Recruiting Benefit Claimants: A qualitative study of employers who recruited benefit claimants

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A report of research carried out by IFF Research Ltd on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Education and Skills
CONTENTS

Acknowledgements v

The Authors vi

Summary 1

1 Introduction 13
   1.1 The ONE service 13
   1.2 The ONE evaluation 13
   1.3 Research amongst employers 14
   1.4 Methodology 14
   1.5 Creative events 15
   1.6 Main quantitative survey 15
   1.7 Qualitative research 15
   1.8 Structure of the report 16
   1.9 Conventions used 17

2 Experiences of recruiting ONE relevant groups 19
   2.1 Nature of recruits 19
   2.2 Nature of work obtained 20
   2.3 Recruitment process 20
   2.4 Changes to accommodate needs of ONE relevant groups 4
      2.4.1 Changes in working hours 20
      2.4.2 Physical changes/ special equipment 22
      2.4.3 Changes to job specification 23
      2.4.4 Changes in attitude of other staff members 23
   2.5 Training and support given to ONE relevant groups 23
   2.6 Job performance 25
   2.7 Interaction with other staff 27
   2.8 Working Families’ and Disabled Person’s Tax Credit 29
   2.9 Information and guidance received from the Jobcentre when recruiting ONE relevant groups 29
   2.10 Likelihood to recruit ONE relevant groups in the future 31
      2.10.1 Lone Parents 31
      2.10.2 Long-term unemployed people 32
      2.10.3 People with physical disabilities 33
      2.10.4 People with mental health problems 35
3 Views of the new ideas 37
3.1 Account manager 38
  3.1.1 Advantages and concerns 39
  3.1.2 Concept development 40
3.2 More information on recruits 42
  3.2.1 Advantages and concerns 43
  3.2.2 Information requirements 45
3.3 Specialist advice on employing people from ONE relevant groups 46
  3.3.1 Advantages and concerns 47
  3.3.2 Information requirements 47
3.4 Specialist personal advisers 50
  3.4.1 Advantages and concerns 51
  3.4.2 Concept development 53

4 Conclusions 57
4.1 Employers’ experiences of recruiting people from ONE relevant groups 57
4.2 Views of the new ideas 57
  4.2.1 Account manager 58
  4.2.2 More information on recruits 58
  4.2.3 Specialist advice on employing people from ONE relevant groups 59
  4.2.4 Specialist Personal Advisers 59
4.3 Implication of offering these new types of services 60

Appendix 61
Other research reports available 63

LIST OF TABLES

Table A.1 Breakdown of employer interviews by pilot area 61
Table A.2 Breakdown of employer interviews by size of establishment 61
Table A.3 Breakdown of employer interviews by industry sector 62
Table A.4 Breakdown of employer interviews by types of ONE relevant recruits taken on 62
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SUMMARY

The ONE service was set up by the Department of Social Security (DSS), the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), the Benefits Agency (BA) and the Employment Service. (DSS and the employment part of DfEE are now known as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)).

ONE is a new way of delivering social security benefits to people of working age. It brings together the Employment Service, Benefits Agency and Local Authorities to provide a single point of entry to the benefits system and to place work, and the steps required to facilitate a return to the labour market, at the centre of the claim-making process. The aim of ONE is to increase economic activity, encourage people (back) into work where possible and to provide claimants with a more integrated service that is tailored to their personal circumstances.

The ONE service was introduced between June and November 1999 in 12 pilot areas in Great Britain. Three different service models are being trialled: a Basic Model, a Call Centre Model and a Private/Voluntary Sector Model.

A major programme of research to evaluate ONE was set up by the Department of Social Security (now Department for Work and Pensions) on behalf of itself and the other agencies involved.

IFF Research Ltd. was commissioned to undertake the research amongst employers. The main objective of this work was to examine how we can secure employers’ commitment to help a wider range of people with limited capacity to get jobs. It has not sought to evaluate ONE from the employers’ perspective, but to help inform broader policy development on engaging employers further in tackling these issues.

The research focused on three groups¹, henceforth referred to as ONE relevant groups:

- Lone parents - single parents who are entering or returning to the workforce after a period looking after their children.

¹ These groups were not defined strictly in terms of benefit status, but were chosen to represent some of the key barriers faced by ONE claimants.
Long-term unemployed - people who have been unemployed for at least 12 months.

People with physical disabilities or mental health problems.

More specifically, the research:

- examined employers' attitudes towards and recruitment behaviour in respect of these groups;
- identified ways to help minimise the perceived 'risks' of employing these groups;
- identified ways to encourage employers to use the ONE service.

The research had three component parts:

- Creative Events.
- Main quantitative survey.
- Qualitative research.

This report covers the findings of the qualitative research.

The main purpose of the Creative Events was to identify new and more effective ways of encouraging employers to take on people from groups that find it more difficult to obtain work.

The main quantitative survey sought to examine employers' attitudes and recruitment behaviour in respect of people from ONE relevant groups and to assess their views of six new ideas generated from the Creative Events and whether they would have any impact on their likelihood to use the Jobcentre and/or recruit people from ONE relevant groups in future. The survey consisted of 1201 telephone interviews with employers who employed five or more staff and had recruited in the last three years.

The third, and final, stage of this work was a small qualitative study. It involved follow-up interviews with a small sample of employers (32) who had recruited people from ONE relevant groups in the last year.

The main purpose of this element of the project was to explore, in more detail, employers' experiences of recruiting and integrating people from ONE relevant groups into their workforce and their views of some of the new ideas tested in the main quantitative survey. Interviews were therefore conducted face to face and were more discursive in nature.

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2 The period of 12 months was used for research purposes only. The DfES definition of long-term unemployed is people unemployed for six months or more. Six months was not always viewed by employers as a significant period of time, so the definition was extended to 12 months.
The people recruited from ONE relevant groups by employers interviewed in this final stage were very mixed and illustrate the diverse nature of ONE clients and their difficulties.

All the lone parents were female but ranged in age from 25-44 years. Most were returning to work after a period looking after their children, but this period varied from a few months to several years. Recruits who had been long-term unemployed were of mixed age and gender and were returning to work after a period of between one and seven years. The extent and nature of physical disabilities varied considerably from people with slight hearing or mobility difficulties to people in wheelchairs. The range of mental health problems reported by employers was similarly wide-ranging, including dyslexia, depression and schizophrenia. The inclusion of a number of people with learning difficulties rather than mental health problems illustrates the lack of awareness and confusion amongst employers about the nature of mental health problems.

The jobs obtained by people from ONE relevant groups were mainly low or unskilled manual or office/clerical work. Few were recruited to higher skilled or managerial positions. Most were, however, recruited to permanent positions and, with the exception of many of the lone parents, these were mainly full-time jobs.

Most recruits were recruited through the Jobcentre. Advertisements and word of mouth were the other main recruitment channels. This pattern mirrored the findings of the main quantitative survey. The process by which these people were recruited was fairly standard and did not vary significantly from the recruitment of other people via Jobcentres, either in the nature or length of the process or in terms of dealings with Jobcentre staff.

Employers demonstrated a strong willingness to make adjustments to accommodate the needs of people from ONE relevant groups. Changes to, and flexibility around, working hours was the most common adjustment, particularly for lone parents. Changes to accommodate the needs of people with physical disabilities included physical changes to the building such as installing lifts and ramps and purchasing special equipment such as minicomms for people with hearing disabilities. However most of the changes were small adjustments to the workplace and workstation such as fitting head rests to chairs, altering desks for wheelchair use or simply altering the work position so people did not have to move about so much. Reflecting the results of the main quantitative survey, few employers had made changes to the job specification.
Again reflecting the results of the main quantitative survey, employers provided additional training and support where it was required. Lone parents required little or no additional training and support. About a third of unemployed recruits had received extra training and support. This was mainly required to update their IT skills and (re)build their confidence.

Those with physical disabilities or mental health problems were more likely to require both additional and different support. It often had to be provided in a different way such as one to one or in smaller groups and in some cases help was obtained from external agencies.

Most employers were very satisfied with the recruits from ONE relevant groups, with few reporting any serious problems. Again this was consistent with the findings of the main quantitative survey. The problems encountered included poor attendance (particularly amongst recruits with physical disabilities), lack of confidence and, to a lesser extent, lack of motivation. These problems were more likely to be encountered by employers recruiting long-term unemployed people.

The interaction of recruits from ONE relevant groups with other staff was largely positive. There were few or no problems encountered with lone parents or long-term unemployed in this area. Most of the problems that occurred concerned those with physical disabilities and mental health problems and included teasing of recruits by other staff, communication problems and use of abusive language.

Whilst people with physical disabilities and mental health problems were more likely to have encountered problems interacting with other staff, they also provided some of the most positive examples.

There has been some concern expressed about the administrative burden of operating Tax Credits and that this might be discouraging employers from recruiting people entitled to these Tax Credits. None of the employers interviewed in this study had encountered any major problems with the new system and felt it would be unlikely to affect their recruitment of ONE relevant groups.

Generally, the employers who had recruited people from ONE relevant groups had received very little information, guidance or support from the Jobcentre. Such information that was received was usually requested by the employer. Several employers also commented that they did not have the name of someone to call if they did require information or assistance of any kind.
The findings of this stage were again consistent with those of the main quantitative survey. Overall, most employers would be willing to take on people from ONE relevant groups again in future, if they were the most suitable applicant for the job. However, this did vary significantly between the groups, with employers being most likely to take on lone parents and, to a slightly lesser extent, the long-term unemployed, but significantly less likely to take on people with physical disabilities and mental health problems.

Most employers had few or no reservations about recruiting lone parents. They felt the problems of employing lone parents were no different to employing people with children more generally. Several employers pointed out that they did not know the people were lone parents when they recruited them. The main adjustment required was around working hours and this could usually be accommodated. However this group were more likely to have to leave promptly at the end of the day and to be less flexible about working overtime and this could sometimes cause problems.

Again employers had relatively few reservations about recruiting long-term unemployed people, if they were the right person for the job. Some employers did comment that their skills were more likely to be out of date, particularly if they had been out of work for a significant period of time and this was likely to make it more difficult for them to compete with other candidates who had not been out of work (for so long). However the most important requirement was for them to demonstrate to the employer that they wanted the job and to work. This would involve explaining why they had been out of work and how they had used this time. Only a few employers said they would be unlikely to take on long-term unemployed people again, mainly because they had encountered problems previously.

Although employers were less likely to recruit people with physical disabilities, their reasons for doing so were similar to other groups, namely that if they were the best person for the job it did not matter and they would make adjustments where necessary and not discriminate. Employers who had been particularly pleased with their recruits were keen to recruit more.

Employers' reservations about employing people with physical disabilities mainly centred on whether they would be physically capable of doing the work and not present a danger to themselves or others. Another concern was about their building not being suitable for disabled access or difficult to adjust. However these concerns also serve to highlight the very narrow definition of physical disability that employers have. People with hearing or speech disabilities might present no such problems.
Whilst most of those employers who had taken on people with mental health problems would do so again, few other employers would do so. The main concerns were about the nature of their problems and how they would present themselves in the workplace. In particular they were concerned about how they would integrate with other staff and interact with customers. Some employers also felt their workplace environment was too stressful for this group or the nature of the job was not suited to them, for example, because it involved working on their own or at night.

**Views of the new ideas**

Six of the ideas generated in the Creative Events were tested in the main quantitative survey to determine if they were of interest and relevance to employers and would impact on their likelihood to use Jobcentre-type services and/or recruit people from ONE relevant groups. It should be noted that we were testing idea concepts not fully developed models and that some of the ideas exist, at least to some extent, already. The results of the main quantitative survey showed that all six ideas were of interest to employers and would increase their likelihood to take on people from ONE relevant groups. The four ideas that were likely to have the greatest impact were examined further in this stage of the research. In particular we explored why employers felt the provision of these new services would affect their behaviour towards these groups and also discussed how these services could be implemented.

The four ideas explored in this stage of the research were as follows. The first of these ideas, the account manager, was aimed at encouraging employers to use a Jobcentre-type service. The other three were aimed more specifically at encouraging employers to take on people from ONE relevant groups:

- **Account manager** - All employers using the Jobcentre would have an account manager with specialist knowledge of their business sector.

- **More information on recruits** - Providing additional ‘softer’ information about potential recruits’ wider achievements and interests to demonstrate key attributes such as commitment, good timekeeping, etc.

- **Specialist advice on employing ONE relevant groups** - Providing more specialist advice and information on employing these groups including extra support available.

- **Specialist personal advisers** - Personal advisers specialising in assisting people with particular types of difficulty. They would provide support to both clients and employers during recruitment and for up to six months after recruitment.

The findings for each of these services are discussed in turn.
The main reason why employers felt that having an account manager would be of benefit to them and would encourage them to use a Jobcentre-type service (more) in future was that it would mean better matching of potential applicants to the vacancy, which would in turn make the recruitment process more efficient. There was also a strong preference for having a named person they could call and being able to deal with the same person all the time. This was not their current experience of Jobcentres. Most employers did not have the name of a person to contact and rarely dealt with the same person twice.

Few employers expressed any real concerns about this new service, but some were sceptical about whether such a service could be delivered by the Jobcentre, in particular real improvements in the matching process. Some also expressed concerns about the availability of the account managers and that they might be too pushy and intrusive. These concerns were likely to reflect their wider experiences of ‘being account managed’.

Employers’ views as to how this service could best be implemented were as follows:

- The account manager should be a small team of 2-3 people (the main contact and one or two others assisting), rather than a single person.
- Whilst most of the contact would be by telephone, fax and email, the account manager should visit the employer in person, shortly after the relationship has been established. It should then be agreed with the employer whether further face-to-face meetings are required on a regular basis (say every year or six months) or only if required.
- The account manager should also agree with employers whether they should adopt a proactive approach, and contact them if they have a client who may be suitable, even if there is no advertised vacancy, or not.
- Account managers could be based regionally or even nationally, particularly those servicing employers in smaller, more specialist sectors, but would need to liaise closely with colleagues based locally to keep abreast of local issues.
- Employers would be willing to provide feedback on recruits put forward for vacancies, but would prefer to do this informally over the telephone, rather than in writing, and only for those candidates interviewed.

Again employers’ interest in this new service reflected the fact that it would represent a significant improvement in the amount and type of information currently provided by Jobcentres on applicants. The main benefit would again be that it would improve the matching of applicants to vacancies, as both the jobcentre staff and employer would have a better idea of whether the candidate was suitable for the vacancy. Other benefits were that it would provide the employer with a better and more rounded impression of the recruit, particularly if the candidate had not worked before or did not have a full employment history, and help with...
the interview by giving the employer other subjects to talk about, which
might in turn overcome candidates’ nerves or shyness and give them a
potentially better opportunity to demonstrate their skills and ability to
perform the work required.

Employers’ concerns about this new service fell broadly into two areas.
Firstly it may disadvantage some recruits who did not have, or could not
effectively demonstrate, wider interests or achievements. Secondly they
were concerned about the quality of the information provided, in particular
that it would be honest and reliable and about the ability of Jobcentre
staff to obtain this type of information.

The additional information required for each of the ONE relevant groups,
reflected concerns employers had about recruiting these people and were
as follows:

- Lone parents – childcare information.
- Long-term unemployed people – the reason(s) why they had been
  unemployed for this length of time and how they had used the time.
- People with physical disabilities – demonstrate that the person is capable
  of performing the job they are applying for and any limitations,
  adjustments or special equipment required.
- People with mental health problems – demonstrate that the person is
  capable of performing the job they are applying for and the nature of
  their problems and how they might present themselves.

This additional information should be included in the application form
in the form of a short biography and/or standardised question and answer
format.

This service would make employers more willing and confident about
taking on people from ONE relevant groups as it would make them
much better informed about the nature of their problems and how it
might impact on their ability to undertake the work. It would also assist
them in determining what adjustments, if any, were required, how to
deal with any general problems that arose and who to turn to if they
required more specific advice or assistance. Provision of this kind of
information could also have the wider benefit of raising awareness of
these groups and the difficulties they faced in obtaining employment.

Few employers felt there were any significant drawbacks to the provision
of this type of information. The only real concern that was expressed was
again that it might disadvantage some clients, particularly those whose
disability was not severe, by suggesting the problems were greater than
they were.
The information and support employers wanted for each group was as follows:

- **Lone parents:**
  - Local childcare provision;
  - Benefits and financial assistance available.

- **Long-term unemployed people:**
  - Guidance on helping recruits adjust (back) into work;
  - Information on training available to refocus or update their skills and any financial assistance available for this training.

- **People with physical disabilities and mental health problems:**
  - Information on the most common conditions and how they might present themselves;
  - Types of work which people with these types of problem could and could not do;
  - For the types of work they could do, what limitations were there or what adjustments would be required;
  - Financial and other assistance available;
  - Guidance for staff working with them on the basic ‘do's and don’ts’ and ‘what to do if...’

Employers felt it would be better to provide separate guides for each group, as one guide was likely to be too general to be of value.

Employers would also welcome a general guide on interviewing candidates from all these groups and a guide to common problems and possible solutions for each group.

Employers felt this information could best be provided in booklet form, although some felt it should also be available on a website. It should be sent to employers as part of the marketing effort to raise awareness and employment opportunities for these groups. A national telephone helpline would also be welcome to respond to more specific queries.

Employers felt this new service would be of benefit to both themselves and the recruits. The main benefit to the employer was that the Personal Adviser could provide more advice and information to assist them at both the recruitment stage and thereafter to help the recruit settle in and reduce the likelihood of the recruit leaving at an early stage. They also felt it would give recruits more confidence as they would know there was someone there to help them if there were problems.

Employers had significant concerns about the ability of a Jobcentre-type service to effectively deliver this level of support. They recognised the resources that would be required and questioned whether advisers could reasonably be expected to have sufficient knowledge of both the individual and the business to be of real benefit. Their other main concern was that the personal adviser might undermine the role of the line manager.
Employers’ views as to how this new service should be implemented included:

- In-work support should be provided for both the employer and recruit for up to six months.
- Both parties should be able to contact the Personal Adviser directly without informing the other party first. The Personal Adviser would need to use their discretion in determining whether to inform the employer of issues raised by the recruit in order not to undermine the role of the line manager.
- The personal adviser could also assist the employer, if required, in identifying any additional or specific training required by the recruit.

**Conclusions**

The results of this follow-up study strongly support the findings of the main quantitative survey. The main qualitative survey found that the majority of employers were willing, at least in principle, to take on (more) people from ONE relevant groups. Whilst it must be remembered that all the employers interviewed in this qualitative stage of the research had taken on at least one person from ONE relevant groups, they showed a strong willingness to take on more recruits in the future. This reflected their generally high level of satisfaction with those recruits taken on, both in terms of the way they have performed in their work and integrated into the business.

Whilst people from ONE relevant groups had mainly been recruited into low or unskilled manual and clerical jobs, a few had obtained higher skilled work, which reflected their abilities. However, most had been recruited into permanent positions rather than casual work. In most cases the jobs were also full-time positions. Lone parents were the main group working part-time, reflecting their particular needs and circumstances.

Most recruits went through the employers’ usual recruitment process, again supporting the main survey findings that the recruitment of people from these groups is a rational business decision and not one based on charity or favour. People from these groups have been, and will only be, recruited if they are capable of performing the work. Whilst employers have made, and are willing to make, adjustments to accommodate the particular needs of these groups such as to working hours and providing additional support and training, few are willing to change the job specification.

Employers have encountered no major problems in administering Working Families’ and Disabled Person’s Tax Credits and this has not acted as a disincentive to employing people from these groups.
The more detailed discussion of some of the new ideas tested in the main quantitative survey provided further evidence that employers would welcome these new services and that they would increase their willingness to take on people from ONE relevant groups. The new ideas were seen to offer real benefits to both the employer and ONE client. For employers they would improve the quality of service they receive from a Jobcentre-type service, including better matching of clients to the job vacancies and additional information and support to assist the employer in integrating the individual more quickly and smoothly into their organisation. For ONE clients they would improve their potential to get jobs and retain them. They would help them to obtain work by helping to minimise the barriers (from the employers' perspective) to taking them on, which are largely due to a lack of knowledge and understanding of the nature of their problems and the impact that this would have on their ability to undertake the job. They would help them to retain these jobs by providing additional support for both them and the employers during the early stages.

There are a number of implications of offering these new services that the Department will need to take into account in determining whether to further develop these ideas:

- There will be a significant training requirement for staff if they are to deliver these services effectively.
- Personal Advisers and account managers working with employers will need to be sensitive to their existing systems and practices.
- As with any programme of this nature, clients involved in the programme will be labelled as such. Lone parents (for whom employers feel there are few, if any, barriers to obtaining work) and clients with less severe physical and mental health problems therefore risk being disadvantaged, as the extra support and assistance they receive might suggest to employers that their disability or problem is more severe than it is.
- Provision of these new services will have significant resource implications. The services that are most resource intensive are the account manager and specialist Personal Adviser. If resources are limited, we recommend these be focused on providing just one or two of these new services and/or for particular groups of employers or ONE relevant groups. If resources are to be focused on particular ONE relevant groups, we recommend they be directed towards people with physical disabilities and mental health problems, as they experience greatest difficulty in obtaining work. From the employers' perspective, lone parents require no extra support.

As well as the need to address the foregoing points it will also be necessary to take an overall view of how this proposed type of service would sit alongside any future model developed to support Jobcentre Plus.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The ONE service

The ONE service was set up by the Department of Social Security (DSS), the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), the Benefits Agency (BA) and the Employment Service. (DSS and the employment part of DfEE are now known as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)). ONE is a new way of delivering social security benefits to people of working age. It brings together the Employment Service, Benefits Agency and Local Authorities to provide a single point of entry to the benefits system and to place work, and the steps required to facilitate a return to the labour market, at the centre of the claim making process. The aim of ONE is to increase economic activity, encourage people (back) into work where possible and to provide claimants with a more integrated service that is tailored to their personal circumstances.

More specifically the objectives of ONE are to:

• put more benefit recipients in touch with the labour market through the intervention of their Personal Adviser;
• increase sustainable levels of employment by getting more benefit recipients into work;
• ensure that more clients experience an effective, efficient service that is tailored to their personal needs;
• change the culture of the benefits system and the general public towards independence and work rather than payments and financial dependence.

The ONE service was introduced between June and November 1999 in 12 pilot areas in Great Britain. Three different service models are being trialled: a Basic Model, a Call Centre Model and a Private/Voluntary Sector Model.

1.2 The ONE evaluation

A major programme of research to evaluate ONE was set up by the Department of Social Security on behalf of itself, the Department for Education and Employment, the Benefits Agency and the Employment Service.

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3 Under the Basic Model the Employment Service, Benefits Agency and Local Authorities work together to provide a work-focused integrated claim-taking service to all those making claims to benefit in the area. Under the Call Centre Model similar arrangements apply but clients are encouraged to make initial contact with the service by telephone, testing the latest call centre technology. Under the PVS Model the private and voluntary sector organisations work with and manage the other agencies in developing innovative and flexible ways of delivering a work-focused and integrated service.
The main aims of the evaluation were to assess:

- the feasibility of delivering ONE in the different models;
- the effectiveness of the different models in improving the quantity and quality of labour market participation.

The project has involved research amongst clients, staff and employers, operational research, cost-benefit analyses and a database of administrative records and statistics.

IFF Research Ltd was commissioned to undertake the research amongst employers. The main objective of this work was to examine how we can secure employers’ commitment to help a wider range of people with limited capacity to get jobs. It has not sought to evaluate ONE from the employers’ perspective, but to help inform broader policy development on engaging employers further in tackling these issues.

The research focused on three groups, henceforth referred to as ONE relevant groups:

- Lone parents – single parents who are entering or returning to the workforce after a period looking after their children;
- Long term unemployed – people who have been unemployed for at least 12 months;
- People with physical disabilities or mental health problems.

More specifically, the research:

- examined employers’ attitudes towards and recruitment behaviour in respect of these groups;
- identified ways to help minimise the perceived ‘risks’ of employing these groups;
- identified ways to encourage employers to use the ONE service.

The research had three component parts:

- Creative Events;
- Main quantitative survey;
- Qualitative research.

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4 These groups were not defined strictly in terms of benefit status, but were chosen to represent some of the key barriers faced by ONE claimants.

5 The period of 12 months was used for research purposes only. The DfES definition of long-term unemployed is people unemployed for six months or more. Six months was not always viewed by employers as a significant period of time, so the definition was extended to 12 months.
1.5 Creative Events

The main purpose of the Creative Events was to identify new and more effective ways of encouraging employers to take on people from groups which find it more difficult to obtain work. Given that Jobcentres are a key channel to the labour market for these groups, this work also examined ways of encouraging employers to use the ONE service (more) when recruiting.

Two Creative Events were conducted. The Creative Events used structured brainstorming and lateral thinking techniques to help participants think more broadly and creatively about the issues. Each event lasted a day and involved about 20 people from a variety of different but relevant backgrounds. Participants included small-medium sized employers, ONE staff, marketing consultants, recruitment agencies, charities/special needs advisers and DWP staff involved in ONE policy and evaluation.

1.6 Main quantitative survey

The main quantitative survey sought to examine employers’ attitudes and recruitment behaviour in respect of people from ONE relevant groups and to assess their views of six new ideas generated from the Creative Events and whether they would have any impact on their likelihood to use the Jobcentre and/or recruit people from ONE relevant groups in future.

The survey consisted of 1201 telephone interviews with employers who employed five or more staff and had recruited in the last three years. This was done to concentrate interviewing resources on the key target market, ie employers with some recruitment activity.

Interviews were conducted in eight of the pilot areas; two operating the Basic Model, two operating the Call Centre Model and the four areas being run by private/voluntary organisations. The eight areas were selected to cover each of the model types, areas with higher and lower unemployment levels and urban and rural characteristics. In the event no significant differences by model type were found. This was to be expected as ONE was not set up to offer a significantly different service to employers.

The results of the main quantitative survey are reported in an earlier report.\(^6\)

1.7 Qualitative research

The third, and final, stage of this work was a small qualitative study. It involved follow-up interviews with a small sample of employers (32) who had recruited people from ONE relevant groups in the last year.

The main purpose of this element of the project was to explore, in more detail, employers’ experiences of recruiting and integrating people from ONE relevant groups into their workforce and their views of some of the new ideas tested in the main quantitative survey. The report therefore comments on the main themes and issues arising from these discussions, rather than presenting a statistical analysis of the findings.

Interviews were conducted face to face. Employers selected for interview at this stage had all:

- recruited people from ONE relevant groups in the last 12 months;
- recruited through the Jobcentre in the last 12 months; and
- said that they were likely to recruit people from ONE relevant groups again in the future.

Half the interviews were conducted with employers who had recruited people with physical disabilities and/or mental health problems, as this was the group that, the main quantitative survey had shown, employers were least willing to take on. We also over-sampled large employers (employers with 100+ employees), as they were the group who were more likely to take on people with physical disabilities and mental health problems and to generally have more experience of recruiting people from ONE relevant groups as they had taken on larger numbers.

Fieldwork was conducted between 28 February and 16 March 2001.

More detailed information about the survey methodology and profile of the employers interviewed are contained in the appendix. A copy of the topic guide is also appended.

1.8 Structure of the report

This report covers the findings of the qualitative research. Some results from the main quantitative survey are also included to help set the qualitative findings in context. These findings are presented in the following chapters. Chapter 2 examines employers’ experiences of recruiting and integrating people from ONE relevant groups into their workforce. Chapter 3 examines employers’ views of four of the new ideas tested in the main quantitative survey and how these concepts might be developed. The final chapter draws together our overall conclusions from the research and makes some recommendations about how the new idea concepts could be further developed and taken forward.
1.9 Conventions used

In this report we refer to the different sizes and types of employers as follows:

- Small employers - 5-24 employees;
- Medium sized employers - 25-99 employees;
- Large employers - 100+ employees;
- Largest employers - 200+ employees;
- Production - covers employers involved in manufacturing and construction;
- Retail distribution and leisure - cover employers involved in retail distribution (shops), hotels, restaurants, public houses and other catering establishments, businesses providing entertainment services such as theatres and cinemas and sports clubs and leisure centres;
- Other commercial sector - all other private sector employers including those involved in wholesale distribution, communication and transport and finance and business services;
- Public sector - including health, education and public administration.
This chapter examines employers’ experiences of recruiting people from ONE relevant groups. The chapter begins by describing the type of recruits taken on and the nature of the work they obtained, changes made to accommodate them and the training and support provided. We then discuss employers’ satisfaction with their job performance and likelihood to recruit people from ONE relevant groups again in future. This chapter also briefly examines whether employers had encountered any problems in administering Working Families’ and Disabled Person’s Tax Credit and the impact of this, if any, on future recruitment of people from these groups.

2.1 Nature of recruits

During interviews conducted, employers were asked to talk about up to two of their recent recruits from ONE relevant groups. People with mental health problems were prioritised, followed by those with physical disabilities, then lone parents and finally long-term unemployed people7. In total, discussions took place about six recruits who had mental health or learning difficulties8, 19 recruits with physical disabilities, 18 lone parents and 13 long-term unemployed people.

All of the lone parents recruited were female and aged between 25 and 44. Half of the recruits had one child whilst the others had two or three children. The majority of lone parents were returning to work after a period of looking after their children rather than entering work for the first time. This period of time out of work varied from a few months to several years.

Recruits who had been unemployed for over a year were of mixed age and sex, with people in their early 20s through to their late 50s. The majority were returning to work after a period of between one and seven years.

The nature and extent of physical disabilities varied considerably from those with slight hearing difficulties to someone with multiple sclerosis. Several recruits who were discussed were wheelchair bound, two had epilepsy and a further two had speech impediments. Other disabilities included cerebral palsy, diabetes, someone with a heart problem and someone who was blind. Again, both sexes and a range of ages were represented.

7 More detailed information about the survey methodology is contained in the appendix.

8 Learning difficulties such as Downs Syndrome and Dyslexia were perceived by employers as being mental health problems and therefore, for the purpose of this report, are included.
Of the six recruits with mental health problems or learning difficulties, two were schizophrenic, two were dyslexic, one had depression and one had Downs Syndrome.

2.2 Nature of work obtained

Work obtained by the ONE relevant groups was mainly of a manual nature as well as some office/clerical work.

Manual jobs included porters, cleaners, kitchen staff, waitresses, warehouse and assembly line workers, operatives, drivers and checkout cashiers. Office/clerical jobs included secretaries, administrative assistants, personal assistants and receptionists.

Few of the ONE relevant recruits were recruited to managerial or other higher-status positions. Examples included one lone parent who was recruited as Fraud Investigation manager, another as a lecturer and someone with a physical disability was recruited as merchandiser/buyer for a large retail chain.

However, nearly all of the recruits were employed in permanent positions (50/56) and the majority were also in full-time work. The main exception to this were lone parents who were more likely to be in part-time work due to having additional family responsibilities and subsequent pressures on available time to work.

2.3 Recruitment process

In the main quantitative survey 59 per cent of those employers who had recruited people from ONE relevant groups had recruited through the Jobcentre. Advertisements and word of mouth were the other main recruitment channels. This pattern is mirrored in this stage of the research with the Jobcentre again the most popular recruitment channel.

Employers were also asked at this stage whether the recruitment process was any different to recruiting generally through the Jobcentre. The general consensus was that there was no difference at all with some employers commenting on how the Jobcentre has a ‘standard procedure’ for everyone. The process therefore did not take any longer and there were no additional dealings with Jobcentre staff. Some employers commented on how they just get sent a list of names and therefore often do not know if the recruits are from such ONE relevant groups or not anyhow.

2.4 Changes to accommodate needs of ONE relevant groups

2.4.1 Changes in working hours

In the mainstage survey, 60 per cent of those who had recruited ONE relevant groups had made adjustments to either the establishment or to the working arrangements so as to accommodate their needs. The main types of adjustment described at this stage were those made to working hours, such as making them more flexible (35 per cent), changing hours from full-time to part-time (19 per cent) or job-sharing (13 per cent).

A similar pattern was found at this stage with many employers having
made adjustments to their establishments or working practices. Changes to working hours again was the most common adjustment. This was particularly the case for the lone parents that had been recruited with several employers describing how they changed the hours to suit the lone parent.

"Her hours are geared around what she can do. We can work round through using shifts for example"

"We adapted the hours to suit her. She works from 10am to 2pm from Monday to Friday, which are the only hours she can work. Normally we would expect part-timers to do ‘doses’ (until end of business at approximately 12pm) or full-timers to do fully flexible hours on a rota which means the company decides when they work. However, working 10am to 2pm fits in quite well as it is our peak time"

(medium distribution employer)

"The company has very strict hours on a flow-line. To accommodate that we placed her in an a department where there was more flexibility for hours where she could leave at 4pm rather than 5pm"

(large production employer)

Increased ‘flexibility’ was again the behaviour or attitude that employers recognised as being key. This was demonstrated in a variety of ways, for example letting the recruit go to lunch later, fitting around them if their child is sick or, indeed, actually letting them leave on time.

"She receives flexibility from the company. The company fit in around her if she occasionally has to collect her child if sick or take her to medical appointments. There is always someone to cover for her and take her calls if she has to collect her child. She is allowed to take her lunch break at 3pm so that she can collect her child from school and take her to the child-minder."

(small distribution employer)

"We were as flexible as we could be so that if she needed to go early for any reason, for example if her child was sick, she could. Also we were flexible on short notice holidays which the company is generally not that flexible about. She also had to always leave on time which meant that the other staff had to be able to handle anything that might arise when she was not there"

(large production employer)
One employer clearly recognised that giving lone parents this flexibility is beneficial to the employer as well as the recruit:

“She says that this flexibility is something she used not to get from previous jobs and she thinks it is rare and has made her more loyal to the company”
(small distribution employer)

Although changes in working hours are nearly all associated with lone parent recruits there were a couple of other isolated examples of changes made for other ONE relevant groups. The first of these was to increase the hours worked by a long-term unemployed recruit so that the New Deal could be taken advantage of:

“We increased his hours from 12 to 20 so that we could take advantage of the New Deal and he could earn more money and we would be paying less. Although he was taken on as a leaflet distributor we gave him portering duties as well to make up his hours so that he could go on New Deal”
(large distribution employer)

One person with diabetes was allowed additional flexibility as a result of her condition.

“We gave her flexibility with meal times and breaks. She is allowed additional ‘food breaks’ because she is diabetic”
(medium public sector employer)

About half of employers who had recruited people with a physical disability had made changes to physical building or workplace or had purchased special equipment for the recruit. This was determined by both the nature of disability involved and size of employer, with the larger employer tending to be able to do more. Some employers had not had to make any changes for the ONE relevant recruit because a lot of effort had been made previously with facilities such as ramps and lifts for those in wheelchairs or fire-alarms that flash rather than ring for those who are deaf.

The most common types of changes made were small but very valuable adjustments to the workplace and workstation such as adding head rests onto chairs, adapting desks for wheelchair use or simply altering the work position so that the recruit has to walk less far:

“We allow her to work on an end till which is near to the fries and amenities so that she does not have so far to walk. She finds walking at a ‘pacey’ speed difficult”
(medium distribution employer)

Other changes mentioned included installing a lift in the block where the person with a physical disability worked, building a disabled toilet, allowing recruits to park closer to work so they do not have to walk so far and purchasing mini-coms so the hard of hearing can answer the phones.
Several of the larger employers commented on how their Health and Safety or Occupational Health Unit came round and inspected the workplace to see how things could be improved for everyone, particularly for those with physical disabilities.

“...had to adapt her desk so that it was the right height for her wheelchair. Health and Safety did a Risk Assessment with her and found quite a few areas and situations that she cannot manage.”

(large public sector employer)

### 2.4.3. Changes to job specification

In the main quantitative survey it was found that very few employers (eight per cent) had actually made changes to the job specification when employing people from ONE relevant groups. This was reflected in the qualitative stage with only a couple of cases where changes were made. The first of these involved changing the job to one not involving computers for a long-term unemployed recruit:

“...had to change her job to one which did not involve computers. She had trouble using the computers as she had not worked on them before ... she was becoming quite stressed whilst trying to work on them but is much happier now”

(large public sector employer)

Another change involved a recruit who had epilepsy and also applied to one of the recruits with schizophrenia:

“...main problem is that he can’t cope with pressure. He has behavioural outbursts. We make other staff aware of his problems and try to find a role where he is shielded from dealing with customers”

(large public sector employer)

A final change that was commented on by employers was that of having to change the attitude and behaviour of other staff members towards certain ONE relevant recruits.

“...had to change in attitude by other staff members towards her disability. They tended to tease her about her limp and we have had to talk to them and her about this”

(medium distribution employer)

This area will be explored in some more detail when we look at how recruits interact with other staff.

### 2.4.4. Changes in attitude of other staff members

In the main quantitative survey 24 per cent of employers who had recruited ONE relevant groups had given them additional or different training. At an overall level the findings from this stage of the research show a similar pattern. However if one looks at the four groups separately there are distinct differences between the ONE relevant group types.

### 2.5 Training and support given to ONE Relevant groups
The training and support that the lone parents received was no different to that received by everyone else.

Some of the long-term unemployed recruits had been given additional training and support. Additional training was particularly required in improving recruits' information technology and computer skills which had deteriorated in the period that they had been out of work (if they had any such skills in the first instance).

"We took him on as a trainee with the aim that he would become a fully trained baker. He has fitted in but needs extra coaching and direction, more than most recruits"
(large distribution employer)

"It took time to train her up on the computer which she had not used before. I worked solidly with her for two days. The training only differed in that most people have some computer knowledge and I would only need to show them where things are on the system"
(small distribution employer)

Additional support was also needed for some of the long-term unemployed recruits because of their lack of confidence, again a result of being out of work.

"She was rather nervous and apprehensive as she had been out of work for some time. She reports to a supervisor and another colleague for extra IT training and support in general"
(medium distribution employer)

"We put him on an NVQ course as we thought this would aid his confidence"
(large production employer)

Some recruits with physical disabilities required additional and different training and support. Employers were specifically asked how this differed from that normally provided although no details were taken as to what the 'normal' training and support involved. For some of those that were deaf, training needed to be organised in one-to-one or smaller group sessions so as to aid lip-reading. The recruit who was blind also needed training to be one-to-one as well as more detailed and intensive. For the two recruits with speech impediments, it required material to be written down rather than spoken and thus the training sessions were also longer. In a couple of cases some additional help was received from support groups.
A good example of the additional and different training (and the changes needed to accommodate requirements) that employers can give to their recruits came from an employer in the retail distribution sector who had recruited someone with severe hearing difficulties to work on the checkouts.

"First of all we ensured she was positioned in such a way that she could contact her supervisor very easily. Her name badge indicates that she has hearing problems. This is quite discreet and she is quite happy to wear it. She had some problems with customers, but she is determined not to let it beat her. Some customers can be quite rude as her speech is affected but she is excellent at lip reading. When teaching her on the tills, we had a very small training session, one trainer to three people, and the trainer was made fully aware of her disability. In her store interview we made sure we had good facial contact with her and I slowed my speech so that she could lip read. She had her induction with everyone else, and I made sure if I had to present something to the room that I was fully visible to her. I made sure at the end that she had understood everything and had no queries or problems. She was a little bit apprehensive when she first went down to the check-out but she has been very successful and loves the job. We initially started her on a part-time contract, but now she is doing almost full-time hours."

The ONE relevant group that most required additional and different support and training were those with mental health problems or learning difficulties with half of those discussed needing some extra support. This ranged from a recruit with dyslexia requiring additional skills training to help build up confidence, a shadow person required to write down everything at training, or extra support for a recruit with Downs Syndrome from the home that he came from.⁹

2.6 Job performance

Overall, most employers were happy with the ONE relevant groups that they had employed with three-quarters of employers reporting no problems. This was consistent with the 75 per cent of those satisfied with ONE relevant recruits in the mainstage quantitative survey.

Indeed several of the recruits that were taken on were described in an extremely positive light whether it be excelling in the work that they did, earning the respect of others or putting in an abundance of effort.

⁹ We acknowledge that these three examples are from recruits with "learning difficulties" as opposed to mental health problems. In terms of support provided, those recruits with strictly "mental health" problems did not actually require additional or different training. However the fact that these have been grouped together illustrates how little employers know about mental health problems, what they are and how they present themselves.
“Exceptional – would do anything you asked of her to the best of her ability which was of a high standard. She had studied for a degree in Business Studies prior to re-entering the work market and had also studied and researched how she would manage being a lone parent returning to the workplace. I wish everybody were like that. She has been promoted from typing to estimating”
(large production employer)

“Brilliant performance ... because she is older than the other staff they tend to respect her. It has a very positive effect in that she has a mature outlook to her work and this rubs off on the other staff. Lone parents often need the money and they help teach younger staff the value of money which means I get better work out of them”
(medium distribution employer)

“Excellent – a key member of staff. He performs better than others in that he is always willing to do more and is not lazy in any of his tasks”
(medium distribution employer)

The problems that had occurred were focused around four main themes, namely absenteeism and time off, lack of confidence, lack of motivation and speed of work.

Poor attendance was the most common of these complaints with some employers reporting this as a reason for dissatisfaction, mainly amongst those with physical disabilities but also isolated examples amongst lone parents and long-term unemployed people.

“Here is always the problem of having time off for young children”
(large public sector employer)

“The only problem is that she has continual absences ... mainly due to her high blood pressure which may be linked to her disability”
(medium distribution employer)

As examined a little earlier, some of the long-term unemployed recruits had a few problems with a lack of confidence and nerves, which was centred on the whole issue of getting back into working life. However these were minor problems and were all overcome through additional support.

“She needed extra support and encouragement in order to get her back into ‘work mode’”
(medium distribution employer)
Problems with lack of motivation and speed of work were less common. Two employers felt recruits they had taken on lacked motivation. These were both long-term unemployed people. One of these was very problematic and left the employer’s confidence in recruiting from this one relevant group severely dented:

“...At the interview his attitude was not good but I offered him the job to get him back in the system. He deliberately did not do as you asked him to do. He walked out halfway through a shift and no-one knows why. His work was always below average. He complained he was bored and said he had done his time and would go back to the bottom of the pile. I feel this is fairly typical of the long-term unemployed I have taken on. Of the five taken on in the last year, two did not manage a week and another left after just under a month. They are running the system as they do not get hassled once they have tried a job”

(medium production employer)

Speed of work was a (minor) complaint principally laid out at some of those with physical disabilities. However, only in one case was it a real problem and in others the problem lay more in the recruit getting frustrated as opposed to the employer being particularly unhappy:

“...He does really well ... He just gets frustrated sometimes and a bit angry when he is working on the replenishment side as he cannot work as quickly as others. He has trouble with numbers so we could not put him into stock management i.e. rotating the stock on the shelves according to sell-by date.”

(large distribution employer)

2.7 Interaction with other staff

The interaction of one relevant groups with other staff was largely positive. The only complaint amongst all of the lone parents and long-term unemployed people was the long-term unemployed recruit described above (Section 2.6).

The problems that did occur concerned those with physical disabilities and mental health problems and were focused around teasing/tension with other staff, communication problems and sudden mood changes.

It was mentioned earlier that one of the changes that was needed to accommodate one relevant recruits in the workplace was a change in the attitude and behaviour of other staff members towards certain one relevant recruits. Although certainly not widespread, some employers did describe a certain amount of teasing (or at least perceived teasing) of those with physical disabilities and mental health problems which was resulting in unnecessary tensions in the workplace.
“He is bad tempered and shouts and swears to himself. This happens when he is busy and hot. The other staff ‘wind him up’ and make him worse. Especially the younger ones who see him as ‘just a kitchen porter’ and do not treat him with respect.”  
(Recruit with slight schizophrenia) (medium distribution employer)

“She tends to think people are talking about her, which they weren’t and this creates problems with the other staff. The staff tend to forget that she is deaf. Every few months she gets ‘a bee in her bonnet’ and can lash out. We had to ask her husband to come in and discuss things with her and sort it out and calm her down.”  
(large production employer)

“We have managed to get this (the teasing) down to a minimum by calling her into the office and having a word with her to explain that it is ‘just people being people’. The attitude of the staff has had to change as well. They have had to become more accepting”  
(Rcruit with limp) (medium distribution employer)

There were a few communication problems with recruits who were blind, deaf or who had speech impediments. The blind recruit found it difficult to integrate with his fellow workers although he will be given a named contact soon which should help (mentor type system). With those who are deaf and/ or speech impaired, the communication problems were mostly overcome through a combination of sign language, lip reading (thus necessitating the need to speak clearly and slowly) and the use of pen and paper. These were not, however, deemed major barriers to employment by any of the employers spoken to.

A couple of employers experienced problems with recruits who had sudden mood changes which resulted in unacceptable behaviour towards other staff or customers. One recruit with slight schizophrenia had difficulty interacting with other members of staff as described earlier and one recruit with epilepsy was kept away from customers.

Although those recruits with physical disabilities or mental health problems were most likely to have problems interacting with other staff members, they also provided the most examples at the other end of the spectrum in how well they interacted with, and even inspired, others (be it staff or customers).

“He does really well. He is very friendly and always chatting to the customers. He interacts well with staff as well”  
(large distribution employer)
"I heard that he was brilliant and had excellent presentation skills and a very positive attitude which inspired the students.

(Rcruit with physical disability - one arm and leg) (large public sector employer)

There has been some concern expressed that the administrative burden of operating tax credits may be too great and that it might have been acting as a disincentive for employers to recruit people for whom tax credits are applicable. Therefore, this stage of the research provided a valuable opportunity to explore whether employers had encountered any problems in administering Working Families’ or Disabled Person’s Tax Credit or any other benefits ONE relevant recruits are entitled to.

None of the employers spoken to had encountered major problems in administering the tax credits and it certainly would be unlikely to affect recruitment in any way.

One employer commented that the documentation can be a problem in terms of getting all the details together but claimed it would not have any negative impact on their likelihood to recruit ONE relevant groups.

Another employer recognised that there might be potential problems in the time lapse in reclaiming it from the government as well as the additional administrative costs.

“We do not have any problems at the moment as we only have one person on it. There might be a negative impact in the future if we take on too many people who have this benefit because there is a lapse in reclaiming it from the government. Also, there is the extra time in administering it and the cost to us of that extra time.”

(medium distribution employer)

A slightly different problem with the Working Families’ Tax Credit that one employer commented on was that of overtime, whether this be when production needs to be suddenly increased or at times like Christmas. The employer claimed that those on the tax credit were reluctant to work an extra hour a day as it would be knocked off the Working Families’ Tax Credit.

In general, those employers who had recruited ONE relevant groups through the Jobcentre received very little information, guidance or support.

At one extreme it has been argued by the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux (NACAB) that workers were actually being sacked by firms trying to avoid the trouble of administering the Working Families’ Tax Credit.
The guidance that had been received was largely at the employers’ request rather than being supplied proactively.

Three employers mentioned that they had received advice about the New Deal from the Jobcentre with one being told how the system benefited both themselves as an employer as well as the recruit.

“After he had started someone from the Jobcentre explained that he qualified under New Deal and that this would benefit both him and us. I then spoke to the recruit who agreed to increase his hours. After a couple more conversations with the Jobcentre he joined New Deal. I was quite happy with this service”

(large distribution employer)

One employer spoke of how, although the guidance they had received was at their request, they had still managed to build up a good relationship. In this case they had been provided with information on grants for long-term unemployed people.

“The guidance we receive from the Jobcentre is at our request and the most recent contact we have had was eight weeks ago. A good link with them has been established and I would like to think it would continue. We had one case where we wanted information on how best to get an applicant through the recruitment process and they advised us on grants available for introducing people back to work. It is not something we know about unless we ask”

(large distribution employer)

Another employer had been invited to a disability centre which was talked about in a very positive light.

“I was invited to a day at a disability centre in Leeds. They gave a talk and showed us equipment such as amazing Braille computers. It all helped because I could then help an employee with similar problems”

(large distribution employer)

Although a few employers talked of how they had “built a better relationship” with the Jobcentre, the majority described how the Jobcentre had given them no help or support in recruiting ONE relevant groups into the workforce either at recruitment stage or since then. For some employers this was in the guise of a genuine complaint about the (lack of) Jobcentre “service”. For others this was fuelled by negative experiences of previous candidates sent by the Jobcentre.

“We never get any advice even though I have phoned them. I get people from the Jobcentre who are not interested in working and it’s a waste of time. They come so they do not get their benefit stopped”

(medium production employer)
Several employers also commented on how they lacked a central contact at the jobcentre, someone who they could call when they had a particular issue or problem to sort out. One employer, prior to the later discussion about new ideas spontaneously suggested the need for an “Account Manager”.

Disability Employment Advisors (DEAs) were largely not involved in the recruitment of people with physical disabilities. Only one case was recorded where they were involved and this was on the employer’s behalf. The DEA did a risk assessment and determined what adjustments were necessary for the disabled recruit. The employer found the assistance helpful.

“I contacted their Disability Adviser and she came in and did a risk assessment on what we were doing and what she felt they (the disabled recruits) were capable of doing. One of the ladies requested a stool. It was definitely helpful”

(large distribution employer)

The number of employers likely to recruit ONE relevant groups in the future again reflected the findings of the main quantitative survey. In the quantitative survey, 88 per cent of employers said they were likely to take on lone parents in the next 2-3 years, 78 per cent long-term unemployed, 62 per cent those with physical disabilities and 37 per cent those with mental health problems.

Most employers spoken to in this qualitative stage stated that they would recruit lone parents in the future without any reservations. The most common reason given was that if they were the right person for the job then it did not matter that they were lone parents returning from a period of time out of work. Several employers commented on how their needs were no different to others and some pointed out that they did not actually know that they were lone parents when they were recruited.

“I do not see that they are any different to anyone else. As long as they do their job and are committed then everything’s fine”

(large distribution employer)

In terms of the adjustments that would have to be made, largely with respect to being more flexible, most employers stated that they would make them as and when necessary with little fuss or subsequent impact.

“I am a lone parent myself. My capabilities are as good as anyone else, if not better. There is good flexibility in my working hours and I also do a lot of work from home. The company are very understanding and if other lone parents were recruited they would also have this flexibility”

(medium distribution employer)
“In terms of willingness to take on people we do operate a ‘flexi’ system and quite a relaxed management style to meet people’s personal needs. The needs of a lone parent would not cause the authority any particular concerns. We have child care difficulties across the board and generally speaking we have been able to come to arrangements of how that can be facilitated in terms of people taking unpaid leave, different ways of working, working from home etc. It is not something we are resistant to”

(largest public sector employer)

As demonstrated in the example above, a couple of employers were lone parents themselves and there was a feeling amongst some that lone parents should be given a chance as they have been treated badly as a group in the past by employers, the media and the government.

Several employers were also keen to point out that they could not, and would not, discriminate against lone parents in any way.

Positive features of being a lone parent were also mentioned as reasons for recruiting this group in the future. Their maturity and level of commitment were the most common mentions.

Only two employers held reservations about employing lone parents, both for different reasons. One felt that the additional flexibility that was needed if recruiting this group was sometimes unfair on other staff.

“However too much flexibility would not be fair on the other staff. For example, we work ‘continental shifts’ for many of our jobs, which includes weekend shifts. It would not be fair to allow a lone parent to take weekends off and not the others”

(large production employer)

Another employer would only take on a lone parent if they knew that the child care provision was good.

2.10.2. Long-term unemployed people

Again, as with lone parents, the most common reason to take on long-term unemployed recruits was that if they were the right person for the job then it did not matter that they had been out of work for some time. Several employers noted that they had had no problems in the past so there was no reason to assume differently in the future. The importance of not discriminating was another core theme.

One employer delved into the whole issue of the reasons behind being unemployed and felt that there were often very good reasons for being out of work for a lengthy period and thus one cannot pre-judge people on this basis.
"I would take them on because I have been long-term unemployed myself and there have been some people in my family who have been long-term unemployed and I know there are sometimes good reasons for this. As long as the recruit does not have any criminal convictions I really believe everybody deserves a chance"

(small distribution employer)

Although generally most employers stated they would recruit long-term unemployed people in the future, a few more reservations were held than with the lone parent group. The most frequent of these came in the form of “it depends on the individual”.

Several employers pointed out that potential recruits would have to be able to show signs of activity whilst they had been out of work and one employer stressed that they would be competing against people with experience so it can be particularly difficult.

“The job market is very competitive and we have good responses to our advertising. People who have up-to-date and recent experience make it more difficult for these people to compete. We approach recruitment on the basis of equal opportunities and we have scoring systems, personal specifications and so on. So if someone who has been out of work is faced with someone who has more relevant experience it makes it very difficult”

(largest public sector employer)

For one employer the issue of skills was important as she noted that the majority of her openings were for specialists who were unlikely to be out of work.

“We rarely see the long-term unemployed. They would need to be up-skilled before applying”

(large public sector employer)

Only four employers would probably not take on long-term unemployed people in the future. Three of these had had bad experiences in the past and one had a very single-minded negative attitude to anyone who was unemployed.

“If they have been unemployed for over 12 months and have been signing on for unemployment benefit it means they do not want a job doesn’t it? We do not see these people”

(medium distribution employers)

2.10.3. People with physical disabilities

Although fewer employers were likely to recruit people with disabilities, those who would gave the same sorts of reasons as seen with both lone parents and the long-term unemployed, namely that if they were the best person for the job it did not matter, they would make adjustments when necessary and not discriminate.
A few employers were particularly pleased with recruits they had taken on in the past and were thus very keen to recruit people with physical disabilities again. One employer also commented on how he thought a mixture of “type” of person was best to enable good social cohesion and a positive group dynamic.

“My view is that I like a mixture of people – lone parents of a mature age, younger staff, people with disabilities and so forth. It makes the whole group intermingle well and you get a nice working group”

(medium distribution employer)

Reservations, however, were fairly common with many employers adding the caveat that it would depend on the type of position they were offering. Office and clerical positions were generally considered fine but several employers had worries over more physical or manual job roles. A few employers felt the requirements of the job ruled out recruiting people with physical disabilities.

“We would not be able to take people on with physical disabilities as you need to have a certain level of fitness to be able to do the milk rounds”

(medium distribution employer)

For some physical disabilities this might seem a sensible and realistic train of thought but, for others, it does highlight the very narrow definition of “disability” that many of the employers had. Someone who has a hearing or speech impediment may be perfectly suited to a job that may be difficult for someone in a wheelchair to do.

Other conditional responses included “as long as they are physically capable of doing the job” and “as long as they do not present a danger to themselves or to others”. A couple of employers also stated that they would take on people with physical disabilities if they applied but they do not get many applications from this group.

Two specific reasons why employers were unlikely to recruit from this particular ONE relevant group were problems experienced in the past in obtaining grants and having a difficult building in terms of disabled access.

“I would be put off taking another deaf person on only because of the excessive delay in obtaining a grant for the mini-com … it took months to come through. Also the paperwork was very confusing and we had no help in completing it”

(large public sector employer)

“We have a very difficult building in terms of disabled access. It is a listed building and we cannot make adaptations such as a lift and there are many stairs to climb”

(large public sector employer)
Reflecting the findings from the main quantitative survey, few employers were likely to recruit people with mental health problems. However, a handful of employers did state unconditionally that they would take on people with mental health problems in the future with a few employers particularly pleased with the recruits they had taken on showing real evidence of successful employment.

Again, those that were likely to recruit this group gave the same sorts of reasons as seen with other ONE relevant groups, namely that if they were the best person for the job it did not matter and that they would not discriminate.

The majority of employers, however, did hold some reservations. The most common of these was that the nature of the mental health problem would have to be considered in terms of the extent of the problem, the type of problem and how it would present itself in the workplace.

"There are differing degrees of problems. We probably have people like that already bearing in mind that one in five people are likely to suffer from mental health problems"

(large production employer)

"I would be concerned about what they were suffering from, i.e. what type of depression and whether they need to take medication. It would be nice to hear what caused it just in case something might trigger it at work"

(medium distribution employer)

Other isolated concerns included employers needing additional support and advice if they were to take on people with mental health problems, and worries about absenteeism.

"The main concern is absenteeism. The management are hot on this. It is a very busy environment and people need to be here. There is someone at present in the company who has developed mental health problems and he is often off sick so this colours my view"

(large distribution employer)

Employers that were very unlikely to take on people with mental health problems cited several reasons, the most common being a worry about whether they would be able to cope. This could either be because of a stressful workplace environment or because of the nature of the job, for example if the recruit had to work night shifts or work by themselves.

"Our working environment is very stressful in terms of long hours and I am not sure if someone could cope. I would hate to put someone in a stressful environment if they could not cope but you do not always know in advance"

(medium distribution employer)
“If someone with severe depression came here for a job ‘on nights’ I would be unlikely to take them on. Night work is known to cause depression or could exacerbate an existing condition”
(large production employer)

Another reason why a couple of employers were unlikely to recruit people from this ONE relevant group is that they were concerned about the recruits having to deal with the public.

“Slight depression would probably be OK but this job is dealing with the public - even the cleaners see the customers. They may say something that upsets the public and not conform to what we would expect them to do. Also they may be violent”
(medium distribution employer)

One employer had also had a serious problem with a recruit taken on in the past, which had left them very unlikely to recruit again.

“He frightened the other staff and made abusive gestures. He was a bit of a dangerous person. He would pick on certain staff members including me. He ‘blew up’ about a month ago and left. Since then we have received hate mail. We tried to overcome problems while he was here by our operations manager having a chat with him”
(medium distribution employer)
The Creative Events generated a number of new idea concepts. These ideas were aimed at both encouraging employers to use the ONE service as a recruitment channel and to take on (more) people from ONE relevant groups, by minimising some of the perceived risks involved in recruiting these types of people. As ONE focuses on encouraging benefit recipients (back) into work wherever possible, the service will need to develop ways to engage employers as the Jobcentre will be a key route for (re)entry into the workplace. Increasing the proportion of recruitment via a Jobcentre-type service was therefore seen as an important step to increasing the opportunities for people from ONE relevant groups to obtain work.

It is worth noting that the ideas generated and tested in the research were idea concepts and not fully developed models. A number of the ideas generated also overlapped with each other or already existed, at least to some extent.

Six of the ideas generated were tested in the main quantitative survey to determine if they were of interest and relevance to employers and would impact on their likelihood to use a Jobcentre-type service and/or recruit people from ONE relevant groups. Of the six ideas tested, two were aimed at encouraging employers to use Jobcentre-type services (more). The other four were aimed more specifically at encouraging employers to take on people from ONE relevant groups.

The four ideas which the main quantitative survey showed were of greatest interest to employers and likely to have most impact on use of Jobcentre-type services and/or recruitment of people from ONE relevant groups were further examined in this stage of the research. In particular we examined why employers felt provision of these new services would affect their attitude and behaviour towards these groups and what they thought were the particular benefits of these new services and any concerns they might have about them and how they were implemented. We then explored employers’ views of some ideas for how these new services could be implemented.

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11 A number of these risk factors were explored in research on New Deal for Young People- New Deal for Young people: Striking a deal with employers, Employment Service, Report ESR 36, January 2000
The four ideas tested at this stage of the research were as follows:

- **Account manager** - employers using the Jobcentre would be serviced by a named account manager.

- **More information on recruits** - employers would be provided with more information about potential recruits. Emphasis would be placed on ‘softer’ information about their wider interests and achievements to demonstrate key attributes.

- **Specialist advice on employing people from ONE relevant groups** - providing employers with more information about these groups, the emphasis being on practical advice and information on the range of assistance available.

- **Specialist Personal Advisers** - Personal Advisers, specialising in dealing with people with particular difficulties, would provide additional support to both the employer and recruit during the recruitment process and for up to six months.

The findings for each of these ideas are discussed in turn. A more detailed description of the new ideas, as given to respondents, is provided at the beginning of each section.

### 3.1 Account manager

The account manager was one of the ideas aimed at encouraging employers to make more use of Jobcentre-type services. The description of the concept given to employers was as follows:

All employers contacting the Jobcentre would be directed towards an adviser with specialist knowledge of business and staffing issues in the relevant business sector. This person could then become their first point of contact for all future discussions and contacts with the Jobcentre and aim to build up a good understanding of their business and staffing requirements.

The account manager was the most popular of the ideas tested in the main quantitative survey. Overall 84 per cent of employers expressed interest in the idea, with 50 per cent saying they were very interested. Over half of employers (56 per cent) said that they would be more likely to use the Jobcentre if this idea was introduced. These results reflect that the provision of account managers is common business practice. These findings are also supported by the results of a study entitled Employers as Customers conducted by the Employment Service, which showed that employers felt that lack of knowledge of the labour market and their more specific business and skills requirements was the major weakness of the service currently provided by the Jobcentre and the key area where they would like to see improvement.

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12 Employers as Customers Report ESR 28 November 1999
All the 32 employers interviewed in this stage of the research said they were interested in this idea and generally felt it would make them more likely to use the Jobcentre.

3.1.1. Advantages and concerns

The main reason why employers felt having an account manager would be of benefit to them was because it would mean there would be more and better matching of potential applicants to the vacancy, which would in turn make the recruitment process more efficient.

There was also a strong preference for having a named person they could call and being able to deal with the same person all the time. This was not their current experience of the Jobcentre. Most employers did not have the name of a person they could contact and rarely dealt with the same person twice.

A few employers spontaneously commented that this would make the service more like that which they received from recruitment agencies.

“...I would be more likely to use the Jobcentre if I had an account manager. It would be good as it would be more like an employment agency. They try and make the recruit look as good as possible”

(large commercial employer)

Some of the other advantages mentioned included that the account manager would be able to provide better support for recruits, such as assisting them with completing application forms and providing them with more information about both the position and company to which they were applying.

“...it would be very helpful for these groups if there was someone in the Jobcentre who understood our recruiting process. The account manager could explain and guide the applicant through our process. At the moment only about one-third of all the forms come back to us which could be due to the applicant not understanding what the job is or how to fill in the form”

(large public sector employer)

“...it would help to give the recruit a clearer idea of the job and prevent them from getting confused or being disappointed if they had the wrong idea of the job”

(small distribution employer)

A few employers also felt it would be easier to provide feedback on recruits and they might also be more willing to do so if they were more confident that it would improve the matching process in future.

“...if we had a better relationship with a person, then they would build up a knowledge of what we do. Also if we were experiencing any difficulties it would be far easier to relay it back to that person. It would increase the amount of vacancies we would directly make available to them”

(large public sector employer)
Relatively few employers expressed any real concerns about this idea, reflecting the high levels of interest. However, these concerns were mainly expressed by employers who were more likely to use a Jobcentre-style service if this concept was introduced and therefore warrant particular note. The concerns expressed generally reflected scepticism about the ability to deliver such a service. In particular they were doubtful about whether improvements in the matching process could really be achieved.

“They will still send through the timewasters”

(medium distribution employer)

Other concerns included the availability of account managers (i.e. whether they would always be out or on the telephone and therefore difficult to get hold of) and whether they would be too pushy and intrusive in trying to secure employment opportunities for their clients. The opinion of the researchers was that these concerns seem likely to reflect their wider experience of “being account managed”.

“I wouldn’t want them pestering me all the time if we haven’t got vacancies by keeping ringing me up”

(large public sector employer)

3.1.2. Concept development

We then discussed some ideas for how the new service should operate if it was implemented.

Respondents expressed a strong preference for this service to be delivered by a small team of say 2-3 people (the main contact and 1-2 others assisting) rather than a single person. This primarily reflected employers’ concerns about the availability of account managers. Employers recognised, from their wider experience, that account managers would have a large number of accounts to handle and would not always be available when they called. Employers therefore felt it was preferable to be able to talk to someone else in the team who had knowledge of their account, rather than have to rely on the one person. Not only would this provide a better level of service generally, it would also provide better continuity if their key contact left.

“I would prefer a team so there would be cover for holidays”

(large public sector employer)

“There is nothing worse than people being unavailable”

(medium public sector employer)

One or two employers also felt that the service provided by a team would be better as they would benefit from sharing views and discussing ideas.
“I prefer a team as in my experience teams always work better. If you’ve got a team they’ve got more ideas rather than just the single idea/individual approach”

(medium distribution employer)

Although it was recognised that most contact would be by telephone or email, there was a strong preference for some face to face contact, at least initially. It was felt that it would be essential for the account manager to visit their business in order to obtain a good understanding of what the business did, how they operated and their needs and requirements. Thereafter, it was felt that face to face meetings might only be required annually or ‘as and when needed’. Those employers preferring more frequent contact were more likely to be in the distribution sector and/or have a regular need for new recruits e.g. nursing homes.

It was explained to employers that it might not be possible to have account managers with more specialist knowledge of each sector based at each local Jobcentre. Nonetheless, there was a slight preference for account managers to be based locally if at all possible. This view was stronger amongst employers in the production and public sectors, as they felt this would give account managers a better understanding of local needs and issues.

“We would want someone to understand the rural issues in our area”

(large public sector employer)

“We would place adverts in the local Jobcentre so having someone familiar with us at the local Jobcentre would be handy, although I accept that you could not have an Account Manager at every local Jobcentre. Provided they had good contacts with the local branches and they understood who was doing what and who to contact I think a regional set up would work”

(large public sector employer)

The opinion of the researchers is that if this new style of service is implemented it is likely that, particularly for the more specialist sectors, this service could only be provided regionally or even nationally. Account managers will therefore need to liaise closely with colleagues based more locally to their clients to ensure they have a good understanding of local issues, in particular keeping abreast of new issues or events that arise e.g. the closing of a large employer in the area.

Employers divided fairly equally between those who would welcome their account manager taking a more proactive approach and contacting them, speculatively, if they had a candidate who might be suitable and those who would be more resistant to such advances. As discussed above a few employers spontaneously raised concerns about account managers being too pushy and intrusive. Large employers and those in the retail distribution and leisure sector were more likely to favour a more proactive
approach, reflecting that they were more likely to have an ongoing demand for recruits. These findings suggest that, early in the relationship, account managers should agree with clients individually what approach they should take.

“A count M anagers should be as proadive as possible... they should forge the link”

(large production employer)

As discussed earlier a few employers spontaneously mentioned that the introduction of account managers would make it easier to provide feedback on recruits. When we asked employers directly about providing feedback on clients, the majority said they would be willing to do this, as they recognised the benefits to both them and the recruits in doing so.

“Sometimes you don’t have the time to provide that feedback. But if you have a close relationship with an account manager you are likely to be more frank and do feedbacks over the phone. T his is easier than on paper”

(medium distribution employer)

“Its very important otherwise candidates cannot monitor their own performance and the Jobcentre will still send through the wrong candidates”.

(large production employer)

However there was a strong preference to provide feedback informally, over the phone rather than completing forms. T his appears to reflect the Jobcentres’ own experiences. In the early stages of this project we visited one of the Jobcentres involved in ONE who were pilot testing a new agreement with employers (written contract) which would oblige them to provide written feedback on all recruits put forward for a vacancy. T heir experience was that few completed these forms and a lot of valuable time was being spent by staff, chasing these forms up.

“T he phone is much quicker and easier, we have enough paperwork to do as it is”

(large distribution employer)

Employers were also only willing to provide feedback on recruits interviewed (rather than all those put forward). T his was not just because it would be less onerous for them. Employers also felt that it would be more beneficial for both them and the recruits as they would be able to provide more detailed feedback and informed judgements on these recruits.

3.2 More information on recruits

Providing more information on recruits was one of the ideas aimed at encouraging employers to take on more people from ONE relevant groups. M any of the recruits from ONE relevant groups have no or limited work experience. It was hoped that providing more detailed information on recruits, particularly ‘softer’ information on their wider achievements and interests, would help demonstrate that they had the
‘basic work skills’ and could be successfully integrated within the business. The results of other evaluation work on ONE amongst claimants suggested that they would also welcome this idea. Some people, particularly those claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance did not feel that employers were given sufficient information about them to demonstrate their skills and aptitude. The description of the concept given to employers was as follows:

Employers would receive more detailed information about potential new recruits. As well as details about their qualifications and experience, it would include ‘softer’ information about their wider achievements and interests, to demonstrate key attributes they might have such as commitment, strong sense of responsibility, good time keeping etc.

This idea also generated high levels of interest when tested in the main quantitative survey. Overall 87 per cent of employers expressed interest in this idea, with 47 per cent saying they were very interested. Over half of employers (56 per cent) said they would be more likely to use the Jobcentre if this idea was introduced and two in five (40 per cent) to be more likely to take on people from ONE relevant groups.

3.2.1. Advantages and concerns

Most employers felt that this would give them more information about the recruit than is currently provided by the Jobcentre. They also felt that this information would be valuable to them if it could help to demonstrate that they (potentially) had the core work skills such as good timekeeping, a sense of responsibility etc.

They felt the key advantage to them would be that it would improve the matching of recruits to vacancies, as both the Jobcentre staff and themselves would have a better idea of whether the candidate was suitable for the vacancy.

“It would give us a dearer idea about that person. We would have a better idea of whether they would fit in here particularly in terms of time-keeping and responsibility as the company is strict on those things.”

(small distribution employer)

“We would get a better calibre of recruit in terms of their being better matched to our vacancy”

(medium distribution employer)

Other advantages which employers mentioned included:

- It might help the employer to obtain a better (more rounded) impression of the recruit, particularly if the candidate had not worked before or did not have a full employment history;
  
  “If there was a lack of experience we would be looking for hobbies, personality, voluntary work and that sort of thing. If the Jobcentre sends someone through with no qualifications or experience but they have a great attitude, have travelled the world, are into voluntary work, then we would probably see them”

  (large other commercial employer)

- It might help with the interview, by giving the employer other subjects to talk about which might in turn help overcome candidates’ nerves or shyness and help them to perform better during the interview.
  
  “It would be easier to conduct an interview with them - easier for both the interviewer and the interviewee. A lot of recruits are very shy and it would help me talk to them and get them to open up”

  (medium distribution employer)

Employers’ concerns about this idea fall into broadly two areas:

- That the provision of this extra information may not be advantageous to some clients. Some employers felt that it may disadvantage those recruits who did not have, or could not adequately demonstrate, wider interests or achievements. A few employers felt it was also fairer to judge candidates on the same basic information otherwise there was a danger that the assessment would become too subjective;
  
  “It’s better to take people on face value only. It could make you prejudiced and cloud your judgement”

  (medium other commercial employer)

- Concerns about the quality of the information provided. Employers were concerned that the information should be honest and reliable and some questioned whether Jobcentre staff had the necessary skills and training to obtain this information.
  
  “It sounds like a good idea but it depends on the quality and accuracy of the information you get and also whether the Jobcentre staff are going to be trained to interview someone to make sure that what they are being told is correct. It is moving more into the role of an employment agency. Will they be trained to analyse the depth of the recruits’ knowledge in specialist areas such as accountancy? If the information provided is inaccurate it may cloud the judgement of one of our managers and make them take a person on inappropriately”

  (medium distribution employer)

A few employers said that they already obtained this information on their own application forms and a few stressed that it would need to be brief.
3.2.2. Information requirements

Employers agreed that the main purpose of this additional information would be to demonstrate basic work skills. The key ones employers mentioned include timekeeping, organisational skills, communication skills, team working and a sense of responsibility and commitment.

In terms of particular information requirements for each of the groups, these generally reflected the concerns employers had in relation to these groups. In the case of lone parents where they had few specific concerns, the only specific requirement mentioned by employers was to know about their proposed childcare arrangements. For long-term unemployed people, employers would be looking to understand why the person had been unemployed for so long, that they did really want to work and that they had used the time when they were unemployed constructively e.g. to undertake training, do voluntary work.

"We would want to know about their achievements and interests. Whether they are a team player. By their interests you begin to build up a picture of what sort of person they are. For example, if they do bowling or play football they are a team player”

(medium distribution employer)

"What they are doing to try and get back into the work place. What they are doing in their private life to gain skills”

(medium distribution employer)

"I want to know what they do in their spare time, what their interests and hobbies are because I find that during that discussion you find out a lot about their maturity, level of intelligence and things like that. We would like it if the Jobcentre could give us this type of information and also tell us what skills and qualities they think they can bring to the company. This would be extremely useful. Also a list of jobs they have done in the past, how long they have been unemployed for. If they have just been sitting there for two years on the dole – to me that is just laziness because there are loads of jobs out there”.

(small distribution employer)

For those with physical disabilities, employers said they wanted information to demonstrate that the person was able to undertake the role they were applying for and any limitations or adjustments that would be required. They also wanted to know if they would require any specially adapted equipment or facilities.

"That they could do light assembly work using their hands as well as any other specific limitations”

(large production employer)
“Things to give an idea of what they are capable of. Some examples of the jobs they have done - people may think that they are not capable of doing certain things”

(large distribution employer)

For those with mental health problems employers said they also wanted information that would demonstrate that the person could do the job and any limitation or adjustments required. However they would also want more information on the nature of their problems and how these might present themselves in the workplace. This reflected that employers were less aware of these issues and the potential impacts on the business and other staff. Employers noted that the information would be important not just at the interview stage, but also if these people were taken on, to help brief other staff who would be working with them.

“I would want to know whether they are nervous or highly strung as this creates problems with learning. Can they sit and concentrate for any length of time?”

(medium production employer)

In terms of the preferred format for this information, employers felt it should be part of the existing application form, but were fairly evenly divided between those that would prefer some form of standardised question and answer format and those who wanted the information presented in a short biography. Information on limitation or adjustments required by people with physical and mental health problems should be in a separate section.

3.3 Specialist advice on employing people from ONE relevant groups

As has already been discussed, a key barrier to taking on people from ONE relevant groups, particularly people with physical and mental health problems, was employers’ lack of knowledge and understanding of the nature of their problems and how it would impact on their ability to undertake the job and any special adaptation or equipment that would be required. The provision of more information on these groups and their needs and requirements was therefore aimed at overcoming this barrier. The emphasis would be on providing practical information and assistance. The description of the concept given to employers was as follows:

Jobcentres would provide more information and advice for employers about employing harder to place groups. The emphasis here would be on the practicalities such as user friendly checklists for employers about what they need to know and do and information on the range of extra support and assistance including financial support that is available for employers who recruit these groups.
Again this idea was well received by employers when tested in the main quantitative survey. Overall 79 per cent of employers expressed interest in this idea, with over a fifth (22 per cent) saying they were very interested. Approaching half (45 per cent) of employers would be more likely to use a Jobcentre-style service if this idea was introduced and 38 per cent to be more likely to take on people from ONE relevant groups.

Amongst the 32 employers interviewed at this stage, there was a wider interest in this idea. This reflects that this entire group had taken on at least one person from these groups in the past. However they were slightly more likely to be employers who had not taken on people with physical disabilities and in particular mental health problems in the past.

3.3.1. Advantages and concerns

Employers confirmed that the main advantages to them of this new service would be that it would make them better informed about the nature of the risks that taking on these people might pose to the business and how best to deal with them and the assistance that might be available to them to help them in this task. This in turn would make them more willing and confident about taking on these groups. They also felt it would also have the wider benefit of making employers more aware of these groups and the particular difficulties they face in obtaining employment.

“...It would help take away your ignorance of these groups. A lot of people have inborn prejudices espedally on mental health as it is not something that can be seen and people don’t know how to deal with it. It would take away some of the bias against these groups”.

(large production employer)

Few employers expressed any concerns about this idea. Some employers, in particular larger employers, felt this information was already available. A few employers again expressed the concern that this kind of positive discrimination might not be advantageous to the client, particularly those whose disability was not severe, by making it appear worse than it was. One of the employers who made this comment had taken on someone with a limp. The only practical problem that this presented was that it made it more difficult and slower for him to move around the building. Colleagues were only too willing to assist him in this way.

3.3.2. Information requirements

Again reflecting the findings of the main quantitative stage, this information was likely to be of greatest benefit in helping people with physical and mental health problems to obtain work. It was also the group for which employers would have the widest information requirements.
These included:

- Information on the (most common) conditions and how these might present themselves in the workplace;
- The types of work that recruits with these types of problems could or could not do;
- For the types of work they could do, what were the limitations, what adjustments would be required and what special equipment or adaptations would be required;
- Financial and other assistance available;
- Guidance for the staff who would be managing and working with them such as ‘basic do’ and don’ts’ and ‘what to do if...’;
- Support bodies available which could provide more specialist advice and assistance. For example as discussed earlier, one of the firms that took on a diabetic person, sought advice from a specialist charity.

“Recurring problems’ such as epilepsy can be a problem for the business as many of the staff are dealing with very fine and expensive materials/products. There are often very delicate operations to be done. More information on conditions such as these may be useful”
(large production employer)

“His type of problem scares me in a big way so as much info as possible. Would someone with depression try to commit suicide? Would I need specialist training to deal with people who may come to me with problems? Would we need a specialist on site to deal with these people?”
(medium distribution employer)

“The more information the better, especially on financial packages that are available as the company is always trying to save money”
(large distribution employer)

“A advice on their disability would be useful. If we had a booklet it would help us to train our managers to say that people with physical disabilities are OK and help explain the practical ideas and not so practical ideas. A booklet should explain that physical disabilities are in the work-force and to explain how these people work and interact with the work-force. Also explain the practicalities or pros and cons of hiring someone with a physical disability”
(medium distribution employer)

For lone parents the main requirements were for information on local childcare provision and financial assistance available. In most cases it was recognised that this information would primarily be of value to the individual rather than the employers, but reflects that employers feel there are no particular barriers to employing this group. Employers’ comments also indicated that they would use this information as much (or more) for assisting existing employees as taking on new ones.
Childcare issues and information on grants available. We need to be able to inform our members of staff about these things. It is very rural here and it is extremely difficult to get people to come here to work if they have got young children and if they need a crèche to be able to go to work. We could advise them where the nearest one is.

(large public sector employer)

For long-term unemployed people, the main information needs included guidance on helping these recruits adjust (back) into work, information on training available to re-train them or update their skills and any financial assistance available.

Reflecting the different types of information required for each of these groups, employers were strongly of the view that information should be provided separately for each specific group. One guide covering all the groups was likely to be too general to be useful.

Employers also showed significant interest in receiving guides on both interviewing candidates from ONE relevant group and explaining some of the common problems that might be encountered when recruiting these groups and possible solutions. For example the interviewing guide would be helpful if it provided hints and tips on how to make candidates feel more at ease and how to ask the questions they needed to ask about the person's circumstances and how this might affect their ability to do the job they were being recruited for, without inadvertently offending candidates or falling foul of any legislative requirements. Similarly the guide to common problems would make them more aware of the potential problems that could arise and ideally help them to prevent these occurring in their business. It was felt that these guides would be of value not just to the respondents, but also to others in the company who were involved in recruitment and line management.

"It would be very helpful to others in the company who do interviewing"

(large distribution employer)

"The law and the terms which are politically correct change all the time, this would help to keep me up to date"

(large distribution employer)

"It's useful if other companies are doing the same sort of things to see how they have dealt with problems"

(medium other commercial employer)

"It is good to have case studies and shared information"

(large distribution employer)
“It would be good to know about problems others have encountered, so we
don’t make the same mistakes”

(large distribution employer)

In terms of the preferred format for receiving all this information, there was a strong preference for information to be provided in booklet form, although some respondents also liked the idea of this kind of information being available on a website. The main advantage of the website was that the information could more easily be kept up to date and additional items added. However employers would also like a telephone helpline to deal with more specific queries.

The consensus was also that the information should be provided proactively, not least because the provision of the guides would help to raise awareness of these groups and the help and assistance available.

3.4 Specialist personal advisers

The fourth idea discussed was that clients from ONE relevant groups would be assigned to a Personal Adviser with more specialist skills and experience in dealing with that particular group. They would provide support to both their clients and employers, both during the recruitment process and for up to six months. Other research on New Deal supports the development of this idea and providing employers with more specialist advice on employing people from ONE relevant groups (as discussed in the preceding section). Research amongst employers on New Deal for Young People found that follow-up information and support for employers was very variable. A key conclusion of this research was that ‘no employer-centred equivalent to the Personal Adviser exists to ensure employer needs are consistently met and more work is needed to establish an effective partnership with employers’. The research on New Deal for Disabled People found that the support that employers expected from the Personal Adviser Service included good matching of the individual to the post, guidance on what particular help and support this person required and access to support for specialist equipment and training. The level of service provided did not always match employers’ expectations with some complaining that Personal Advisers were not sufficiently informed or proactive in these areas.

Research from other parts of the ONE evaluation also supports this idea. The work on the Delivery Evaluation conducted to date by the Tavistock Institute found that the Personal Advisers lacked the specialist knowledge and expertise to help the more difficult cases and were not always aware or making sufficient use of the extended networks/partnerships and other

14 New Deal for Young People: Striking a deal with Employers, Employment Service ESR 36, January 2000
15 Kelleher et al, ‘ONE in Action: Interim Findings from the Case Studies and Staff Research’, September 2001, In-house report no. 84.
support mechanisms available. They concluded that this was a significant limiting factor on the effectiveness of ONE. Similarly, qualitative research amongst participants conducted by BMRB\textsuperscript{16} found that participants were not always given adequate or appropriate guidance on employment and training opportunities or referred to more specialist services.

The full description of the concept given to employers was as follows:

Introducing Personal Advisers specialising in assisting people with particular types of difficulty. These Personal Advisers would provide additional support to new recruits and their employers both before employment commenced and on an ongoing basis for up to six months. They would be able to advise employers thinking about employing certain groups of people and ensure that employees are well prepared for and knowledgeable about what they would be expected to do in their workplace. The Personal Advisers could also be on hand to help sort out any initial problems and provide additional support and training for new recruits in the early weeks.

When tested in the main quantitative survey, over two-thirds (69 per cent) of employers expressed interest in this idea, with a fifth (20 per cent) saying they were very interested. Two-fifths (40 per cent) of employers would be more likely to use a Jobcentre-style service if this idea was introduced and a third (33 per cent) to be more likely to take on people from ONE relevant groups.

Amongst the 32 employers interviewed at this stage, there was wide interest in this idea and many said it would be more likely to encourage them to take on ONE recruits. Again this reflects that this entire group had taken on at least one person from these groups in the past. However, compared with responses to the previous idea (providing specialist advice on employing people from ONE relevant groups), this group of employers were more likely to include employers who had taken on people with physical disabilities or mental health problems in the past. This may well reflect that they were more aware of the problems that could arise particularly when employing these two groups of recruits and thus better appreciated the value of this type of assistance.

3.4.1. Advantages and concerns

Employers recognised that this idea would be of value to both the employer and the recruit. The main benefit to the employer was felt to be that the Personal Adviser could provide advice and information to assist them in helping the recruit to settle in and become a fully functioning member of staff. They also felt it would give the recruits more confidence, as they would know there was someone there to help them or that they could turn to if there were problems.

\textsuperscript{16} Osgood, J. and Stone, V., (forthcoming Winter 2001) Delivering a work-focused service: Integrated report of research with clients and staff.
“It would give support to the recruit by being on hand to talk to them when necessary to boost their confidence at any given time”
(large distribution employer)

More specific benefits mentioned by employers included that, at the recruitment stage, they could assist the employer in determining whether the person could undertake the role they were being recruited for and what adjustments or special equipment might be required. Once the person had been taken on, they would be on hand to help deal with any problems, and hopefully these would be dealt with more quickly and effectively. This in turn would assist the recruit in settling in more quickly and reduce the likelihood of the recruit leaving at an early stage. It would also help relieve the pressure on line managers.

“It would be helpful. It is similar to the New Deal Advisers. We had someone here on New Deal and a lady would come and provide support in terms of training and checking his understanding. That was helpful as he lacked self-confidence coming into a place where he knew nobody and being faced with a big new role. He had someone coming in spending some time with him who he was used to meeting up with at the Jobcentre. It enabled him to settle into the store and make friends”
(large distribution employer)

“It would be invaluable because they could help if we had problems we felt we could not deal with”
(medium distribution employer)

“It is an extra safety net, if there is something they are not happy with, a third party would understand their needs more and communicate that to me”
(medium distribution employer)

Again employers were concerned about the ability of a Jobcentre-type service to effectively deliver this level of support. They recognised the amount of resources that would be required and questioned whether the advisers could reasonably be expected to have sufficient knowledge of both the individual and the business to be of real benefit.

The other main concern raised by employers was that the Personal Adviser might undermine the role of the line manager, with a number of employers, mainly large ones, feeling that they already offered this type of support to new recruits.
There may be problems with boundaries. The recruit may lean too heavily on the advisor and not move forward with us here. It would have to be treated very carefully and customer driven, i.e. with us, the employer. There may be problems with the advisor having to justify their job title and visit and hand-hold too much. This can happen in government departments. It's got to be genuine assistance and not just making a job for someone.

(large public sector employer)

Additional help and support required through a Personal Adviser mirrored that discussed above with regards to specialist advice on employing people from ONE relevant groups. Essentially, there were three key areas that employers felt it would be useful for Personal Advisers to help with; information on financial support and entitlements, assistance for recruits to help them increase their confidence and information regarding specific disabilities or mental health problems.

In terms of particular requirements for each of the groups, again these generally reflected the concerns employers had in relation to these groups. In the case of lone parents where they had few specific concerns, the only additional help that was required by a few employers was with information regarding childcare provision and benefits and financial assistance that are available.

For long-term unemployed people, information about financial assistance and entitlements would also be well received. More important however was the Personal Adviser’s role of providing support both before employment commenced and then being “on hand” at the workplace to help with any initial problems, particularly for those recruits who lack confidence as a result of being out of work for a long period of time.

“They should be able to build up their confidence which might be low especially if they have applied for many jobs. They will take an interest in them and the recruit will have a named contact to speak to”

(medium distribution employer)

As with the previous idea, the specialist personal adviser was likely to be of most help for recruits with physical disabilities or mental health problems. As stated above, this may well reflect that some of the employers we spoke to were very aware of the problems that could arise when employing these two groups of recruits and thus better appreciated the value of this type of assistance.

Letting employers know what the problems are and how they might present themselves in the workplace was the most frequent request for additional help. Several employers also commented that a Personal Adviser would help “bridge the information gap” that persists about these two groups. Increasing recruits’ confidence was another underlying theme.
“Useful to have more information on the possible impact of a mental health issue on employment. The advisor would allow them to understand whether they can tackle a particular job. The advisor would need an excellent knowledge of that person, their background and how their condition would impact on the job”

(medium public sector employer)

“Hey should let us know what the problems are and come into our company and see what type of work it is”

(large distribution employer)

“Communication of information about the recruit is key”

(large distribution employer)

A few employers mentioned spontaneously that the service should be available for more than six months. However when asked directly about the timescale that the support should be available for, most employers felt that six months was sufficient, although they recognised that this might vary depending on the nature of the recruit and severity of their problems. Some felt that six months was too long, fearing that if someone needed support for six months they were probably not suitable for the job.

“If someone needed six months’ support it would be a concern to me whether they would be right for the job one had employed them for”

(large distribution employer)

For those who felt it would be useful if the support was available for longer than six months, they generally wanted to know that the adviser would be available on the telephone to provide advice if a problem arose later on, rather than providing more direct assistance.

“It would be nice to know you could still contact someone if needed”

(large distribution employer)

We also asked employers whether they or in particular the recruit should be able to request support directly from the specialist Personal Adviser, without informing the other party first. Most employers felt that it would work more effectively if both parties, particularly the recruit, contacted the Personal Adviser directly. As discussed earlier employers felt that one of the key benefits for recruits is that they would have someone else that they could turn to if there was a problem. The value of this could be undermined if recruits had to inform the employer first. However the Personal Adviser would need to handle this situation very carefully, as some employers again raised concerns about the Personal Adviser undermining the role of the line manager.
In addition to providing general advice and support, we also asked employers if they would want help specifically with identifying training needs or helping to organise training. Many employers interviewed felt this would be useful. However this would only be in relation to additional or specific training requirements for the recruit. All employers felt they had the systems in place to deal with their general training requirements.

"We address training issues with any new employee in order to get that person familiar with their particular area of work. Anyone who can assist us to get the person trained appropriately would be useful. We have a range of training facilities available to us. If there was something which was very specific pertaining to that person and the Personal Adviser was aware of how they could facilitate that sort of training, we would co-operate with that"

(large public sector employer)

"It might be useful for them to identify training. We provide a lot of training, but if it was special training we might ask for help needed"

(large distribution employer)
CONCLUSIONS

In this final chapter we set out our main conclusions from this stage of the research and recommendations for how these findings could be taken forward.

The results of this follow-up study strongly support the findings of the main quantitative survey. The main quantitative survey found that the majority of employers were willing, at least in principle, to take on (more) people from ONE relevant groups. Whilst it must be remembered that all the employers interviewed in this final stage of the research had taken on at least one person from ONE relevant groups, they showed a strong willingness to take on more recruits in the future. This reflects their high level of satisfaction with these recruits taken on, both in terms of the way they have performed in their work and integrated into the business.

Whilst these people from ONE relevant groups have mainly been recruited into low or unskilled manual and clerical jobs, a few have obtained higher skilled work, which reflected their abilities. However, most had been recruited into full-time permanent positions rather than casual work. Lone parents were the main group working part-time, reflecting their particular needs and circumstances.

Most recruits went through the employers’ usual recruitment process, again supporting the main survey findings that the recruitment of people from these groups is a rational business decision and not one based on charity or favour. These people have been and will only be recruited if they are capable of performing the work. Whilst employers have made and are willing to make adjustments to accommodate the particular needs of these groups, such as to working hours and providing additional support and training, few are willing to change the job specification.

Employers have encountered no major problems in administering Working Families and Disabled Persons Tax Credits and this has not acted as a disincentive to employing people from these groups.

4.1 Employers’ experiences of recruiting people from ONE relevant groups

4.2 Views of the new ideas

The more detailed discussion of some of the new ideas tested in the main quantitative survey provided further evidence that employers would welcome these new services and that they would increase their willingness to take on people from ONE relevant groups. The new ideas were seen to offer real benefits to both the employer and ONE client. For employers they would improve the quality of service they receive from a jobcentre-type service, including better matching of clients to the job vacancies and additional information and support to assist the employer in integrating the individual more quickly and smoothly into their organisation. For ONE clients they would improve their potential to get jobs and retain them. They would help them to obtain work by helping to minimise
the barriers (from the employers’ perspective) to taking them on, which are largely due to a lack of knowledge and understanding of the nature of their problems and the impact that this would have on their ability to undertake the job. They would help them to retain these jobs by providing additional support for both them and the employers during the early stages.

This stage of the research has also identified a number of ways in which these new ideas should be implemented to maximise their effectiveness. These are briefly summarised below for each idea.

4.2.1. Account manager

- This should be a small team of 2-3 people (the main contact and one or two others assisting), rather than a single person.
- Whilst most of the contact would be by telephone, fax and email, the account manager should visit the employer in person, shortly after the relationship has been established. It should then be agreed with the employer whether further face-to-face meetings are required on a regular basis (say every year or six months) or only if required.
- The account manager should also agree with employers whether they should adopt a proactive approach, and contact them if they have a client who may be suitable even if there is no advertised vacancy, or not.
- Account managers could be based regionally or even nationally, particularly those servicing employers in smaller, more specialist sectors, but would need to liaise closely with colleagues based locally to keep abreast of local issues.
- Employers would be willing to provide feedback on recruits put forward for vacancies, but would prefer to do this informally over the phone and only for those candidates interviewed.

4.2.2. More information on recruits

Additional information required for each of the ONE relevant groups, reflected concerns employers had about recruiting these people and were as follows:

- Lone parents – childcare information.
- Long-term unemployed people – the reason(s) why they had been unemployed for this length of time and how they had used the time.
- People with physical disabilities – demonstrate that the person is capable of performing the job they are applying for and any limitations, adjustments or special equipment required.
- People with mental health problems – demonstrate that the person is capable of performing the job they are applying for and the nature of their problems and how they might present themselves in the workplace.
This additional information should be included in the application form in the form of a short biography and/or standardised question and answer format.

The information and support required for each group was as follows:

- **Lone parents:**
  - Local childcare provision;
  - Benefits and financial assistance available.

- **Long-term unemployed people:**
  - Guidance on helping recruits adjust (back) into work;
  - Information on training available to refocus or update their skills and any financial assistance available for this training.

- **People with physical disabilities and mental health problems:**
  - Information on the most common conditions and how they might present themselves in the workplace;
  - Types of work which people with these types of problem could and could not do;
  - For the types of work they could do, what limitations or adjustments would be required;
  - Financial and other assistance available;
  - Guidance for staff working with them on the basic ‘do’s and don’ts’ and ‘what to do if...’

Employers should also welcome guides on interviewing candidates from all these groups and common problems and possible solutions.

This information should be provided in booklet form and also be available on a website. A separate guide should be produced for each group. These guides should be sent to employers as part of the marketing effort to raise awareness and employment opportunities for these groups. A national telephone helpline, could also be provided to respond to more specific queries.

- **In work support** should be provided for both the employer and recruit for up to six months.
- Both parties should be able to contact the Personal Adviser directly without informing the other party first. The Personal Adviser would need to use their discretion in determining whether to inform the employer of issues raised by the recruit in order not to undermine the role of the line manager.
- The Personal Adviser could also assist the employer, if required, in identifying any additional or specific training required by the recruit.
There are a number of implications of offering these new services that the Department will need to take into account in determining whether to further develop these ideas:

- There will be a significant training requirement for staff if they are to deliver these services effectively.
- Personal Advisers and account managers working with employers will need to be sensitive to their existing systems and practices.
- As with any programme of this nature, clients involved in the programme will be labelled as such. Clients with less severe physical and mental health problems therefore risk being disadvantaged, as the extra support and assistance they receive might suggest to employers that their disability or problem is more severe than it is.
- Provision of these new services will have significant resource implications. The services that are most resource intensive are the account manager and specialist Personal Adviser. If resources are limited, we recommend these be focused on providing just one or two of these new services and/or at particular groups of employers or ONE relevant groups. If resources are to be focused on particular ONE relevant groups, we recommend they be directed towards people with physical disabilities and mental health problems, as they experience greatest difficulty in obtaining work. From the employers' perspective, lone parents require no extra support.
- As well as the need to address the foregoing points it will also be necessary to take an overall view of how this proposed type of service would sit alongside any future model developed to support Jobcentre Plus.
This appendix provides further details about the research methodology.

Interviews were conducted with a small sample of employers (32) who had recruited people from ONE relevant groups in the last year. Their names were drawn from a pool of employers we had spoken to during the mainstage quantitative survey who had agreed to take part in a follow-up interview. Interviews were conducted between 28 February and 16 March 2001.

We aimed to achieve at least half of the interviews with employers that had recruited people with mental health problems or physical disabilities, at least half from the public or retail distribution and leisure sector and two-thirds with large employers (100+ employees). We therefore, over-sampled those employers that met these criteria.

During the interview employers were asked to talk specifically about their experiences with up to two of their recent recruits. If they had recruited more than two people they were asked to select two recruits to talk about, if necessary prioritising people with mental health problems, then physical disabilities, and then long-term unemployed people.

Breakdowns of interviews achieved by region, size of establishment, industry sector and types of ONE relevant recruits taken on are provided below:

**Table A.1 Breakdown of employer interviews by pilot area**

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<th>Pilot area</th>
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**Table A.2 Breakdown of employer interviews by size of establishment**

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<th>Size of establishment (no of employees)</th>
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<td>100+</td>
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Table A.3 Breakdown of employer interviews by industry sector

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<td>Production</td>
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Table A.4 Breakdown of employer interviews by types of ONE relevant recruits taken on

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<td>People with mental health problems</td>
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<td>People with physical disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-term unemployed</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lone parents</td>
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