1 84123 450 8</td>
<td>£35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>167</td>
<td>Delivering a work-focused service: Views and experiences of clients</td>
<td>1 84123 451 6</td>
<td>£30.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>168</td>
<td>Findings from the Macro evaluation of the New Deal for Young People</td>
<td>1 84123 464 8</td>
<td>£26.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169</td>
<td>Costs and benefits to service providers of making reasonable adjustments under Part III of the Disability Discrimination Act</td>
<td>1 84123 476 1</td>
<td>£42.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td>From job seekers to job keepers: Job retention, advancement and the role of in-work support programmes</td>
<td>1 84123 477 X</td>
<td>£41.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>171</td>
<td>Qualitative research with clients: Longer term experiences of a work-focused service</td>
<td>1 84123 478 8</td>
<td>£30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>172</td>
<td>Social Fund use amongst older people</td>
<td>1 84123 485 0</td>
<td>£29.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173</td>
<td>‘Disabled for life?’ attitudes towards, and experiences of, disability in Britain</td>
<td>1 84123 493 1</td>
<td>£46.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>174</td>
<td>A comparison of Child Benefit packages in 22 countries</td>
<td>1 84123 506 7</td>
<td>£54.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>175</td>
<td>Easing the transition to work</td>
<td>1 84123 507 5</td>
<td>£34.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176</td>
<td>Electronic government at DWP: Attitudes to electronic methods of conducting benefit business</td>
<td>1 84123 508 3</td>
<td>£32.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of Study</td>
<td>ISBN</td>
<td>Price</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment as a route off benefit</td>
<td>1841235091</td>
<td>£31.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The wider benefits of education and training: a comparative longitudinal study</td>
<td>1841235172</td>
<td>£30.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees’ opportunities and barriers in employment and training</td>
<td>1841235180</td>
<td>£34.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family change 1999 to 2001</td>
<td>184123530X</td>
<td>£39.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Families’ Tax Credit in 2001</td>
<td>1841235318</td>
<td>£27.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working after State Pension Age</td>
<td>1841235326</td>
<td>£27.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The final effects of ONE</td>
<td>1841235407</td>
<td>£50.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business start-up support for young people delivered by The Prince’s Trust: a comparative study of labour market outcomes</td>
<td>1841235504</td>
<td>£39.50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer engagement and the London labour market</td>
<td>1841235512</td>
<td>£34.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easing the transition into work (part 2 – client survey)</td>
<td>1841235601</td>
<td>£37.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further information regarding the content of the above may be obtained from:

Department for Work and Pensions
Attn. Paul Noakes
Social Research Division
Information and Analysis Directorate
4-26 Adelphi
1–11 John Adam Street
London WC2N 6HT