Moving towards work: The short-term impact of ONE

Vicky Davies and Clare Johnson

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This report presents the qualitative findings of research conducted with individuals who claimed benefit through the ONE service in summer 2000. The overall purpose of the research was to determine the impact of ONE on its participants. More specifically, it explored the service’s impact on participants’ attitudes and behaviour towards work and claiming benefit.

**Introduction**

ONE is a new service for delivering benefits to people of working age. It brings together the Employment Service, the Benefits Agency and Local Authorities to deliver a more integrated benefit service, providing prospective claimants with a single point of entry to the benefit system. ONE is intended to offer a work focused benefit service, tailored to meet individuals’ needs. New and repeat benefit claimants are allocated a Personal Adviser who deals with their benefit claim and discusses options for work at the start of the claim.

The ONE service was introduced between June and November 1999 in 12 pilot areas in Great Britain. Three different models for delivering ONE are being piloted: a Basic Model; a Call Centre Model; and a Private/Voluntary Sector (PVS) Model. Before April 2000, ONE was voluntary for all claimants for benefits other than Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), for which ONE was compulsory. Since April 2000, ‘full participation’ was introduced whereby all new and repeat claimants in the pilot areas are required to participate in the service.

**Objectives of ONE**

The overall purpose of ONE is to establish a work focused benefit service to improve the quality and quantity of labour market participation of people of working age. 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
- to increase the level of sustainable employment by getting more benefit recipients into work
- to ensure that more clients experience effective, efficient service that is tailored to their personal needs
- to change the culture of the benefits system and the general public towards independence and work rather than payments and financial dependence

**The evaluation**

The Department of Social Security has commissioned a wide ranging evaluation of the ONE service, using a variety of research methodologies.
including: social research with ONE participants and staff, and employers; operational research; costs-benefit analyses; and a database of administrative records. The overall aims of the evaluation are to assess:

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

This report presents the findings from the first of two stages of qualitative research with individuals who claimed benefit through ONE since full participation was introduced.

**Qualitative research with ONE participants**

The objectives for this qualitative element of the policy evaluation are:

- to consider the impact on people’s attachment to the labour market
- to consider how far clients can be refocused on work as a first priority
- to consider whether more people get jobs and whether they get them more quickly than they might otherwise
- to see if more people stay employed for longer periods
- to assess whether there has been a reduction in inactivity
- to examine the effectiveness of the Personal Adviser in identifying barriers to work, in considering whole needs and in offering appropriate advice

**Research respondents**

Individuals were purposively recruited to ensure the research captured the full range of participants’ attitudes and outcomes achieved after the first PA meeting. Interviews were held with participants drawn from specific ‘client groups’, determined by the benefit claimed, and were timed to take place three months after their initial meeting with a Personal Adviser. The groups included were jobseekers, lone parents, carers, widows, and sick or disabled people. Individuals from minority ethnic communities and those living in rural areas were also key groups included within the research, and were drawn from the five distinct client types.

Although the research intended to pull out specific findings relating to ethnic minorities and people living in rural areas, this was not possible in practice. The main problem encountered was the diversity of experience, values and status of the individuals recruited for these groups. At least six different ethnic groups were covered in 16 interviews, preventing the research from identifying any meaningful common experiences that can be attributed to ‘ethnic minorities’. Similarly, the diversity of rural participants’ attitudes to work, their personal circumstances, and their individual experiences of ONE meant that no clear, distinct findings emerged that were peculiar to this group.

**Qualitative research findings**

**Attitudes towards the benefit system**

The prime concern for all ONE participants at the time of their claim was to secure some money, irrespective of their intentions towards the labour market, to support them in their everyday lives. All participants discussed their need to claim within the context of their immediate
intentions and personal circumstances. For many this referred directly to their relationship with the labour market, implying that they perceived the benefit system to be a source of support in the absence of financially rewarding work. Other participants emphasised the need to claim so that they could fulfil intensive caring responsibilities to family members (Section 3.1).

Participants’ knowledge about their entitlement to benefit, prior to ONE, depended largely on whether they had claimed benefit before. Those who were making claims on the same basis as previous occasions were often quite knowledgeable about which benefits they would be entitled to, and did not feel the need to seek further advice. New claimants, with no prior experience of claiming, were often unaware which benefit they could claim and hoped to get advice from the benefit service. Even participants with previous experience of claiming, but where their personal circumstances had changed, wanted further advice and guidance on their full eligibility to benefits (Section 3.1.2).

Generally participants acknowledged a link between work, or their ability to work, and the support available through the benefit system. The research identified four different groups of participant, based on their attitudes and behaviour towards work and claiming benefit:

- **Participants already in work**
  Most participants already in employment were working on a part-time basis. They did not feel that they were able to work full-time because of their caring commitments for other members of their family. As a result they were, to an extent, reliant on the extra money provided through benefits. All of these individuals planned to continue working for the foreseeable future (Section 3.2.1).

- **Participants for whom work was an immediate priority**
  Claiming benefit was viewed as a temporary or short-term measure for those who perceived themselves to be ‘job-ready’. These participants, from all client groups, were focused on finding work as an immediate priority in order to support themselves, and their families. Yet few had developed a clear, targeted strategy for finding work. Instead, many relied on advertisements in local newspapers for information on job vacancies. The main exception to note here is those lone parents who had recently completed education or training in their desired occupation, already had some temporary work experience, and were actively targeting employers, or trade journals, for permanent work (Section 3.2.2).
Participants for whom work was an option in the defined future

Some participants were not focused on work at the time of their initial PA meeting, but did want to work within the next two years. A variety of personal circumstances influenced these participants’ ability to focus on work, including: participation in education or training (lone parents); the sudden end of a relationship (lone parents and widows); a recent illness or injury to self or close family member (carers and those claiming sickness benefits). In these instances, participants intended to claim benefit in the interim until they were able to return to, or secure, work (Section 3.2.3).

Participants for whom work was not an option

Lastly, some participants from all client groups (except jobseekers) did not consider work to be an option in either the foreseeable future or at all. These participants fell into three broad groups: those who did not feel it was possible to combine work with caring responsibilities (lone parents and carers); those who did not want to work alongside their other commitments (also comprising lone parents and carers); and those who suffered continuous serious illnesses. All of these individuals expected to claim benefit for a considerable period of time while they looked after themselves, or their dependants.

Barriers to work

Barriers to work were defined as those factors that prevent or hinder an individual from effectively seeking and/or finding work. Three different groups of barriers were identified by the research:

- **‘Hard’ barriers** include objective, tangible barriers including qualifications, basic skills and work experience.
- **‘Soft’ barriers** refer to attributes that are more difficult to identify or measure and may be considered to be more subjective, such as problem solving, communication, team working and confidence.
- **A range of circumstantial barriers** may influence an individual’s ability to look for and take up work. Some circumstantial barriers may be anticipated by the type of benefit that an individual claims. For example, the ability of someone claiming Incapacity Benefit to take up work will be affected by their ill-health. There are other circumstances, however, which may also adversely affect individuals’ ability to secure work but are unrelated to their need to claim benefit. Examples include vulnerable housing arrangements, debt and local labour market conditions.

This research revealed that a wide range of barriers prevent, or deter, participants from engaging in the labour market. However, many participants were unaware of some, or all, of these. In some cases participants reported that their PA helped them identify factors that might hinder their efforts to secure work, but these were a minority. In fact, participants’ accounts of their ONE experience suggest that PAs provided a reactive service to barriers to work. PAs were seen to be taking action
to address barriers to work when participants identified the specific factors that they felt prevented them from effectively seeking and securing work. There were, however, very few cases when PAs actually helped participants identify their barriers to work.

Many participants’ attitudes and behaviour towards claiming benefit and work were affected by their experience of ONE and, more specifically, their Personal Adviser. Most of these changes refer to the short and medium-term impact of the service. However, there is also some evidence to suggest that ONE will achieve a more fundamental, long-term impact on individuals’ perceptions of the role of the benefit system.

- **Participants already in work**
  
  Where participants were already working, PAs concentrated on checking and submitting benefit forms. As a result, there was no change in the attitudes and/or behaviour of those already in work although those with no caring responsibilities were interested in progressing into full-time employment.

- **Participants for whom work was an immediate priority**

  PAs were able to make a direct impact on the behaviour of those who lacked a clear, or comprehensive, job search strategy. This impact was augmented when the PA was familiar with the participants’ circumstances or work goals, either through their own experience or because they knew someone personally who had been in a similar situation. In these scenarios, PAs were often able to provide individuals with focused advice on how and where to look for jobs. As a direct result, participants’ confidence in themselves, their job search activities and in their work goals increased. They changed their job seeking behaviour in line with the advice given and adopted a more targeted strategy to finding work compared with the ad hoc approaches previously used. Many of these participants had subsequently moved into work or had started vocational training to improve their skills and qualifications in their target labour market.

  Participants’ negative attitudes about the benefit system were challenged where they felt their PA was approachable, listened to their circumstances, understood their situation and respected their work-related goals. However, ONE did not seem to challenge or change the expectations of those jobseekers with previous experience of claiming. They largely perceived the service to be the same ‘process’ they had experienced before and, in some instances, compared the advice received unfavourably with that offered through the Jobcentre.
Participants for whom work was an option in the future

The extent to which ONE made an impact on the attitudes and behaviour of those participants who considered work to be an option for the future was limited, often because PAs concentrated on benefits and did not discuss work in any depth.

The greatest impact was achieved with those individuals who had recently lost a partner, either through death or separation. The ONE service focused on benefit claims, providing financial security during a period of uncertainty and disruption. Although work was not really discussed, the space and sympathy afforded by PAs allowed these participants to come to terms with their new situation and reflect on their next steps. The way in which PAs handled the meetings conveyed to these participants that help and support was available. As a result, many stated that they would return when they felt work was a more immediate priority. At the time of this research, some of these participants were beginning to think about the type of jobs they were interested in but they had not started to actively seek work.

Participants for whom work was not an option

Personal Advisers were able to change a few participants’ attitudes to work and claiming benefit by exploring the different options available. For lone parents, this often entailed exploratory discussions concerning individuals’ interests and hobbies which allowed the PA to suggest training opportunities. More general discussions around work, including previous experience and options for the future, enabled some of those claiming sickness or disability benefits to feel work was a realistic and achievable option for them when previously they had not felt work was possible. These impacts, however, are an exception to the wider experiences of those participants who did not feel work was an option.

There were a few instances where participants felt aggrieved that their PA raised work as an issue when they were expecting help with claiming benefit. These individuals did not feel work was an option for them, often because they had intensive caring responsibilities, and they were not prepared to consider it. As a result, they felt the ONE service was inappropriate to their needs.

Distance travelled

The different ways in which ONE caused a change in participants’ relationship to the labour market, either by altering their attitude or their behaviour towards work, varies according to participants’ original position in the labour market at the start of their claim. Where changes have occurred, they tend to relate to progression into or towards the labour market. The most common effects observed by this qualitative research are:

- facilitating movement into work for those who consider it to be an immediate priority
Conclusions

The ONE service has affected the way in which many participants think about the benefit system and the support available. Fundamentally, as a direct result of their involvement in ONE many realised that the benefit system was not solely concerned with processing benefit claims and generating payments. Instead, participants across all client groups, and regardless of their position in the labour market, became aware that they could, and in some cases did, seek advice and support relating to work. However, some perceive ONE to be the same type of service offered by the benefit system that they had experienced previously and, as a result, ONE has failed to change these attitudes.

Participants reacted negatively to ONE when their adviser did not engage in a dialogue with them, explore their interests or work options, or offer any practical help with current circumstances. In contrast, positive reactions to the ONE service occurred when participants felt that their adviser listened to what they were saying, respected it and offered help or advice in those areas raised by the participant. They appreciated the time advisers devoted to their case. Furthermore, many liked the idea of having a dedicated PA who knew their circumstances and would be able to deliver a more personal service.

- enabling participants to progress towards work by providing support with benefit claims
- raising work as a realistic goal in the future when participants did not necessarily consider it to be an option at all
In October 1998, the Government announced plans to introduce a new ‘Single Work Focused Gateway’ to the benefit system. Renamed ‘ONE’, the service sought to combine individuals’ claims for benefit with discussions about work during meetings with a Personal Adviser (PA). Voluntary participation, where claimants were encouraged\(^1\) to attend a meeting with a PA, was launched in 1999 in 12 pilot areas across Great Britain. In April 2000, ‘full participation’ was introduced whereby all new and repeat claimants in the pilot areas are required to participate in the service.

This report presents the qualitative findings of research conducted with individuals who have claimed benefit through the ONE pilots since full participation was introduced. It explores the impact of ONE on their attitudes and behaviour towards work and claiming benefit. It also determines whether the service has helped to improve and increase participants’ engagement with the labour market.

1.1 The policy context

Since 1997, the Labour Government has introduced a series of ‘welfare-to-work’ policies based on the philosophy of ‘work for those who can, security for those who cannot’. To date such policies have largely referred to the various New Deal initiatives, targeting specific groups of people disadvantaged in the labour market. Examples include New Deal for Disabled People and New Deal for Lone Parents. ONE seeks to take these approaches a step further by offering tailored advice and support to all new benefit claimants, regardless of their status.

1.1.1 The rationale for ONE

Prior to the introduction of ONE, individuals needing to claim more than one benefit often had to submit claims to different agencies:

- claims for Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) were directed to local Jobcentres, run by the Employment Service (ES)
- local authorities managed claims for Housing Benefit (HB) and Council Tax Benefit (CTB)
- all other benefits were handled through local Benefits Agency (BA) offices

This set-up presented claimants with a fragmented benefit service in which those making multiple claims had to provide the same background information for their claim to more than one agency. The three key agencies (the ES, the BA and local authorities) are now working in partnership to deliver a joined-up service in the ONE pilot areas. They aim to offer a single point of entry to the benefit system, rather than the

\(^1\) Participation was compulsory from the outset for individuals claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA).
multiple entry routes outlined above, in order to provide a more seamless and integrated service to prospective claimants.

Before ONE, most benefit claimants, except jobseekers, were not required to engage in any work-related activities to receive their benefit. With time spent away from the labour market, these individuals risked losing any skills and/or work ethic they had acquired through employment. At the same time, it is likely that such claimants would be less able to adapt to new working patterns and environments adopted in the workplace than those in gainful employment. As a result, benefit claimants risked becoming increasingly distanced from the labour market, making it more difficult for them to find work, and leaving them more dependent on benefits for income. To counterbalance these effects, ONE has introduced work focused meetings at the start of the claiming process and, where relevant, at defined trigger points after certain periods of time on benefit.²

By making these meetings a condition of receipt of benefit, the ONE service aims to help people to keep in touch with the labour market, and developments within it, in order to ease their transition into work.

1.2 The aims and objectives of ONE

The overall purpose of ONE is to establish a work focused benefit service to improve the quality and quantity of labour market participation of people of working age. The service also has specific objectives to achieve including:

- to put more benefit recipients in touch with the labour market
- to increase the sustainable level of employment by getting more benefit recipients into work
- to ensure that more clients experience an effective and efficient service that is tailored to their personal needs
- to change the culture of the benefits system and the general public towards independence and work rather than payments and dependence

1.3 The ONE evaluation

In line with these service objectives, the evaluation of ONE seeks to test:

1. the feasibility of delivering ONE using different models of delivery
2. the effectiveness of the service in improving the quality and quantity of people’s labour market participation

² The trigger points include: following a Personal Capability Assessment (PCA) where the client remains entitled to Incapacity Benefit (IB); when entitlement to Invalid Care Allowance (ICA) ceases while other ONE benefits remain in payment; when the carer premium in Income Support (IS), HB and CTB ceases; when part-time work begins or ends; when training or education arranged through ONE comes to an end; when the participant reaches 17 or 18 (for 16 and 17 year olds who have claimed through ONE); and annual triggers for all lone parents, except those claiming IB and Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA).
There are four components to the evaluation:

- a policy evaluation exploring the impact of the service on labour market outcomes
- a delivery evaluation investigating how ONE is implemented
- a database monitoring information on administrative records
- a cost-benefit analysis


1.3.1 The policy evaluation

The policy perspective of the evaluation is primarily concerned with the outcomes achieved by the ONE service and how these are realised. The outcomes relate directly to the labour market and may include movement into work as well as increases in individuals’ motivation and confidence to work. The need to consider labour market outcomes is reflected in the objectives set specifically for the policy research:

- to consider the impact on people’s attachment to the labour market
- to consider how far clients can be refocused on work as a first priority
- to examine the effectiveness of the Personal Adviser in identifying barriers to work, in considering whole needs and in offering appropriate advice
- to consider whether more people get jobs and whether they get them more quickly than they might otherwise
- to see if more people stay employed for longer periods
- to assess if there has been a reduction in inactivity

It is important to stress that this report is concerned only with the qualitative findings related to these objectives. It does not, and cannot, address quantitative questions concerning the number of people getting jobs, whether they get them more quickly or if they stay in work for longer periods. These questions will be fully addressed by the quantitative survey with participants. The findings presented here, however, do aim to inform the results of the quantitative survey by identifying those factors influencing an individual’s decision to move into or stay in employment. These may include: whether participants’ attitudes to claiming benefit changed as a result of the ONE service; whether ONE encouraged individuals to refocus their priorities and activities towards work; and if the service provided support with claiming benefit for those who were unable to work.
1.4 Research approach

As mentioned above, this report presents the findings from qualitative research with ONE participants as part of the policy strand of the overall ONE evaluation. The main fieldwork took place in autumn 2000, more than five months after full participation was introduced, to allow the pilot areas to become accustomed to full participation. It is based on 106 in-depth interviews completed with benefit claimants who participated in the ONE service, and covers six of the 12 pilot areas.

Letters were sent out to a sample of potential interviewees asking for their assistance with the research. Individuals not wishing to take part were given the opportunity to ‘opt out’ but very few elected to do so. Following experience gained in conducting research during the voluntary phase of ONE, participants were purposively recruited to ensure the full range of participants’ attitudes and outcomes achieved after their first PA meeting were captured by the research. This was achieved by asking individuals a short series of questions over the telephone. A copy of the telephone questionnaire used is provided in Appendix D. This approach to recruitment allowed the research to collect sufficient evidence to robustly reflect the diversity of views and experiences encountered.

Interviews were held with participants drawn from specific ‘client groups’, determined by the benefit claimed, and were timed to take place three months after participants had attended their PA meeting. The groups included were jobseekers, lone parents, sick or disabled clients, carers and widows. Individuals from minority ethnic communities and those living in rural areas were also key groups included within the research, drawn from all five client groups.

A full account of the methodology adopted for this element of the ONE evaluation is provided in Appendix A.

1.5 Report structure

- **Chapter 2** provides some background information on how ONE is delivered, the pilot areas covered by this research and a brief profile of the individuals interviewed.

- **Chapter 3** outlines individuals’ attitudes and behaviour towards work and claiming benefit before they entered the ONE service, aiming to provide a baseline from which any impact brought about by ONE can be measured.

- **Chapter 4** describes the variety of barriers to work experienced by individuals, from their own perceptions but also from the perceptions of the researchers. It also explores whether ONE Personal Advisers recognised or identified these barriers and what action, if any, they took to help claimants overcome them and move towards work.

- **Chapter 5** then returns to the attitudes and behaviour of participants three months after their ONE experience to determine what impact was achieved and how this affected participants’ engagement with the labour market.
• Finally, Chapter 6 draws some conclusions from the main research findings, identifying those aspects of the service that were working, or not, for the individuals interviewed.

Since this report is based on the experience and perception of people participating in the ONE service, the term ‘participants’ is used throughout. This is not ideal since it assumes that individual service users are willingly and actively involved in the ONE service. However, it is used in preference to ‘client’, which is more commonly used by professionals but is not necessarily how individuals perceive themselves within the service. The terms ‘individuals’, ‘respondents’ and ‘benefit claimants’ are also used to refer to ONE participants. Lastly, the ONE policy and service is often simply referred to as ‘ONE’ within the report for ease of reference.
Separating the delivery of ONE from its impact, or outcomes, is not wholly desirable for the purpose of this report since this research ultimately seeks to identify those aspects of the service that help a participant to claim benefit and progress towards, or into, work. Other external factors, such as local economic conditions, may also influence the impact achieved by the ONE service. Thus it is important to place the findings of this qualitative research within its wider context.

This chapter explains how ONE is delivered, in theory, under full participation. The different models of delivery are outlined together with the process by which a participant may receive, or seek, advice and support from the ONE service. This is followed by a short description of the local economic conditions in each of the study areas at the time the research was undertaken. Lastly, some brief information is given on the characteristics of the participants interviewed to show any bias or differences across delivery models. These different elements are not intended to be comprehensive accounts of the environments, or characteristics, affecting ONE participants. Instead they aim to contribute a wider contextual understanding for the findings presented in later chapters.

2.1 Models of delivery

The ONE service is being piloted in 12 areas across Great Britain, covering approximately 10 per cent of all new and repeat claims made for ONE benefits. It is being delivered using three different approaches:

- **Basic Model**
  
  The Benefits Agency, the Employment Service and local authorities deliver the service from local Jobcentres and benefit offices. The Basic model was the first model to start operating, beginning in June 1999. It is being tested in four areas: Clyde Coast and Renfrew; South East Essex; Lea Roding (North East London and West Essex); and Warwickshire.

- **Call Centre Model**
  
  Call Centres, and call centre technology, are used for participants’ first contact with ONE where individuals’ details and background information to their claim is collected. Call centre variants of the basic model started in November 1999 and are operating in four of the 12 pilot areas: Buckinghamshire; Calderdale and Kirklees; Somerset; and South East Gwent.

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3 Further information on how ONE is actually being delivered can be obtained from the Department of Social Security.
• **Private and Voluntary Sector (PVS) Model**

The PVS model has a similar set-up to the basic model but is delivered by private and voluntary organisations using existing Jobcentres and benefit offices and new dedicated ONE suites. This version also began operating in November 1999 and is being tested in the remaining four pilot areas: Leeds; North Cheshire; North Nottinghamshire; and Suffolk.

The ONE process is broadly the same across all three models of delivery and is outlined in the following section.

2.2 The ONE process

There are three separate stages to the ONE service: a Start-up meeting with a Start-up Adviser; a work focused meeting with a Personal Adviser (PA); and follow-up meetings also held with a PA. The following description of how ONE works is based on the original design and therefore reflects how it is intended to operate. It does not necessarily reflect the way the service is actually working in practice. For further information on the actual practice please refer to Chapters 4 and 5 and other research reports available from the Department of Social Security (DSS).

2.2.1 Start-up meeting

An individual enters ONE through a ‘Start-up meeting’ during which background information, such as the person’s name and their work history, is collected by a Start-up Adviser. The purpose of Start-up is to elicit, as quickly and comprehensively as possible, sufficient information about a participant’s circumstances to enable them to participate fully in the ONE process. During this relatively short, informal meeting the Start-up Adviser will:

• explain the ONE service and check that the participant is eligible to take part in ONE
• establish which benefit(s) the participant wishes to claim, assess for additional benefits and ask relevant questions to enable accurate completion of the claim form
• gather information on employment history, job readiness, and barriers to employment – if the participant is ‘job-ready’, the Start-up Adviser will conduct a job search and refer the participant to suitable vacancies
• explain the PA service and book participants’ first meeting with a named PA, usually to take place within three days
• advise the participant on the evidence and documentation to be brought to the PA meeting to support their claim for benefit

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In the call centre pilots the Start-up meeting, including the completion of certain claim forms, is done over the telephone. If prospective claimants visit their local Jobcentre or benefit office to make a claim, they are given the telephone number for the call centre and asked to call the number in order to start the claim process. Dedicated telephones are provided on agency premises for this purpose, or participants may call from their own home. Calls are charged at the local rate and, on contact, a Start-up Adviser will arrange to call the participant back.

2.2.2 The initial Personal Adviser meeting

The second stage of the process is an initial meeting with a named Personal Adviser (PA). This is conducted on a face-to-face basis in a ONE suite for all delivery models and is intended to last up to one hour. During this meeting the PA is expected to:

- explain their role and what the ONE service can offer
- check the participant’s personal details to establish that the person attending is the intended benefit recipient
- explore the participant’s circumstances, barriers to work, establish their job goals and refer to suitable vacancies
- identify if the participant qualifies for New Deal
- identify training or specialist support needs
- discuss with the participant, where appropriate, the benefits of making an application to the Child Support Agency (CSA)
- consider the need for an in-work benefit calculation
- agree and complete a Jobseeker’s Agreement for jobseekers or a ONE action plan for other participants

All participants are required to attend a meeting with a PA as a condition of receipt of benefit. While these are intended to occur within three days of the Start-up meeting, there is scope for the initial PA meeting to be deferred under certain circumstances. It may not be appropriate, for example, to invite a new widow or a lone parent with a new baby to attend a PA meeting to discuss the possibility of work in the immediate future. In such circumstances, PAs are expected to use their judgement to determine what immediate action is appropriate and to identify a later date when the initial meeting may be held.

2.2.3 Follow-up meetings

The process design for ONE anticipated that most participants would have further contact with the PA or a specialist adviser, such as a Disability Employer Adviser, after their initial PA meeting. All jobseekers are required to attend two key meetings after their ONE PA meeting: one after 13 weeks of unemployment; and one after 26 weeks of unemployment. In contrast, it was assumed that half of all other client groups (lone parents, widows, carers and sick or disabled clients) would have more contact depending on their circumstances. This would allow ongoing contact between participant and adviser to be established to review progress, provide support and examine suitable work opportunities.
The quantity and duration of follow-up contact is agreed between the PA and participant, according to each participants’ individual circumstances. Such further contact for non-JSA participants is not, however, mandatory.

2.3 Study areas

As indicated in the previous chapter, this qualitative research covered six of the 12 pilot areas. The six areas operate in different conditions and demonstrate contrasting labour markets, as described in the following economic summaries. The following data is based on local authority district boundaries rather than local benefit districts, and so should be used as guidance only.

2.3.1 Basic model pilot areas

* Clyde Coast and Renfrew

Clyde Coast and Renfrew covers a resident population of approximately 445,000 people\(^5\) in four local authority districts: Argyll & Bute, Inverclyde, East Renfrewshire and Renfrewshire. The proportion of women of working age in employment is highest in this pilot area (75 per cent in Inverclyde, for example) compared with a UK average of 68.3 per cent\(^6\). Employment tends to be concentrated in the service industries (27.8 per cent\(^7\)), wholesale and distribution (17.6 per cent) and manufacturing (18.5 per cent of all employment), where two in every five jobs is related to the manufacture of electrical equipment. Unfortunately no reliable unemployment data is currently available for the Clyde Coast pilot area.

* Lea Roding

The Lea Roding pilot area covers part of North East London (the London boroughs of Waltham Forest and Redbridge) and West Essex (Epping Forest). With a local population of almost 600,000 people\(^8\), Lea Roding is the third largest pilot area and is predominantly urban. Employment and unemployment differ considerably within the pilot area: there is a significant amount of local employment in banking and finance in the more suburban parts of the pilot area (21.7 per cent in Redbridge compared with 14.6 per cent in Waltham Forest) for example. Unemployment is particularly high in Waltham Forest (7.9 per cent compared with a UK figure of 6 per cent) while Redbridge benefits from relatively low rates of unemployment (4.9 per cent).

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\(^7\) Annual Employment Survey, 1997.
\(^8\) Estimated mid-year resident population, NOMIS, 1998.
2.3.2 Call centre model pilot areas

- **Calderdale & Kirklees**
  Calderdale and Kirklees is the largest suburban-rural mix area amongst the pilot areas, with a population of 575,500. Almost a third (30.8 per cent) of the local workforce is employed in manufacturing, where one in every four jobs are in textiles despite recent years of decline in the industry. The proportion of people of working age in employment is slightly higher in Calderdale and Kirkless (76.4 per cent) than the UK average (73.8 per cent). This is mainly due to a higher proportion of men of working age in employment (81.4 per cent in Calderdale and 80.2 per cent in Kirklees).

- **South East Gwent**
  South East Gwent is the smallest pilot area included in this qualitative research, with a local resident population of 315,700. In close proximity to the valleys of South Wales, the area is predominantly rural with the towns of Newport, Chepstow, Cwmbran and Abergavenny. The local workforce was mainly employed in wholesale and distribution, the service industries and manufacturing, where one in four jobs were in metal manufacture. Recent announcements on the closure of Corus, a major local employer in the steel industry, is likely to adversely affect the number employed in manufacturing. Unemployment in Newport is 9.9 per cent, the highest level of unemployment across all six pilot areas. The proportion of working age people in employment is also the lowest of the study areas (69.3 per cent in Newport compared with a UK average of 73.8 per cent).

2.3.3 PVS model pilot areas

- **Leeds**
  Leeds is a large metropolitan city based in Yorkshire and is the largest of all six pilot areas studied here with a population in excess of 725,000 people. Local employment is concentrated in wholesale and distribution (17.6 per cent) and banking and finance (22.4 per cent). Unemployment runs at 5.3 per cent of the local labour force, below the UK average of 6 per cent, while economic activity rates are similar to that found in the UK as a whole.

- **North Nottinghamshire**
  The ONE pilot area of North Nottinghamshire covers five local authority districts: Amber Valley; Ashfield; Bolsover; Mansfield; and Newark & Sherwood. The area is predominantly rural, covering a local population of approximately half a million people. Local employment is concentrated in the manufacturing industry (32.4 per cent), particularly in the manufacture of metal, textiles and timber, rubber and plastics. The local labour market varies considerably across local authority boundaries, with low economic activity rates, a low proportion of people of working age in employment, and relatively high rates of unemployment in Amber Valley, Mansfield and Newark & Sherwood compared with Ashfield and Bolsover.
This qualitative research does not purport to be statistically representative of the entire ONE participant population, so it is important to show the type of people interviewed. The rest of this section provides some data on their characteristics, including age, gender and ethnicity. This serves two functions: firstly, it shows exactly who the research has consulted; and secondly, it allows the reader to see if any differences exist in the people interviewed across the different delivery models.

Individuals were selected to participate in the research, and to an extent were defined, on the basis of the type of benefit they claimed. Jobseekers are characterised by their claim for Jobseeker’s Allowance, for example, or widows by their claim for Widow’s Pension or other widows or bereavement benefits. However, it should be remembered that ONE participants are individual service recipients and make up a diverse group. The interests and/or characteristics of carers, for example, may be similar to those of lone parents. Indeed carers may also be lone parents. Further, all individuals allocated to any one group cannot be considered to be homogenous in that they may have different attitudes and behaviour towards work. Participants’ attitudes and behaviour are explored in detail in Chapters 3 and 5.

A total of 106 ONE participants were interviewed for this qualitative research, as shown in Table 2.1. They were drawn from five client groups and from the three different delivery models outlined earlier. Of these 106 interviewees, 16 were with individuals from minority ethnic communities and 22 were living in rural areas. Interviewees from these two additional categories were drawn from the five client groups shown in Table 2.1. Although the research intended to pull out specific findings relating to these two additional groups, this has not been possible. The main problem encountered was the ethnic diversity of participants recruited for the research, which included: British Muslim; Pakistani; Black British; Black African; British West Indian; and White Irish. With only 16 interviews conducted across these six groups it has not been possible to draw out any discernible common experiences. Consequently this report does not comment on the impact of ONE on ethnic minorities’ engagement with the labour market as a distinct group.

Table 2.1 The number of participants interviewed, by client group and delivery model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>JSA</th>
<th>Lone Parents</th>
<th>Sick or Disabled</th>
<th>Carers</th>
<th>Widows</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic Model</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call Centre Model</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVS Model</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Similarly, the diversity of rural participants’ attitudes to work, circumstances and experiences of ONE prevented any findings peculiar to this group emerging. As a result, the report does not reveal any evidence, or draw any conclusions, specifically pertaining to individuals living in rural areas.

**Age**

Figure 2.1 presents a graphical representation of the age distribution of the individuals interviewed for the research by delivery model.

**Figure 2.1 Age range of interviewees, by delivery model**

![Graph showing age distribution](image)

As can be seen, the broad pattern across models is very similar with all drawing participants from the four key age ranges: 18-24, 25-39, 40-49, and 50+. These ranges were devised on the basis of the groups targeted, by age, through New Deal.

**Gender**

Similarly, Figure 2.2 shows the composition of research participants according to their gender. By the nature of some of the client groups of interest to this research, namely lone parents, carers and widows, the individuals in those three categories were predominantly women and thus more women were interviewed than men. Female perspectives, therefore, heavily influence the research findings of these client groups reported later in this report. More importantly, the barriers to work faced by men, their experience of ONE and therefore the impact of ONE on men is largely limited to cases from jobseekers and sick or disabled client groups.
Figure 2.2 The gender of interviewees, by delivery model

Figure 2.3 shows that the research is based on a broadly equal mix of individuals who have had previous contact with the benefit system and those with no previous contact.

2.4.2 Previous contact with the benefit system

The main difference to note is that more participants drawn from the call centre model were new to the claiming process and benefit system compared with those from the Basic and PVS models.

Figure 2.3 Incidence of previous contact with the benefit system

The main difference to note is that more participants drawn from the call centre model were new to the claiming process and benefit system compared with those from the Basic and PVS models.

2.5 Summary

ONE is designed to maintain contact with its participants over time in order to improve and increase their engagement with the labour market. The rest of this report explores whether this aim was achieved at the time the research was undertaken. The findings presented in subsequent chapters are based on the perceptions and experiences of 106 ONE participants drawn from five client groups: jobseekers; lone parents; widows; carers; and sick or disabled people. Evidence on participants’ experiences for three of these groups, namely lone parents, widows and carers, is largely drawn from interviews with women as a direct result of the nature of these groups.
3 ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR BEFORE PARTICIPATION IN ONE

ONE places work at the very centre of the benefit system. By encouraging participants to consider work alongside their benefit claim, it aims to supplant the culture of ‘dependence and payments’ with one of ‘independence and work’. For this to be successful, ONE must bring about some kind of change in the way some people think and act towards work and claiming benefit.

This chapter explores ONE participants’ attitudes and behaviour towards work, claiming benefits and the benefit system as a whole before they encountered the ONE service. It describes the different ways in which interviewees came to claim benefit, their motivation for claiming and hence their immediate intentions on entry to ONE. These factors are then used to determine participants’ relationship to the labour market prior to any ONE intervention. Lastly, participants’ expectations of ONE, and the PA meeting, are examined to ascertain the level and scope of their awareness of the service. This aims to reveal any preconceptions held by individuals that may prevent or hinder the desired change in culture mentioned above.

The material used in this chapter is taken from interviews conducted three months after participants entered ONE so that the impact on labour market outcomes could be assessed. There is a risk, however, that individuals’ perceptions of their own attitudes and behaviour three months previously may have altered with the passing of time (and interaction with ONE). Care should therefore be taken when drawing implications from the findings.

3.1 Claiming benefit

The prime concern for all ONE participants at the time of their claim was money. Irrespective of their intentions towards the labour market or their personal circumstances, all participants felt that they needed financial assistance to support them in their everyday lives. This is hardly surprising given that the research was solely concerned with benefit claimants. However, there are very different events that can lead individuals to make a claim. These events provide an insight into participants’ personal circumstances on entering the ONE service and can, to an extent, shed some light on their immediate plans.

3.1.1 Events leading up to claims

The impetus for a new benefit claim is brought about by a change in an individual’s personal circumstances. Such changes may be directly related to work or may be associated with other aspects of a person’s life, such as the death of a husband. These events, together with an individual’s availability for work, determine eligibility for particular benefits. In turn, these benefits are used to categorise claimants into ‘client groups’ for
administrative purposes. The client groups studied for this report include jobseekers, lone parents, carers, widows and sick or disabled clients.

Table 3.1 shows some of the different events experienced by the research respondents that led to their new claim for benefit. It should be noted that such events do not always happen in isolation but may occur either as a result of one another or at the same time.

**Table 3.1 Triggers for new claims**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work-related changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• left job of own accord</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sacked</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• employment contract expired</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• made redundant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reduced working hours</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• became ill, injured or disabled while employed (‘off sick’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• other (e.g. company ceased trading)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• recovered from illness and fit for work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• youngest child reached 16 years old (lone parents)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• separation or divorce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• return to UK from abroad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• death of husband</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• became pregnant / gave birth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• became ill, injured or disabled whilst unemployed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• relative (child, parent or partner) became ill or disabled, requiring care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• caring responsibilities ended</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents discussed the events leading up to their claim, and hence their need to claim, within the context of their immediate intentions and personal circumstances. For many this referred directly to their relationship with the labour market whilst for others it reflected their intensive caring responsibilities to family members:

‘I had to claim the money while I was looking for work.’
(PVS model, female jobseeker, aged 23)

‘I needed some money to get by when I wasn’t working.’
(Basic model, male, recovering from a heart attack, aged 48)

‘I couldn’t go back to work because my husband needed round-the-clock care. I needed to claim so we had some money coming in.’
(Call centre model, female carer, aged 52)

‘I needed to be able to support myself and my children after my husband left.’
(Call centre model, female lone parent, aged 37)
3.1.2 Benefit knowledge  

Participants’ knowledge about their entitlement to benefit, prior to ONE, depended largely on whether they had claimed benefit before. New claimants, with no prior experience of claiming, were often unaware which benefit they could claim and hoped to get advice from the benefit service. In some instances, particularly amongst carers and widows, new claimants had not been aware that they could claim at all. In these cases the participants had been advised to claim by health professionals, friends or other members of their local community, such as fellow parents.

‘I’ve never claimed benefit before but the nurses at the hospital told me I must claim.’
(Basic model, female carer, aged 51)

‘I didn’t know I could claim until I talked to another parent at the school.’
(Basic model, female carer, aged 36)

‘I didn’t know I could claim benefits. It was the funeral director that gave me all the forms to fill in.’
(Call centre model, widow, aged 50)

Where new claimants had a clear idea of the benefit they should claim, their knowledge was gained from the experience of friends and family members, or through independent advice agencies consulted by the participant.

‘My wife used to claim Income Support for the family when we were together. I just assumed that’s what I’d have to claim as well.’
(PVS model, male lone parent, aged 50)

‘I went to see a local group who deal with this kind of thing to make sure I had the right information on which benefits to claim.’
(Basic model, male carer, aged 47)

Previous claimants, returning to claim under similar circumstances to earlier occasions, and individuals making repeat claims felt very clear which benefits they would be entitled to, and did not need further advice. However, where participants’ circumstances had changed from previous visits, their knowledge was less complete and they wanted advice and guidance on the full range of benefits they could claim.

‘I’ve been through the system that many times I knew what I had to claim.’
(Call centre model, female, suffering from severe anaemia, aged 47)

‘We’ve claimed DLA [Disability Living Allowance] for Katie [daughter] for a few years now whilst I was working but now I’ve stopped work we needed information on anything we could apply for.’
(Basic model, female carer, aged 32)
Generally, participants saw the benefit system as an alternative source of income in the absence of financially rewarding work. Their attitude towards claiming, the intended duration of claiming, and reciprocal work plans and strategies were largely based on their perceived ability to participate in the labour market, as outlined in the following sections.

3.2.1 Participants in work

Some of the participants interviewed for this research were already in work when they made their claim for benefit. Of these, some widows had full-time jobs whilst lone parents, carers and some widows had part-time jobs. For those in part-time work, their claim represented an additional source of income to boost that derived from paid employment. These individuals did not feel that they were able to work full-time because of their caring commitments for other members of their family. As a result they were, to an extent, reliant on the extra money provided through benefits. All interviewees planned to continue working in their existing jobs on a part-time basis alongside their claims for the foreseeable future.

3.2.2 Work as an immediate priority

Claiming benefit was viewed as a temporary or short-term measure for those who perceived themselves to be ‘job-ready’. These participants, drawn from all client groups, were focused on finding work ‘as soon as possible’ in order to support themselves, and their families. The financial benefits of being in work, and ‘earning your own money’ were cited as the main factors driving people to find work.

Those individuals with a strong work ethic or continuous employment history were highly motivated to find work because they perceived paid employment to provide financial reward, personal satisfaction and self-esteem. Lone parents, jobseekers and carers had clear ideas about the work they sought, often based on their prior experience. However very few participants had developed a clear strategy for finding employment. Instead, most were applying for jobs on an ad hoc basis through local papers. The main exception to note here is those lone parents who had recently completed education or training in their desired occupation, already had some temporary work experience, and were actively targeting employers for permanent work. Those sick or disabled clients who perceived themselves to be ‘job-ready’ were less clear about the work they were able to do.

‘I’ll do anything really but I can’t lift stuff about or do anything heavy like drive a heavy goods vehicle.’

(PVS model, male, worked as a collier, suffering from respiratory problems, aged 52)

‘I don’t know what work I can do. Whatever I find can’t involve my hands too much or my skin infection will get worse again.’

(Call centre model, male, worked in textile manufacturing, suffering with dermatitis, aged 45)
In contrast, individuals with a patchy, ‘on-off’ employment history, particularly amongst younger jobseekers, were less motivated because their experience of working was characterised by low pay, long hours (often involving shift work) and temporary or casual contracts. They felt more strongly about the type of work and level of pay they were not prepared to take rather than the type of work they did want or would consider. Again, these participants rarely had a targeted job search strategy and relied heavily on the ‘right job’ turning up in the local newspaper.

‘The first thing I wanted to do was get a job, any job, but not in care again or pubs.’

(Basic model, female jobseeker, aged 23)

‘I was trying to get a job as soon as possible, one with good pay, but I don’t really care what in.’

(PVS model, male jobseeker, aged 27)

3.2.3 Work in the future

There were three clear groups of participants who were not looking for work at the time of their initial PA interview but wanted to work at a defined point in the future. These were:

- lone parents in part-time education or training
- lone parents/widows who had recently been separated from their partner
- participants who had recently become ill or who were looking after a close family relative who had recently suffered ill-health

The following paragraphs consider each group’s attitudes and behaviour towards the labour market in turn.

A number of lone parents were in part-time education or training at the time of their claim, as part of a longer-term strategy to return to work. These ONE participants had decided on the type of work they wanted to do in the future and were taking concerted steps towards achieving their goals by enrolling, and participating in vocational studies. Although not actively seeking work, they felt they were taking positive steps for themselves and did not intend to continue claiming benefit for the foreseeable future.

Following a sudden change in circumstances, such as the end of a relationship, some participants felt that work was not a priority at the time of their claim because they needed time to adjust and look after any dependants. This was particularly the case with widows and lone parents recently separated from their husband or partner. Instead they wanted some time to grieve, to look after themselves and their children, and to establish some stability in their lives.
'I just wanted to stay at home and think about him [husband] and grieve for his loss. I wasn’t in a fit state to do or think about anything else.’
(Call centre model, widow, aged 52)

'I didn’t want to go back to work straight away. I needed to spend time with my children and settle things down again. They were very distressed when he left.'
(PVS model, female lone parent, aged 33)

Although not prepared to think about work at the time of their claim, all these participants planned to return to work within six months or a year, and did not want, or expect, to claim benefit for a significant period of time. Some participants had a clear idea of the type of work they wanted to do, usually closely related to their qualifications and previous work experience, whilst others were not sure and had not given much thought to the matter. Very few had considered, in any detail, the methods they would use to find work or where they would look.

Claiming benefit was perceived to be a medium to long-term situation by those participants who had recently suffered an injury, were depressed or were off work due to ill-health. This was also the case with those participants caring for a close member of their family suffering poor health. In these instances, work was not their first or immediate concern. Instead, securing a source of income to support themselves, and/or their dependants, was the most important consideration. These participants felt, however, that work was a very real option for them in the future.

'I was still focused on work but the doctor said it would take twelve months for my arm to get better.'
(Call centre model, male, working as an undertaker, injured arm at work, aged 47)

'I wanted to concentrate my efforts on helping my son for the next few years but then I’d like to go back to work and maybe do something different.'
(PVS model, female carer, aged 38)

Where individuals were off work due to ill-health, most planned to return to their old jobs as soon as they were fit to do so. However, the work-related goals of those without jobs were not at all well defined, largely because their attention was directed towards recovery and/or caring. Instead, work was perceived to be a longer-term goal, something to be considered later.

3.2.4 Work not an option

Lastly, some participants from all client groups, except jobseekers, did not consider work to be an option in either the foreseeable future or at all. They planned and expected to claim benefit for a considerable period of time and so may be considered to be dependent on payments from the benefit system. These participants fell into three broad groups, described below.
Firstly some participants felt that it was not possible to combine work with their caring responsibilities. They often wanted to work but did not consider this to be realistic, given their circumstances. They were unwilling to seek help with caring because of the strong responsibility they felt towards the person they were looking after. Some lone parents also questioned the availability and quality of ‘good’ childcare in their local area, ruling childcare out as an option. As a result, they anticipated claiming for ‘as long as necessary’.

‘If I wanted to go out to work I’d have to get someone in to care for him [husband] at breakfast, lunch and dinner time. I’d have to get up at 5am to wash and dress him before I went to work. The wages I used to earn wouldn’t cover the care expenses and I’d worry about him all day. I’d be a nervous wreck.’

(Call centre model, female carer, aged 52)

‘I didn’t know who would look after the kids … none of the child minders are qualified round here.’

(Call centre model, male lone parent, aged 50)

In contrast, there was a second group of participants comprising of carers and lone parents who had made a very definite decision not to work and were not prepared to discuss or consider work at the time of their claim.

‘Work was not an option. I believe that young children should be looked after by their mother at home.’

(PVS model, female lone parent, aged 24)

‘I gave up work specifically to look after my daughter. When I was working and looking after her, it was awful, we were rowing all the time and not giving the kids enough attention. So we [participant and husband] decided I shouldn’t work.’

(Call centre model, female carer, aged 35)

Lastly, work was not deemed to be an option by a group of participants who suffered continuous serious illnesses, such as angina, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (M.E.), or Lupus for example. Although many wanted to work, they felt that it was not a realistic option given the nature and/or severity of their illness. Instead, these individuals focused their attention on getting through each day and improving their health. As a result, they were resigned to continuing to claim benefit for the foreseeable future.

‘I can’t see anyone employing me. I’m basically not fit enough.’

(PVS model, male, suffering from angina, aged 54)

‘I can’t do much activity, just walking tires me out. Besides, I always get really tired around lunchtime and have to sleep for most of the afternoon. What job could I do?’

(Call centre model, male, diagnosed with Lupus, aged 23)
Given participants’ personal circumstances, level of priority attributed to work and attitudes towards claiming benefit, as outlined above, it is possible to depict their position in the labour market at the start of ONE. Four broad categories can be used, based on work-related activity and timeframe for returning to work. Figure 3.1 shows the four categories: in work, education or training; seeking work; not seeking but would like work; and work not an option.

- **In work, education or training**
  This refers to all ONE participants in full-time or part-time work, education or training at the start of their claim and includes jobseekers, lone parents, widows and carers.

- **Seeking work**
  This category relates to all those individuals seeking work at the time of their claim, including: those actively seeking work and available to start immediately (jobseekers and lone parents); those passively seeking work and available immediately (jobseekers and lone parents); and those seeking but not able to start immediately (all client groups except jobseekers).

- **Not seeking but would like work**
  The third group includes the more inactive participants who, although not actually seeking work, consider work to be an option for the future. They have a fixed timeframe in which they would like to start, or return to, work. The timeframe may be a matter of a few weeks or months, or may extend to up to two years. Examples include participants from lone parents, carers, widows, and sick or disabled clients.

Figure 3.1 Participants’ relationship to the labour market before ONE

- **Work not an option**
  Finally, for the fourth category of benefit claimants, work was not an option in the foreseeable future, if at all. Examples include: lone parents; carers; widows; and sick or disabled clients.
This framework is used throughout the rest of this report to show the distance travelled by ONE participants from the start of their claim to the time they were interviewed for this research, a period of about three months. Before turning to participants’ experiences of ONE and its resultant impact, the final section of this chapter explores individuals’ expectations of the PA service before they attended their initial meeting with an adviser.

3.4 Expectations of Personal Adviser meetings

Interviews were conducted three months after claimants had participated in ONE. Therefore it was not possible to explore their expectations of the ONE service prior to their entry because responses were highly likely to be based on their actual experience. However, the design of the ONE process intends that the PA service should be explained to all ONE participants at the start of their claim, ‘Start-up’. Consequently, it was more appropriate to ask participants about what they thought was going to happen when they saw a PA, based on the information imparted at Start-up.

Most people did not know what to expect from the ONE service and the role of the PA does not appear to be routinely explained at Start-up. Generally, participants’ expectations of the PA meeting tended to reflect their immediate needs and circumstances and so, inevitably, they focused on submitting, and receiving, the benefit claim. Few expected ONE or the PA to provide them with help in finding work or for thinking about work in the longer term. Some were worried that they were being investigated. Clearly, many ONE participants were not fully aware (or had any knowledge) of what the ONE service could offer them as individuals.

‘I didn’t know really, it wasn’t explained to me. I just assumed everyone had to see an adviser, it’s the way the system works. But I wanted to find out if I was going to get the money I asked for.’

(PVS model, female lone parent, aged 37)

‘I thought it was to check my benefit forms and to make sure I wasn’t working already.’

(Basic model, male, suffering from depression, aged 37)

‘I thought they’d tell me whether I was eligible for the benefit or not.’

(Call centre model, female carer, aged 35)

3.5 Summary

Individuals’ immediate priority at the time of their benefit claim was to secure a source of income in the absence of work. Therefore, their minds were largely focused on resolving the claim when they met with their adviser. Yet some were also work focused and actively engaged in job seeking behaviour. In fact, four groups of participants were identified...
on the basis of their attitudes and behaviour towards work:

- participants in work
- where work was an immediate priority
- where work was an option for the future
- where work was not an option

Those already in work sought to claim benefit as a source of supplementary income and perceived this to be a medium to long-term need. In contrast, those focused on work as an immediate priority intended to claim in the short-term only whilst they looked for and found work. Many participants suffering illnesses, those with caring responsibilities and some widows were not immediately focused on work and did not expect work to become a priority for some time. In these scenarios, participants considered the benefit system to be a means of support, either until they perceived themselves to be in a position to work or for the foreseeable future.

Individuals from all client groups were found in all four groups, except jobseekers who were limited to the first two categories. This framework forms the basis of the analysis in Chapter 5 where the actual impact generated by ONE is explored.
4 IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO WORK

The impact of ONE relies on the ability of Personal Advisers (PAs) to identify and overcome the key issues that prevent, or deter, participants from engaging in the labour market. In order to achieve an impact effectively PAs need to consider participants’ whole needs and provide support accordingly. This forms the very essence of ONE: to provide a tailored service to all individuals, regardless of their benefit status, in order to help those able to work to move towards, or into, the labour market.

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the range of issues affecting ONE participants’ willingness and ability to engage in paid employment – their ‘barriers to work’. A distinction is made throughout the chapter between barriers perceived by participants and those identified by researchers. These are set within the context of participants’ PA meetings in order to determine which barriers were recognised by advisers and what action was taken to overcome them. The impact of such action is examined in Chapter 5.

It should be noted that the findings presented in this chapter are entirely based on the perceptions of those ONE participants interviewed for this research. Although accurate and valid in their own right, they do not include any barriers to work identified by Personal Advisers but not discussed with the participant. As such, these findings need to be placed within the context of other research involving PAs being undertaken on behalf of the DSS.

4.1 Barriers to work

For the purpose of this research, barriers to work were defined as those factors that prevent or hinder an individual from effectively seeking and/or finding work. The analysis takes a skills approach, distinguishing between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ barriers:

- ‘Hard’ barriers include the more familiar, tangible barriers including qualifications, basic skills and work experience.
- ‘Soft’ barriers refer to attributes that are more difficult to identify or measure, such as problem solving, communication, team working, confidence, self-esteem or motivation.

Additionally, a range of circumstantial barriers may influence an individual’s ability to look for and take up work. To an extent such barriers can be identified by the type of benefit that an individual is claiming. For example, the ability of someone claiming Incapacity Benefit to take up work will be affected by their ill-health, whilst a participant claiming a caring allowance will have caring responsibilities. There are other circumstances, however, which may also adversely affect individuals’
ability to secure work but are unrelated to an individual’s benefit claim. Examples include vulnerable housing arrangements, debt and substance misuse.

4.2 Hard barriers

Many of the participants involved in this research lacked qualifications, basic skills or work experience, or combinations of the three. Few participants recognised the full extent of these barriers and so did not raise them with their PA. Consequently there was little evidence that PAs tried to address them through the provision of advice or by signposting these participants to alternative services.

4.2.1 Qualifications

Some participants, amongst jobseekers, lone parents and sick or disabled clients, felt that their lack of qualifications was a problem that adversely affected their chances of finding a job. They perceived this barrier to cause difficulties in two ways:

- Some participants were already highly skilled but lacked the formal qualifications to show potential employers that they were able to do the job.

Mark was made redundant a year ago after spending ten years working as a panel fitter. This is a specialist trade and vacancies for this work are available, but he does not have an NVQ or equivalent qualification.

Although looking for work at the Jobcentre, in the local paper and through friends, he had not been able to find work because he could not demonstrate to employers, on paper, that he had the necessary skills to do the job. The PA suggested a training course to obtain the relevant qualification. However, Mark was unwilling to attend the course because he felt he already possessed the required knowledge and skills.

(PVS model, male jobseeker, aged 40)
Others had been out of the labour market for some time as a result of ill-health or caring responsibilities and did not feel confident about finding work because they had no qualifications.

Margaret had cared for her husband, who was diagnosed with motor neurone disease, for the last five years. After his death, she began to think about work because she wanted to get out of the house and have some financial security.

She would like to work as a carer, possibly with children, but does not feel confident about finding work because she has no qualifications. Margaret did not discuss these options with her PA at the time of their initial meeting because she did not realise that the adviser would be able to help her with work.

She continues to stay at home and grieve the loss of her husband but also plans to start looking at different local courses in the near future which might help her to find work.

(Call centre model, widow, aged 52)

PAs only addressed lack of qualifications as a barrier to work when participants raised it as an issue. When the issue was highlighted, PAs directed individuals to local training courses or colleges to enrol in a relevant course and acquire the necessary qualifications. However, those participants with practical work experience but no formal qualifications were unwilling to embark on training at a basic level just to get ‘a piece of paper that says I’ve got the skill’ because they perceived it to be ‘a waste of time’.

‘Basic skills’ refers to basic literacy, numeracy and Information Technology (IT). A number of participants, across all client groups, self-identified lack of basic skills, and particularly basic IT skills, as an issue affecting their ability to find work. Older participants, and particularly those who had worked in declining industries, were not confident about finding work without some basic knowledge and experience of using computers. Participants who told their PA that they were concerned about their lack of IT skills said that they had discussed ways in which they could develop these skills, especially the option of going on a course. Discussions about basic skill needs were not apparently instigated by PAs.

The more inactive participants, including lone parents, widows, carers and people on sickness and disability benefits, did not raise this as an issue with their PA because they did not consider work to be an immediate priority for them.
Jean spends most of her time caring for her aged father who is unable to dress, eat or move around by himself. With previous experience in bookkeeping, she would love to return to work but is unsure if she would be able to find work because she has no experience with computers. Jean did not discuss this with her Personal Adviser because she did not feel it was appropriate at the time.

‘I can’t work at the moment. I have to look after my Dad. So I didn’t see the point in raising it with her [PA] because I wouldn’t be able to do anything about it at the moment.’

(Call centre model, female carer, aged 53)

4.2.3 Work experience

Those with patchy or inconsistent employment histories, or no work experience at all often realised that their ‘track record’ would present a problem when looking for work. This was particularly the case amongst those with a health problem or disability, and those claiming JSA. They recognised that a lack of work experience hindered them from finding work in one of three ways:

- Some participants have problems finding work because of their patchy employment history. Typically they were jobseekers with previous experience of claiming benefit, interspersed with short-term/temporary jobs in a range of occupations/industries. Furthermore, these individuals tended to have little in the way of formal qualifications and a lack of basic and key skills.

Fiona had recently returned to the UK after visiting relatives in Australia and was looking for work in retail. She left school at 15 and has worked for three different employers on a temporary basis, including a month at a local meat factory, three months at a pub and, most recently, five months in an electrical shop. In between jobs, Fiona claimed JSA.

When Fiona met with her PA at the start of her most recent benefit claim, she explained that she enjoyed working in shops but didn’t really have enough experience. The PA suggested that Fiona draw on different parts of her previous experience to show retailers that she could do the job. Fiona has since applied for a couple of jobs and is now working as a cashier in her local supermarket.

(Call centre model, female jobseeker, aged 19)

- Other participants had not worked for a number of years or had never worked since leaving school. They were not job-ready because they lacked up-to-date skills and knowledge of the jobs market. Of these, some were caring for a family member whilst others had left work some time ago due to ill-health. There was no evidence to suggest that PAs had recognised this lack of relevant work experience or taken any action to address the barrier.
Sandra had not worked since her daughter was diagnosed with a heart condition three years ago. With a dated history of cooking and factory work, Sandra realised that she would find it difficult to get a job without more up-to-date experience. She felt that catering was the more realistic option since this is where most of her experience had been gained. But Sandra did not ask her PA for advice on getting up-to-date work experience. Instead, discussions focused on Sandra’s claim for Invalid Care Allowance.

(PVS model, female carer, aged 23)

- A third group of participants had a lengthy work history but in a different occupational/industrial area from that in which they were seeking work. Some were looking in alternative areas because of health problems whilst others simply felt that there were no jobs to be found in their area of experience.

For his whole life, Simon had worked in temporary manual jobs which required packing and lifting of heavy goods. After being diagnosed with angina, he was told that heavy lifting was not possible and he would need to change his job. Although Simon enjoyed work and wanted to return after he had spent some time recovering, he was unsure what type of work he would be able to do.

Simon explained to his PA that he was unable to work at the time of his claim. She did not explore whether work would be an option for the future. Simon did not receive any work related advice and continues to claim benefit whilst passively looking for the right job to ‘turn up’.

(PVS model, male, suffering with angina, aged 54)

When participants discussed their concerns about work experience with their PA, a range of advice was offered. For example, participants claiming JSA described how their PA had suggested alternative occupations which did not demand previous experience or which related to other experience held by the individual. However, participants did not always follow this advice because they often perceived the suggested occupations to be less-skilled and lower paid than their desired job. As a result, the impact of the PA intervention did not always achieve its potential. This finding is explored in further detail in Chapter 5.

4.3 Soft barriers

A range of other ‘soft’ barriers may also inhibit a participants’ access and progression into employment. Typically, soft barriers do not tend to occur in isolation but rather tend to compound other hard and soft barriers. Again, many of these issues were only discussed in depth with Personal Advisers when specifically raised by the participant.
Only a small number of participants expressed concern about finding work because they did not think that employers would be interested in them or what they had to offer. Most of those who expressed this view had a disability or health problem, and their concerns were also bound up with other barriers such as a lack of work experience, communication skills and medical problems. Where participants expressed these concerns during their PA meeting, PAs suggested a range of actions to address this lack of confidence. They outlined the different work options available to participants, gave practical advice on job search methods and signposted participants to training opportunities to address skill gaps. Where such advice was recalled, participants appreciated the good listening skills of their PA and their reassurance in defining individual goals.

Anthony was claiming Incapacity Benefit after being diagnosed with severe depression. His business had gone bankrupt, he felt unable to leave the house, and was feeling suicidal. He lost confidence in his own abilities and feared that employers would not take him seriously because he had failed to cope with his own enterprise. Although work was a long-term goal, the PA reviewed Anthony’s work history and discussed the types of work he felt he could do. This allowed Anthony to see future employment as a more achievable goal which could be reached over time. He planned to get back in touch with his PA when he was better to talk through options for returning to work.

(Basic model, male, suffering with depression, aged 37)

Whilst the incidences of self-identification of confidence as a barrier to work were few, the scale of the issue is likely to have been understated. Researchers identified examples within all client groups of individuals who lacked work experience and/or formal qualifications and who, as a result, seemed to lack confidence in relation to seeking work. Additionally, fears of discrimination against those with a health problem or disability seemed to impact on confidence levels to a greater extent than was articulated by participants claiming sickness and disability benefits.

‘I can’t see any person employing me. I’m basically not fit enough. Would insurance cover me in case I have a (heart) attack at work?’

(PVS model, male, recovering from a heart attack, aged 54)
After Matthew’s relationship with his wife broke down, he needed to stay at home to look after the children. He had not considered work due to his caring commitments and grave doubts about the quality of local childcare. Furthermore, with no work experience in the last three years, he did not feel that work was a realistic option at the time he made his claim. When Matthew entered ONE, his PA raised the issue of work and explored a number of options open to him. She looked at his previous work history and explained that if he found a job he would also be eligible for the Working Families’ Tax Credit (WFTC) which would boost his income. After meeting with his PA, Matthew felt that work was an achievable goal and had started to think more seriously about the type of work he could do.

(Call centre model, male lone parent, aged 52)

4.3.2 Motivation

Some participants claiming sickness/disability benefits lacked the motivation to think about work, including what their options might be (for types of work), and how to go about finding it. To an extent lack of motivation was bound up with a lack of confidence in relation to finding work. In particular, participants lacking in motivation were concerned that the combined effect of their lack of work experience, qualifications and key skills was such that there was little or no chance of their getting work.

Other participants lacked the motivation to seek work because of the combined effect of being long-term claimants, alongside their perception that they were financially better-off on benefits than they would be if they were working. The individuals concerned felt that they would only be able to find work with low levels of pay, because they had few skills and lacked work experience. Despite these concerns, participants did not discuss their levels of motivation with their PA and so, consequently, no action was taken and neither were they given a better-off calculation. While low motivation may have been recognised by PAs during discussion, participants do not remember this being directly referred to by their PA.

After the local authority closed down her business, Isobel decided to stay at home to prepare for an appeal against the decision whilst caring for her two children. Isobel was reluctant to return to work because she did not feel appreciated and felt that the British ‘system’ works against self-employed entrepreneurs like herself. Isobel discussed the pending court case with her PA and made it clear that she was not interested in working at that time. The PA understood and did not try to persuade Isobel that she should work.

(Call centre model, female lone parent, aged 44)
4.3.3 Communication skills

Only a very small number of participants told their PA that because English was not their first language or because they had a disability (such as deafness) that they were concerned about their ability to communicate effectively with other people. There were further cases where researchers felt that communication was an issue, but this was rarely identified by Personal Advisers. Where participants specifically requested help with their English, PAs directed them to local English courses. Generally, however, no action was taken to improve participants’ communication skills.

Mohammed arrived in the UK as an asylum seeker. He was a qualified fork-lift truck driver but he realised that he would need to speak good English if he were to find a company willing to take him on. Mohammed was accompanied by a friend when he met with his PA, to help explain his situation and interpret the PA’s advice. Although already on a basic English course, Mohammed asked for information on other courses and any other assistance available. The PA advised him that he could receive financial support whilst learning English and that he could extend his course for a further six months.

(PVS model, male jobseeker, aged 29)

4.4 Circumstantial barriers

The third and final set of barriers relate to an individual’s personal circumstances. Although some of these could be anticipated from the benefit(s) claimed, others are more generic and may affect any of the client groups included in this research.

4.4.1 Caring responsibilities

Obviously all of the participants claiming benefit as carers had caring responsibilities. In some cases their caring commitments were full-time, often for 24 hours a day, whilst for others it was a part-time responsibility because the dependent received supplementary care in a home or at school for the rest of the day. All these individuals felt that their caring responsibilities took precedence over work. Some carers did combine caring with work, whilst others did not consider work to be an option at the time of their claim. In both cases participants were aware that their ability to work was constrained by the level of care required by their dependants.

Whilst caring is a very clear and easily identifiable barrier to work, and would be evident to PAs through the discussion of personal circumstances, there were no examples of PAs discussing combining work with existing responsibilities. Instead, most meetings focused on either just the claim or just work.
Hannah had taken voluntary redundancy from a management job where she had worked for 20 years to look after her daughter who has cerebral palsy. Although her mother has helped to share the caring responsibilities, her daughter’s condition requires constant, full-time care.

After deciding that she would not return to work for at least another two years, Hannah visited her local ONE office after receiving an appointment to see a Personal Adviser. Despite claiming Invalid Care Allowance, the PA asked Hannah what she was doing to find work. When she explained that she had no intentions to work, the PA said she could not help her because she knew nothing about caring or the benefits available. The PA also said she did not know where Hannah could seek further support, and so was unable to signpost her to other advice or support agencies. This meant that Hannah went home feeling that she had not been helped at all.

(Call centre model, female carer, aged 37)

4.4.2 Childcare

Although childcare was a particular concern for lone parents, it was also an issue for other participants who had pre-school children or children of school age. Some participants claiming JSA, for example, said their job search was restricted because they had children.

Margaret is married; she had one pre-school child and one child at school and was looking for a job that would fit in around school. She had taken voluntary redundancy from a bank where she had worked for ten years and was actively seeking work.

Her primary goal was to find work as a teaching assistant, although she was aware that she also needed to undertake training to establish this as a career. Although specific work hours were discussed at the PA meeting, Margaret had not specified that attending interviews out of school hours would be a problem. After weekly searches through the local paper, she secured an interview for a job at a local school which, she said, would have been ideal because of the short hours. However, because the interview was going to be held after school hours, she did not attend.

(Call centre model, female jobseeker, aged 30)

Childcare issues can either stop parents from considering work at all, or it can impact on working hours. There are two different sets of issues relating to childcare provision. Some parents do not want anyone else to look after their children, while others would only be happy for a family member to look after their children, which is not always possible. In other cases, perceptions about the availability, quality or affordability of childcare (or any combination of these) are such that individuals have not investigated local childcare provision.
For many parents (usually mothers) of young children, work will only become an option once their children are ‘older’. Parents’ definitions of when their children will be ‘old enough’ for them to consider work vary. Some participants anticipate that they will consider work when their youngest child starts school, although the indications are that part-time work will be favoured over full-time. Others suggested that they would want to wait until their children were older, either starting secondary school or when teenagers.

Some parents were actively looking for work, but described how they were restricted in terms of the hours and type of work because of the work patterns of other family members. Whilst they were keen to work, they only wanted a job that fitted in around school hours; alternatively they wanted an evening job so that their husband/partner would be able to care for their children while they were at work. Parents who faced these restrictions on working often felt that their choice of job was limited to low skilled work such as working in a supermarket or as a dinner lady. Some were looking for help and advice about jobs that could fit in around school hours, but felt that PAs had not addressed this need.

After shortening her part-time hours as a shelf stacker in a supermarket, to spend more time at home with her autistic son when he was home from school, Sue was thinking about a more fulfilling career. She knew that she would probably need to go on a course to gain relevant skills/qualifications. Currently Sue’s husband looked after the children in the evenings when she went to work. Because she did not want to use external childcare services, she needed to consider what opportunities were available within school hours. Ideally, she would have liked to do work experience as a teaching assistant at the local school, but feels she is not qualified to do this.

The PA asked if she was working and left the subject when Sue had explained that she was already in employment. Sue felt that she had not had the opportunity to discuss her ideas about developing a career.

(Call centre model, female carer, aged 37)

PAs did try to address participants’ concerns (both Jobseekers and some lone parents) about combining work with family life. In all cases the participant initiated the discussion by specifying their need for working patterns to be flexible around school hours. Sometimes the PA promoted the availability of public childcare services. In a smaller number of cases, the PA also offered help with payment, but there were no examples of this support being taken as a result.

Childcare was neither recognised nor addressed as a barrier for those claiming widows’ benefits and participants had refrained from mentioning this as a first priority. This was also the case for some lone parents. If help was not requested during the interviews, PAs did not systematically offer advice or assistance with childcare provision.
4.4.3 Physical health

Major health problems posed a barrier for participants claiming sickness and disability benefits. Yet individuals across all client groups felt that minor conditions were preventing them from moving into work.

For those claiming a sickness or disability benefit, these self-identified barriers were recognised by the PA. Researchers also felt a few medical issues mentioned by jobseekers may hinder their ability to look for work. These conditions included temporary injuries to the hand or to the back for example which may have stopped the client securing work in the immediate term.

Health problems can hinder individuals from finding and securing work in various ways. Firstly, some participants had been forced to leave their long-term employment as a result of major health conditions such as heart problems or after undergoing a major operation. Some had been instructed to do low-impact ‘desk’ work, but others were unsure as to what type of job would be appropriate for them. PAs did not always tailor their advice accordingly.

Tom had been receiving sick pay from his employer for six months after suffering a slipped disc in his back. He had worked as an optician for the same company for 15 years. Work was not an immediate option as he was unable to stand upright for long, bend down or walk long distances. There was also a chance that he would have to undergo surgery. Although he wanted to return to his job, he was aware that this might not be possible. He was unsure of what other types of work may be feasible when his condition had improved. No advice was offered to him. The PA did not discuss work and concentrated on processing Tom’s claim.

(PVS model, male, suffering with back problems, aged 36)

One group of participants comprised those in secure employment but on paid sick leave. Some were unsure as to when they would be able to return to work or, indeed, whether they would ever be fit enough to go back to work.

Where participants raised specific concerns about their employability in the long-term, PAs offered support. In these cases the PA asked for more detail about the nature of the health condition and in fewer examples, read relevant medical records during the meeting. The PA also discussed physical possibilities for work. If the participant did not feel that it was appropriate to consider work at the time, the PA offered a chance to discuss this as a later date. Participants recalled that this invitation to return to discuss work alternatives instilled confidence in the PA as a potential source of information. For those clients who did not highlight any potential problems in adapting to work because they did not feel fit for work at the time, the adviser missed the opportunity to identify and discuss the barrier presented by their concerns about their employability.
Again, those with temporary conditions refrained from raising this issue and due to the nature of their claim, the PA perceived them as either fit for immediate employment or still intending to stay at home.

Physical restriction was confined to participants claiming sickness and disability benefits. Some individuals identified their lack of mobility as an issue, but others did not. There were cases when researchers felt that individuals would find it difficult to access buildings and climb stairs, which would effectively dismiss certain types of work, although this did not seem to be recognised by the individual and had not been addressed by PAs. Researchers also felt that there were cases when this apparent lack of awareness of mobility as a barrier was allowing participants to follow unrealistic goals.

Other participants were currently not fit for work and therefore did not feel that discussions about their mobility were relevant for the PA meeting. Although this was not identified or addressed, examples showed that participants saw this as their own problem and part of their condition; they did not think it was an issue that PAs should be expected to address.

After ten years of sustained employment at the local hospital as a ward hostess, Mary was forced to stay at home on sick leave. Severe arthritis demanded an operation on her knee at the beginning of the year. After being diagnosed unfit for work, Mary had become depressed and was suffering from sleep deprivation. Confined to the house, she is afraid to travel in case she falls or is ‘knocked’ on public transport.

(Call centre model, suffering with severe arthritis and depression, aged 53)

4.4.4 Mental health

A number of participants had mental health problems. Although most of these cases were amongst those claiming sickness and disability benefits, other participants - for example JSA claimants - also suffered from stress and depression, which hindered their job search.

A number of factors could lead to a decline in mental health. In some cases it was a result of a physical health problem or disability (for example because of the adverse effect on an individual’s quality of life). Additionally, participants who had experienced frequent and/or long-term bouts of unemployment appeared prone to mental health problems. Financial problems and debt (which can be associated with unemployment and/or ill health) was another underlying factor.

Some participants were aware that their mental health was fragile, and described how they did not feel ready to think about work because of this. However, few had raised this concern with their PA. There were a few examples where PAs identified that participants needed to take account of their mental health in relation to any thoughts they might have about work. Whilst PAs did not signpost participants to support
systems to help them address their mental health problems, they did sometimes suggest that the participant should put job search ‘on hold’ until they were more stable. There were additional instances in which researchers felt that participants (particularly within the lone parents, carers and widows client groups) were suffering from stress, usually as a result of significant caring responsibilities. However, individuals in these circumstances did not generally consider work to be an option.

The personal circumstances of those claiming widows’ benefits were such that many of those who did not already have a job were not able to entertain thoughts about work. It is however interesting to note that widows who had a job when their husband died returned to work within a matter of weeks.

It also seems that the attitudes and behaviour of other participants is affected by their emotional state. Researchers felt that there were some lone parents who were not thinking about seeking work on account of their state of mind; typically this was observed when there had been a recent relationship breakdown and/or where the partner had left the family home.

A small number of participants misused alcohol and/or drugs; most of the cases identified were within the sick or disabled client group. Some individuals were alcoholics; generally this was a long-term problem and most had a long benefit history. They said that they were unable to think about work or consider their options because of their alcohol problem. Some described how their lifestyle inhibited their ability to focus on structured goals. Some participants had told the PA about their problems with alcohol but most did not. When raised, PAs expressed sympathy and tried to offer advice; for example by suggesting that it would be sensible to go to the doctor to discuss the help available. However, participants did not feel the advice they received was constructive.

Whilst it is difficult to be certain about such things, the researchers felt that there were a small number of participants who were misusing drugs, but who mentioned this neither during the interview nor to their PA. Clearly this is a sensitive issue for PAs to tackle.

Age was an important consideration in relation to the attitudes of older participants, regardless of client group, towards work and job search. Many older participants discounted work as an option for them on account of their age and had effectively left the labour market. This was particularly so amongst carers who had been caring for their wife/husband for a number of years, and for older widows who were not working prior to being widowed. Concerns about age discrimination were part of the reason why they were not considering work. Others were taking their age into account because they would need to acquire new skills in order
to find work and they felt that it was ‘not worth’ retraining for what would be just a few more years of work.

Some older participants were, however, keen to find work, and discussed this with their PA. PAs had been very supportive of such aspirations, and it had been important to participants to hear that ‘no, you are certainly not too old’. They described how PAs had given them the encouragement to consider work, and look for jobs, and how they would go back to the PA for further advice and help if they needed it.

After a solid work history in hosiery and electronics trades, Audrey gave up part-time work to care for her husband. After his death, she wanted to find work in the near future yet felt her age would be a problem. The PA asked about her work history and the types of work she would consider. She was assured that she was not too old to find work and was planning to return to discuss possible opportunities for employment. Audrey said that she would make an appointment with the PA when she felt ready to discuss her options in relation to work, and for advice on jobsearch.

(PVS model, widow, aged 57)

4.4.8 Work-related goals (pay, location, awareness of opportunities)

Some participants had clear views about the sort of job they wanted, where they want to work, and how much they want to earn. These have been termed ‘work-related goals’ and are considered together since they tend to inter-relate.

Participants claiming JSA were most likely to have set views about levels of pay and earnings, although some lone parents and carers also revealed similar views. They said that (in order to be better off in work than on benefit, and to cover living costs) the minimum amount of income they required from any job had prevented them from finding work, because there were not jobs available offering these levels of pay. They seemed unaware about the availability of in-work benefits. Participants expressing this point of view wanted to ensure that they earned more by working compared with their benefits. Whilst PAs are in a good position to challenge perceptions about potential earnings compared with benefits, few had taken the opportunity to undertake the better-off calculation and therefore participants remained unaware of the potential financial benefits of working, when combined with the various in-work benefits that are available. When the better-off calculation was undertaken, it was effective in raising participants’ awareness of in-work benefits and the feasibility of work as an option.
George had been inactive for six years whilst caring for his wife and was now ready to return to work. Due to the breakdown of his relationship, he had moved into new rented premises before starting to look for work. As a qualified painter and decorator, he felt able to only look for work which would allow him to take home £160 per week. This amount of money was essential to ensure payment of rent and purchase of new furniture.

(PVS model, male jobseeker, aged 36)

Some participants were restricted in their job search on account of their attitudes towards travel. There was a general reluctance on the part of some participants to travel to work; in particular many did not want to travel outside of their local area or town to work, and this was linked with the fact that they did not have access to private transport. However they had not always been up-front with their PA about their willingness to travel, and had therefore found themselves saying that they would look for work in an area when, in fact, they had no intention of doing so. Those participants who had fixed ideas on the type of work they wanted, but who were not prepared to undertake a journey to work were doubly compromised. This unwillingness to travel was found in all client groups, and tended to reflect personal circumstances (for example reconciliation of work with family life or caring responsibilities, or the restrictions on mobility resulting from a health problem) rather than whether the participant lived in an urban or rural area.

There were some instances where participants held fixed views on the types of employment they were seeking, and other instances where participants lacked any focus for their job search. Both extremes act as a barrier to effective job search. A number of participants recognised that they needed information on possible employment options, as well as job search methods. Usually this had been brought to the attention of the PA. This stance was especially noted amongst those claiming sickness and disability benefits and also jobseekers, but was also reported by lone parents and widows. PAs offered a range of advice to these participants. For example they signposted courses (usually Employment Service funded) in relation to CV writing and job search skills. There were also a number of examples of where PAs had suggested to participants that there were possibly other employment opportunities that could be worth considering, and offered ideas as to what these alternatives might be.

Whilst some participants – usually those claiming JSA – recognised their initial work-related goals were probably unrealistic, others did not seem aware of this issue. Those who did identify this barrier said that they were seeking advice and information on alternatives from their PA, and this need was met. Other participants, who appeared to the researchers to have unrealistic or insufficiently focused work-related goals (for example, they were seeking work in occupations in which they possessed neither experience nor qualifications) were not challenged in this by their PA.
4.5 Summary

This research revealed that a wide range of barriers prevent, or deter, participants from engaging in the labour market. However, many participants seem unaware of some or, indeed, any of these. In some cases participants reported that their PA helped them identify factors that might hinder their efforts to secure work, but these were a minority. There were many cases where researchers identified barriers that participants did not seem to be aware of, and did not report their PA to have flagged up either.

Three specific factors were identified as posing a hard barrier to work. These were: a lack of qualifications, poor basic skills (including IT) and a patchy or inconsistent employment history. Whilst basic skills affected all client groups, a lack of qualifications or work experience seemed to be more of an issue for JSA claimants, lone parents and some of those who were sick or disabled. Participants who were seeking work seemed most aware of these barriers.

The key soft barriers that inhibited effective job search were a lack of confidence or motivation, and inadequate communication skills. These barriers rarely occurred in isolation; for example individuals who lacked confidence typically also lacked motivation. Furthermore, these feelings often reflected participants’ lack of qualifications, basic skills and/or work experience. However participants did not recognise these linkages, and generally did not understand how one barrier might be the result of, or might lead to another. There was little to suggest that PAs made these linkages either, when discussing work with participants.

A wide range of circumstantial factors also impacted on participants including: age; responsibilities for children or other dependants; physical and mental health; emotional state; substance misuse and individual work-related goals. Whilst some of these barriers would have been ‘obvious’ to PAs on account of the benefit(s) being claimed, participants did not always feel they had been addressed. PAs had apparently made assumptions about participants based on their claim. Carers, for example, and many of those with children of school age were not systematically offered advice on the options available that might allow them to combine work with family responsibilities. A number of these circumstantial factors relate to highly sensitive issues, which are difficult for PAs to explore.

There were very few cases when PAs had helped participants identify their barriers to work. From the perspective of participants, the role of PAs is reactive. Those participants who identified barriers were offered a range of advice and support, which was generally seen as appropriate. However, some participants had not wanted to follow their PA’s advice, for example if it meant going on a course when what they wanted was a job.
If, as this research suggests, PAs merely respond to participants’ requests for support there has to be a question as to whether this will address and overcome barriers to work. It is clear that participants are unable (or unwilling) to identify the full extent of barriers facing them; indeed they may only identify secondary barriers rather than the ‘real issue’. If PAs do not systematically investigate participants’ barriers to work, they are not in a position to offer the appropriate advice to achieve any impact.
The overall purpose of this research is to determine the policy impact of the ONE service on its participants. This refers, primarily, to the outcomes achieved by the service: whether participants’ attitudes to claiming benefit, and hence the perceived role of the benefit system, has changed; whether ONE has increased individuals’ attachment to the labour market and, where appropriate, encouraged them to refocus their priorities and activities towards work; and if the service has provided support with claiming benefit for those who are unable to work.

The previous chapters have outlined ONE participants’ position, in terms of their attitudes and behaviour, at the start of ONE and how Personal Advisers (PAs) identify and address individuals’ barriers to work. This chapter provides the next and final stage by showing the labour market position of participants three months after their meeting with a PA, building on the framework developed in Chapter 3. It considers the extent to which ONE has led to observable changes in the attitudes and behaviour of participants. As part of this it describes how ONE has supported individuals to claim benefit; where it has influenced people’s decisions and choices about work and claiming benefit; and how this has affected engagement and progression into, or towards, the labour market. A recurring theme throughout is whether PAs have considered participants’ whole needs when delivering the ONE service.

5.1 Reactions to ONE

The actual impact of ONE is determined by participants’ reactions to the service. Their attitudes and behaviour are shaped by their experience, including the relationships formed with PAs. Participants’ reactions to the service are therefore explored below, before its impact is considered in Section 5.3.

5.1.1 Expectations and experience

In contrast to the findings made in the first tranche of fieldwork, participants in the post-compulsory stage of the ‘ONE’ policy did not have well defined ideas of what to expect. Very few anticipated a work-focused PA meeting, even though many participants, across all client groups, were intent on seeking work. Instead, they expected their PA meeting to focus on their claim. Many ONE participants’ experiences matched their expectations, largely due to the way in which ONE was being implemented at the time of the research. They reported that their meeting with a PA often lasted less than 10 or 15 minutes, and they perceived PAs to be ‘very busy’ whilst other people queued for booked appointments. As a result, there was only sufficient time to discuss the benefit being claimed, check the forms were filled in accurately and hand over the required evidence to support their claim.
Where PA meetings were more in-depth, some participants were pleasantly surprised that their PA offered work-related advice and guidance as well as help with claiming. This was particularly true amongst new claimants and those interested in work either immediately or in the short-term.

‘I didn’t realise they can help you look for jobs as well. I thought it was just a way of checking your benefit forms.’

(Basic model, female lone parent, aged 37)

‘It was brilliant. She [the PA] helped sort out all my benefits, asked me what plans I had about work. When I said I wanted to work as a non-teaching assistant in a school, she told me about this bulletin that is distributed by the council. It includes jobs that you don’t usually see in the paper.’

(Call centre model, female jobseeker, aged 32)

At the same time, there were a few instances where participants felt aggrieved that their PA raised work as an issue when they were expecting help with claiming benefit. These individuals did not feel work was an option for them, often because they had intensive caring responsibilities, and they were not prepared to consider it. As a result, they felt the service was inappropriate to their needs.

‘I’d already decided that I wasn’t going to work because I wanted to look after my son. When I got there, all they asked me about was work, what plans I had, what type of work I was looking for. That’s not why I thought I was there. It was a waste of time because what I really wanted was advice on all the benefits I could claim but she couldn’t help me with that.’

(Basic model, female carer, aged 36)

‘I don’t want to work. I want to stay at home and look after my children and I didn’t appreciate being asked about work.’

(PVS model, female lone parent, aged 28)

ONE did not seem to challenge or change the expectations of those jobseekers with previous experience of claiming. They largely perceived the service to be the same ‘process’ they had experienced before and, in some instances, compared the advice received unfavourably with that offered through the Jobcentre.

‘I don’t understand what’s different, except you’ve just got to phone them now. They do exactly the same as in the Jobcentre but with a different name.’

(Call centre model, female jobseeker, aged 19)

‘I can’t see any difference apart from it’s in a different room. The adviser wasn’t as helpful as the Jobcentre and they didn’t have much in the way of jobs.’

(Basic model, male jobseeker, aged 27)
5.1.2 Establishing a rapport

The nature of the relationship developed between a Personal Adviser and a participant was critical to delivering a tailored service to meet the needs of each individual. Positive reactions to the service occurred when participants felt that their adviser listened to what they were saying, respected it and offered help or advice in those areas raised by the participant. They appreciated the time advisers devoted to their case. Furthermore, many liked the idea of having a dedicated PA who knew their circumstances and would be able to deliver a more personal service.

‘I do the one-to-one, that’s what I like about it, it’s as if, she’s mine, she’s the one who can help me out.’

(Basic model, female lone parent, aged 32)

‘When you get someone who is receptive, and sits there and looks at you like a face, and not a case study, or a number, but as a face, an individual, the barriers are gone. And once the barriers are gone then you can be more productive, and work towards a goal.’

(PVS model, male jobseeker, aged 35)

In contrast, participants reacted negatively to ONE when their adviser did not engage in a dialogue with them, explore their interests or work options, or offer any practical help with current circumstances.

‘It was like being on a conveyor belt. I was just another person she had to see. She didn’t ask me what I wanted to do, or if I needed any help.’

(Basic model, female carer, aged 35)

‘I was just another number. I could have been faceless for all she knew. I don’t think she even looked up from her papers.’

(Basic model, male, recovering from a heart attack, aged 49)

‘I explained to her that I was preparing for a legal case against the council after they shut down my business. All she said was, ‘We’ll put you on Income Support then.’ No explanation, no support, nothing.’

(Call centre model, female lone parent, aged 36)

5.1.3 Follow-up potential

Where good relationships were established, participants were more likely to go back to their adviser for further advice and assistance – either practical or emotional. They often referred to the time their PA had devoted to them in their initial meeting and, as a result, were confident that their adviser would be able to provide more help.
Brenda went to see her Personal Adviser when her temporary contract as a nursery nurse with a local school came to an end. She explained that she could not start work over the summer holidays since she had to look after her children. Her PA was understanding and helped check her claim form. Whilst talking about Brenda’s recent job, he realised that she had not received any in-work benefits alongside her wage. The PA explained how the Working Families’ Tax Credit (WFTC) operated and the financial difference it would make to her when she was working. Aware that Brenda did not want to return to work immediately, the PA told her to call him when she was ready and he would sort it all out for her. At the end of the summer holidays, Brenda heard about a vacancy as a nursery nurse in a local school. She applied for the job and was successful. On hearing the news, she booked an appointment with the same PA to make a claim for WFTC. The claim was processed and Brenda started work again in September.

‘He was very good. He went into everything in great detail, he told me about the Families’ Credit and showed me how much better off I’d be if I was in work. He knew exactly what he was doing and he understood that I had to look after the kids over the holidays. He even knew that nursery nurse jobs aren’t really advertised. You have to keep your ear to the ground.’

(Call centre model, female lone parent, aged 37)

Although there are only a few instances where participants saw their adviser a second time, many suggested to researchers that they would return to see their PA if they needed to or when they wanted to return to work.

‘Oh yes, I’ll go back. They were very helpful and understanding. And they can help me find work. I’ll definitely go back when I’m ready.’

(Call centre model, widow, aged 52)

‘I’ve thought about going back but first I need to see how our finances stand when the attendance benefit comes through, and also see what home help will be able to offer me. I’d like to see if there’s any part-time work I could do that coincides with looking after my mother.’

(Basic model, male carer, aged 55)

‘I’m thinking of phoning her because I have just had a job interview and I’ll find out tomorrow if I’ve got the job. So I’ll need to see what help I can get if I get the job.’

(PVS model, female lone parent, aged 29)

5.2 Support with claiming benefit

As explained earlier, and in Section 3, participants’ primary expectation of their meeting with a PA was to resolve their claim for benefit. Their first, and in some cases sole, concern was to get some money. The following paragraphs outline how the ONE service, but more specifically
the PA, provided support in making claims and how this affected people’s perceptions of the benefit service and their ability to progress beyond claiming benefit.

5.2.1 Advice and guidance on benefits

Some participants knew exactly which benefits they wanted to claim, either through previous contact with the benefit system or from guidance from independent advice agencies, and so were able to ask Start-up Advisers for the relevant forms. Others wanted further advice and guidance on their eligibility to ensure that they claimed all the benefits to which they were entitled. In most cases, Start-up met participants’ needs quickly and efficiently by explaining which benefits they could claim, giving the appropriate claim forms and booking a meeting with a PA.

‘I knew what I wanted to claim. The Jobcentre told me to go to the ONE office, I saw this bloke and he gave me the forms I asked for and then I was out again.’

(PVS model, male jobseeker, aged 26)

‘I’d never claimed before and so didn’t really know how it worked or what would happen. The girl on reception was very helpful. She explained the benefits I could claim for and said my adviser would go through the forms with me and explain them all in more depth. She also explained how the Child Support Agency had merged with the ONE service and that it would all be dealt with at the same time.’

(Basic model, female lone parent, aged 33)

‘I needed to ask about my finances, if I could get any more money. They asked about the circumstances that led to my husband’s death and told me I could claim for a widow’s pension. I can’t remember all the details but it seemed quite easy.’

(Call centre model, widow, aged 54)

Some clients had no knowledge of the benefits available to them. In some cases, however, new claimants were asked which benefits they wanted to claim when they visited the ONE service. Instead they expected the service to explore with them their full entitlement rather than simply handing out forms. Where this occurred, participants’ confidence in claiming was undermined and they did not feel that ONE provided adequate support in the early stages for making a claim.

‘I didn’t know what I could apply for and I needed some help but all they did was ask what I wanted to claim, asked why and gave me some forms to go away with and fill in. I didn’t think they were helpful at all.’

(Basic model, female carer, aged 39)
‘I wasn’t sure what money I could get. I was told to go to the ONE office and the lady there just asked me why I wanted to claim benefit and then gave me some forms to take away. It was all done in a flash, so I just left with my forms.’

(PVS model, widow, aged 51)

This led many, but particularly widows and carers with no previous experience of claiming, to suggest that it would be helpful if there was a leaflet explaining the range of benefits available and the eligibility criteria.

Concerns over benefit, and full entitlement, were addressed when PAs focused on the benefit claim during the meeting. Participants appreciated the time devoted to checking their claim forms and resolving any queries. More specifically, they welcomed guidance on when they could expect to receive their money and honesty where PAs’ knowledge about the benefit being claimed was patchy.

‘They went through the claim form with me, checked it was filled in correctly and explained the effects, and that it would take a week to ten days to process. It was all clear and helpful.’

(Basic model, female, diagnosed with M.E., aged 21)

‘My adviser admitted that he had never gone through a claim for widow’s pension before and so it might take a bit of time, which was fine. At least he was honest.’

(PVS model, widow, aged 54)

In some cases, however, participants quickly realised that their adviser did not have specialist knowledge on the benefits they were claiming and, unlike findings from previous ONE research, they rarely sought advice from colleagues. As a result, participants left feeling disillusioned with the quality of the benefit service and did not feel confident about returning for advice and guidance in the future.

‘She looked at my form and said, ‘well to be honest, I don’t know anything about ICA and so I wouldn’t know if you’d filled the forms in correctly or not.’ She wasn’t able to give me any advice on any other benefits I would be eligible for either. So I left. It was a waste of time.’

(Call centre model, female carer, aged 36)

‘I asked if there was any money I could get to tide me over because I had no money coming in. I saw this guy next to me applying for an emergency loan and so I asked my PA if I could apply for one as well but he said it wasn’t appropriate. I threatened to complain and then he said if I came back in the afternoon he’d see what he could do. He said he had to go to lunch first! But in my condition [severe clinical depression] I didn’t want to be hanging around waiting - I’d already waited an hour for the appointment. I did anyway though because I had to.’

(Call centre model, male, suffering from severe depression and stress, aged 38)
'I needed some money pretty desperately and so asked if I could get a crisis loan or something, anything so I could support the children. The PA said I could but when I talked to someone else they said I wasn’t actually entitled to it. The confusion got me into a bit of a state.’

(Basic model, female lone parent, aged 32)

Where participants could not claim for a particular benefit, they felt that their PA should explain why they were not eligible so that they were fully informed. In addition, when claims were delayed or slow coming through, people on caring benefits or sickness and disability benefits looked to their PA to keep them informed of progress made with their claim. This is discussed in more detail in Section 5.2.2.

5.2.2 Follow-up on benefit claims

Whilst most of the participants involved in this research were receiving their benefit by the time they were interviewed, some were not. For those with claims outstanding, usually amongst carers and people on sickness and disability benefits, participants often called the ONE service to chase their claim. In some instances, participants were able to talk directly with their adviser who then explored the matter within the benefit system. Where this occurred, participants appreciated the additional service provided.

However, in most cases where claims were outstanding, participants often contacted centralised processing offices directly to find out what had happened. These participants often chose not to chase their claim through the ONE service because they attributed the delay to the poor service they had received initially or were told by other agencies that ONE was at fault.

‘I waited for three weeks but still nothing had arrived so I called the DSS who passed me onto somewhere else - Preston? - to see what the problem was. They told me they hadn’t received the forms at all, which didn’t surprise me.’

(Basic model, female carer, aged 48)

‘I called the Housing Benefit office to find out what was going on with my claim but they said they hadn’t received it. They said this wasn’t the first time something like this had happened with ONE, that they were always losing the forms. So I had to fill out another claim for Housing Benefit.’

(Call centre model, female, recovering from a liver disorder, aged 43)

In both scenarios, participants’ views of the ONE service were dominated, and to an extent undermined, by problems in processing their claims. Their immediate need, to have some financial security in the absence of work, was not met and consequently they were not able, or prepared, to consider work as an option.
ONE is designed to provide prospective benefit claimants with a personal, work-focused benefit service. However, work was not an immediate priority for many of the participants interviewed for this qualitative research, as shown in Section 3. Furthermore, those with intensive caring responsibilities and/or chronic, continuous illnesses did not feel that work would be an option for them in the foreseeable future, if at all. Given that work is not a priority for all ONE participants, and that many have other commitments or needs that do not relate to work, it is important that Personal Advisers are able to strike the right balance between providing support with claiming benefit and discussing work. Furthermore, Personal Advisers need to consider participants’ whole needs in order to provide appropriate information and advice.

Many participants’ attitudes and behaviour towards claiming benefit and work were affected by their experience of ONE and, more specifically, their Personal Adviser. Most of these changes refer to the short and medium-term impact of the service. However, there is also some evidence to suggest that ONE will achieve a more fundamental, long-term impact on individuals’ perceptions of the role of the benefit system. These are explored in more detail in the following sections.

5.3 Impact of Personal Adviser interaction on attitudes and behaviour

5.3.1 Participants already in work

Where participants were already working, PAs concentrated on checking and submitting benefit forms. Work was only discussed in the context of the immediate claim, and there were no examples of PAs exploring the participants’ work options in any depth. As a result, there was no change in the attitudes and/or behaviour of those already in work although some were interested in progressing into full-time employment. Instead, these participants perceived ONE to be primarily concerned with claiming benefit and would only return to make further claims when necessary. None felt that they would, or could, return to seek advice specifically about work.

5.3.2 Where work was an immediate priority

As described earlier, some participants across all client groups were already highly motivated to find work when they attended their initial PA meeting. It was their intention to claim benefit for a short time whilst they actively sought work. PAs were able to make a direct impact on the attitudes and behaviour of those who lacked a clear, or comprehensive, job search strategy.

Participants’ attitudes about the role of the benefit system were challenged where they felt their PA was approachable, listened to their circumstances, understood their situation and respected their work-related goals. This was augmented when the PA was familiar with participants’ circumstances or work goals, either through their own experience or because they knew someone personally who had been in a similar situation.
Aileen worked as an office clerk at a high street bank for 16 years before taking voluntary redundancy. With no previous experience of claiming benefit, she was unsure what to expect and thought she might be 'grilled' as to why she was claiming benefit. Given this perception, she felt anxious when she attended her initial PA meeting.

With two young children, Aileen wanted to work on a part-time basis as a non-teaching assistant (NTA) in a school so she can look after her children outside of school hours. She outlined her plans to her ONE PA and he understood because his wife also worked as an NTA.

'It was really excellent. I was quite nervous when I went in but he made me feel comfortable by being really down-to-earth and listening to what I had to say. I didn’t think it would be like that. I thought they’d investigate my claim and tell me whether I was eligible or not. I didn’t realise they could help you with work as well. And he was familiar with the type of work I was looking for and didn’t try to push anything else onto me.'

(Call centre model, female jobseeker, aged 35)

In these scenarios, PAs were often able to provide individuals with focused advice on how and where to look for relevant jobs. As a direct result of this tailored advice, participants’ confidence in themselves, their job search activities and their work goals were increased. They changed their job seeking behaviour in line with the advice given and adopted a more targeted strategy to finding work compared with the ad hoc approaches previously used. Many of these participants have subsequently moved into work or have started vocational training to improve their skills and qualifications in their target labour market.

Paul had been unemployed for two years and had just finished a training placement under New Deal when he was referred to the ONE service. He was unsure what to expect but thought they would just go through his claim and ask him to complete a Jobseeker’s Agreement, as he had done previously.

When Paul attended his initial PA meeting, he was asked what type of work he was interested in and what plans he had. He explained that he wanted to set up his own photography business and needed some advice on how this could be achieved. His adviser was very supportive and together they discussed the steps he would need to take over the next six months for his goals to be realised. The adviser also suggested that Paul should contact an agency that dealt with European funding to see if he could get some financial assistance to buy equipment for the new business.

Continued
‘The Personal Adviser was superb, she was really, really helpful. She told me which way was the best way to go about starting a business and put me in touch with the right people I needed to speak to, to get the bit of knowledge that I hadn’t got already.’

Paul is now a joint partner in a professional photography studio that he set up in Sheffield and plans to continue in the business for the foreseeable future.

(PVS model, male jobseeker, aged 32)

Little or no change in the attitudes and behaviour of younger jobseekers with previous experience of claiming was achieved as a result of the ONE intervention. They often dismissed any advice given either because they did not believe the system could help them or because they perceived the advice to be irrelevant to their needs.

‘They always do the same thing. You have to say what jobs you’re looking for, where you’re looking and sign this agreement thing. Then they might look on their computer, but there’s never anything on it. They’ve sent me to Job Club before but it’s just full of old men and they don’t really help you. They just stick you in a corner and tell you to look through the papers they’ve got, or do a CV, but I’ve already got one. She sent me again this time, but I didn’t go because it’s a waste of time. And all the jobs in the Jobcentre are always out of date.’

(Call centre model, female jobseeker, aged 19)

Many of the participants who considered work as an immediate priority found jobs without any direct, work-related assistance from their PA. However, they appreciated the early support with claiming and recognised that this had enabled them to concentrate on looking for and finding work. Lone parents’ confidence and motivation was boosted by simply talking through their plans with an adviser and receiving reassurance that they were ‘on the right track’ and doing something worthwhile.

‘They basically helped me out a lot with the benefits, helped me sort out what I could claim for. And that gave me more time to look for work.’

(PVS model, male jobseeker, aged 45)

‘It was empowering. We talked about what I planned to do and he realised I was doing everything I could. There wasn’t much advice he could give me but it was reassuring to talk it through with someone. He seemed impressed and understood why I needed to claim whilst I looked for work.’

(Basic model, female lone parent, aged 47)

5.3.3 Where work was an option for the future

Work was considered to be an option for the future by some lone parents, carers, widows and people on sickness or disability benefits but, for various reasons, it was not realistic at the time they made their benefit claim. The extent to which ONE made an impact on the attitudes and behaviour
of these participants was limited, often because PAs concentrated on benefits and did not discuss work in any depth.

The greatest impact was achieved with those individuals who had recently lost a partner, either through death or separation. Work had often played an important role in their life, either before the dissolution of their relationship or, for some widows, before they started caring for their husband on a full-time basis. The ONE service focused on benefit claims, providing financial security during a period of uncertainty and disruption. Although work was not really discussed, the space and sympathy afforded by PAs allowed these participants to come to terms with their new situation and reflect on their next steps. The way in which PAs handled the meetings conveyed to these participants that help and support was available when they were ready. As a result, many stated that they would return when they felt work was a more immediate priority. At the time of this research, some of these participants were beginning to think about the type of jobs they were interested in but they had not started to actively seek work.

Liz left work to look after her three children when her husband walked out. She wanted to stay at home and provide her children with some stability after the break up because they had been very depressed. She explained her situation to her PA, emphasising that work was not an immediate option, and found them to be very sympathetic and understanding. Most of their meeting was taken up with checking and completing benefit forms but the PA did encourage Liz to return if she wanted to start work again, and told her that financial help with childcare was also available.

For the past three months Liz has enjoyed staying at home looking after the kids, but has started to feel that she misses work.

‘They really were very helpful. I didn’t feel pressured to return to work and they were happy for me to do my own thing, which is just what I needed at the time. Everything had been all over the place, the children were upset, I was upset – my life had just completely changed from a year ago … I’m not ready to go back to work yet, but I think I’ll probably start looking in the next two to three months. I’ll see then what further help my PA can offer.’

(Basic model, female lone parent, aged 33)

Where participants were claiming caring or sickness and disability benefits, the PA meeting often focused on completing and submitting the relevant forms. The extent to which work was discussed, or steps towards engaging in the labour market, varied considerably. Most participants discussed work in the context of their claim – the events that led to their claim and exit from the labour market.
There were a limited number of examples where those claiming sickness and disability benefits asked their PA for advice about the type of work they would be able to do. In these instances, PAs advised participants to re-train in order to learn new skills. Possible areas of training were not discussed during the meeting but instead participants were advised to think about their options and interests and return when they had a clearer idea of the area they wanted to work in. Most were considering returning to their adviser after a period of reflection though none had actually done so at the time of this research.

‘I'll get in touch with the adviser when I feel ready to do some part-time work. I think I can do some security work so I don’t think I'll need any re-training like she suggested. But we’ll see. I think she’ll be able to help me though.’

(Basic model, male, suffering with angina, aged 57)

As mentioned earlier, problems or delays in receiving claims dominated some participants’ experiences of the ONE service, particularly amongst carers and people claiming sickness and disability benefits. This caused frustration and undermined their confidence in the system to the extent that they were unwilling to return for further advice unless absolutely necessary.

Norman worked in the funeral business until he had to sign off sick because of an injury to his arm while lifting heavy objects. He was off work for six months before claiming because he was reluctant to claim from the state until the family’s finances became ‘desperate’. On his first visit to ONE, his PA was unclear what benefits Norman would be eligible for and so advised him to claim Income Support. Norman asked if there was any way he could get some money quickly to pay his bills, but his adviser informed him that crisis loans were not handled through that office. The PA did not tell Norman where he could apply for a crisis loan.

After two weeks without hearing anything, Norman called to find out when he would receive some money. He was told his forms had been lost and that he would need to make another claim and attend another meeting with a PA. This time the PA advised him to claim Incapacity Benefit and went through the forms with Norman. The forms were lost ‘in between offices’ a second time and so he was told to complete another claim. The income earned by his wife through part-time work was not sufficient to support the family and so Norman returned to work against the advice of his doctor. His book arrived a week later.

(Call centre model, recovering from an arm injury, aged 41)

PAs provided advice, support and encouragement to those lone parents about to start, or already participating in, training. These participants were often highly focused on obtaining vocational qualifications for a
specific area of work and needed to claim benefit so they could successfully complete their studies whilst caring for their children. Again, PA meetings tended to concentrate on completing claim forms but this was appropriate for many of the participants because they had already formulated their own medium-term plans. The advice and assistance given by Personal Advisers on claiming was considered to be valuable because it provided them with financial security whilst they embarked on something new, or completed their studies. PAs’ practical support with the route chosen by participants increased their confidence and helped to consolidate their long-term plans to move back into work.

Jenny was thinking about starting a college course in childcare with the view to getting qualified and then moving into nursery care work for the local authority. She was claiming to have some money to support herself and her daughter. When she visited her local ONE office, her PA took down her details for her Housing Benefit request, filled in the form with Jenny there and then arranged for someone to pick it up immediately. The PA was also able to tell Jenny there and then that she would be getting the claim, which Jenny thought was impressive.

Once the form filling was out of the way, Jenny was asked if she had any specific plans. She told the PA about her plans to go to college, what she intended to study and what she needed from the benefits system to be able to sustain this. The PA talked through her plans and helped Jenny to decide that it was the right decision for her.

‘She was great, she helped with the confusing things and she gave me really good advice about college. A lot of the time people don’t have the confidence to talk about things there and then but once you know that they’re working for you it helps. It’s a real confidence boost to be able to talk to someone objectively about your options and she was really supportive.’

Jenny started the course shortly after her PA meeting and is enjoying it, but finds the paperwork ‘a bit of a struggle’.

(Basic model, female lone parent, aged 35)

5.3.4 Work not an option

Personal Advisers were able to change a few participants’ attitudes to work and claiming benefit by exploring the different options available. For lone parents this often entailed exploratory discussions concerning individuals’ interests and hobbies which allowed the PA to suggest training opportunities. More general discussions around work, including previous experience and options for the future, enabled some of those claiming sickness and disability benefits to feel work was a realistic and achievable option for them when previously they had not felt work was possible.
Fergus was diagnosed as clinically depressed following the dissolution of his business. At the time he started his claim he had no plans to work because he felt he couldn’t cope with it and just wanted to concentrate on getting better. During his initial PA meeting, the adviser efficiently checked his entitlement to benefit and dealt with the claims herself because Fergus was unable to concentrate. Once the claims had been resolved, Fergus was asked what type of work experience he had and what type of work he would like to look for. He explained that he had owned his own plumbing business but it had collapsed. He said he didn’t want to return because it held ‘too many bad memories’. He also explained to the PA that he didn’t feel able to work at the moment.

‘ONE was very helpful in sorting out my claim, making sure it was processed efficiently so I didn’t have to worry about it. I hadn’t really considered work when I saw my adviser but the chat we had made me realise it is something that I’d like to get back into. But only when I feel better and ready to work - hopefully sometime next year. I thought it was just to check my benefit forms and make sure I was not defrauding the system. Now I know they can help me find work, I’ll go back to her [the PA] for advice.’

(Basic model, male, suffering from depression, aged 37)

These impacts are, however, an exception to the wider experiences of those participants who did not feel work was an option. Many participants claiming sickness and disability benefits did not feel that ONE was really appropriate for them because they were not able to work at the time of their claim. Furthermore, it does not appear that PAs asked participants whether they would be able to, or wanted to, work in the future.

‘I’ve only seen her once and she said she couldn’t do anything for me because I’m not fit for work because of my arthritis. I’m not sure why I had to go to be honest with you.’

(Call centre model, female, suffering with arthritis, aged 53)

‘She just rubber stamped my forms and that was it. It would have been useful to talk about work, and what types of jobs I could do but it never came up. If it’s just about work now, then I don’t see why I had to go.’

(PVS model, male, suffering with respiratory problems, aged 52)

Many participants were not prepared or willing to work when they first entered ONE. In many cases, Personal Advisers began to discuss work goals and job search strategies before addressing individuals’ claims for benefit. Where this occurred, participants reacted negatively, and sometimes angrily, because they perceived the purpose of the meeting to be principally concerned with benefit. Many told their PA that they were not prepared to work and only sought help with their claim. Generally, PAs did not challenge these assertions and proceeded to go through the claim forms. As a result, participants’ attitudes towards work
and claiming benefit were unchanged and most continued to expect, and rely on, payments from the benefit system for the foreseeable future.

**5.4 Summary: Distance travelled**

Figure 5.1 shows the different ways in which ONE has caused a change in many participants’ relationship to the labour market, either by altering their attitude or their behaviour towards work. The actual impact achieved varies according to participants’ original position in the labour market at the start of their claim. Where changes have occurred, they tend to relate to progression into or towards the labour market.

The most common effects observed by this qualitative research, as depicted by the thicker arrows in Figure 5.1, are:

- facilitating movement into work for those who consider it to be an immediate priority
- enabling participants to progress towards work by providing support with benefit claims
- raising work as a realistic goal in the future when participants did not necessarily consider it to be an option at all

**Figure 5.1 Changes in participants’ relationship to the labour market**

The ONE service has affected the way in which many participants think about the benefit system and the support available. Fundamentally, as a direct result of their involvement in ONE many realised that the benefit system was not solely concerned with processing benefit claims and generating payments. Instead, participants across all client groups, and regardless of their position in the labour market, became aware that they could, and in some cases did, seek advice and support relating to work. However, some perceive ONE to be the same type of service offered by the benefit system that they had experienced previously and, as a result, ONE has failed to change these attitudes.
ONE has improved and increased some participants’ engagement in the labour market but for others there has been little, or no, impact on their attitudes and behaviour regarding work. Generally, participants felt Personal Advisers have provided appropriate advice, guidance and support to those already focused on work as a first priority which has enabled them to focus their job search and, subsequently, move into work. The level of support given to those participants who are more distanced from the labour market has been mixed. There are a few examples where the service has encouraged individuals to think about work earlier than they would have done without an intervention, but these are limited. For many, however, discussions with ONE Personal Advisers largely focused on participants’ benefit claims rather than work.

This final chapter of the report draws out the key findings and conclusions from the research, making distinctions between the positive and negative aspects of the ONE service based on the perceptions of participants. It identifies where, and for whom, ONE has achieved a significant impact whilst also highlighting those participants who did not benefit at the time this research was completed.

The delivery of ONE is subject to detailed research through other parts of the evaluation. However, for this policy report it has been necessary to refer to the way in which the service was being implemented at the time of the research in order to fully understand how and why ONE has achieved an impact with some participants and not with others. At the time that this qualitative research was undertaken, it was apparent that the quality, scope and depth of discussions between PAs and participants varied enormously. The key discrepancies between ONE’s design process and actual delivery include:

- Generally participants neither anticipate, nor are prepared for, a work-focused interview.
- Most participants reported that discussions around benefits and claiming dominated their initial PA meetings. They perceived that the discussions about work were ‘fitted in’ towards the end of the meeting, but some also reported no discussion about work.
- Participants do not consider their PA meeting to be ‘work focused’ but instead became aware that help and advice relating to work is available through the service.
- A number of participants recalled their initial PA meeting lasting ‘a matter of minutes’ rather than the intended 40–45 minutes.
These variations have important implications for the policy impact of the service. The first is that most participants do not know what ONE has to offer. They neither expect nor demand personalised support in relation to claiming benefit and work. At the same time, the service appears to be reactive rather than proactive: it responds well to, and achieves the most significant impact, with those participants who articulate specific demands of their PA. Yet evidence from participants suggests that ONE has the potential to achieve more with some clients.

A second crucial delivery factor restricting the actual impact achieved by ONE refers to the amount of time PAs spend with participants, both for an initial meeting and for follow-up. Where meetings last for less than fifteen minutes, the focus tends to be solely on benefits and the work element is lost. Consequently, many participants perceive ONE to be a benefit-focused service rather than work-focused.

6.2 The impact of ONE on labour market behaviour

Chapter 3 explained that participants came into contact with ONE because they wanted to make a new claim for benefit or claim new/additional benefits as a result of a change in their personal circumstances. Their immediate priority was to complete the necessary forms in order to receive money as soon as possible. Participants’ attachment to the labour market, and the priority they afforded to work, often reflected their personal circumstances and previous history of claiming and working. To reflect these varied levels of attachment, four different ‘groups’ were identified as the basis of the analysis:

- participants in work
- work as an immediate priority
- work in the future
- work not an option

The labour market position of participants within these groups before and after contact with ONE allowed the research to record changes, both attitudinal and behavioural. In some cases these were directly attributable to the ONE intervention; in others the support provided through the service, coupled with the passage of time, enabled participants to move into or towards the labour market.

There were two dominant trends: the first where participants seeking work moved into a job shortly after their PA meeting; and the other when work became a realistic and achievable goal in the future for some participants who previously did not perceive it to be an option.

Other patterns of movements are also significant. Many participants who were not attached to the labour market at the time of claiming (that is they were neither seeking nor considering work) moved closer to the labour market. In some cases the movement was in attitude rather than behaviour: some individuals who had previously discounted work as an
option felt that this was now something they would like to do (in the future). But there were also changes in behaviour, with a number of participants taking steps to secure a position in the labour market by taking up training opportunities or starting job search. A small number had already moved into work.

6.3 The differential impact of ONE

Whilst ONE has certainly generated changes in the attitudes and behaviour of some of its participants, this has not been uniformly distributed. Across all client groups and regardless of their labour market position at the start of ONE, some participants have moved towards or into work following ONE. However, within client groups there is considerable variation in the extent of movement towards the labour market, suggesting that ONE benefits some participants more than others.

6.3.1 Those who are helped by ONE

As already stated, in all client groups there were some participants who moved closer (or into) the labour market following the ONE intervention. The participants whose attitude or behaviour changed exhibited one, or more, of the following characteristics:

- strong, consistent employment history
- strong work ethic
- highly motivated to find work or progress towards work
- clear ideas of the type of work wanted

More specifically, those claiming benefit for the first time and focused on work as an immediate priority benefited considerably from the service. Their attitudes regarding the role of the benefit system, and the type of service offered, were challenged and changed by the approach adopted by their PAs and, as a result, these participants actively engaged in PA meetings. Similarly, job-ready participants with previous experience of claiming were open and receptive to advice and support offered by their PA when they recognised that ONE was a new, more personalised approach.

Lastly, ONE increased the confidence and motivation of those lone parents who were planning to start, or complete, education and training in specific vocational areas. These participants had devised their own strategy for returning to work and their engagement with the labour market was improved and increased when they received reassurance and encouragement from their adviser.

6.3.2 Those who are not helped by ONE

Not everyone has benefited from ONE though. Some participants in each of the different client groups did not move closer to the labour market following ONE. Even some JSA claimants, who should have been relatively easy to help, did not demonstrate changes in either attitude or behaviour.

ONE was unable to change the attitudes or behaviour of those jobseekers,
particularly younger jobseekers, who held very strong beliefs against the
cenefit system and often discounted its usefulness in helping them look
for and find work. All these participants had previous experience of
claiming, and many reported a continuous on-off relationship with
claiming. In some cases, they compared ONE unfavourably with
alternative sources of advice and guidance and PAs did not appear to
challenge their views. Part of the problem appears to be a general apathy
towards government agencies.

The impact achieved with those participants who did not consider work
to be an option was very limited, either because interviews were cut
short and so concentrated on benefits, or because PAs did not challenge
the assumptions and perceptions of these individuals. Often these
individuals faced significant barriers to work, such as their age, caring
responsibilities, and health problems. Participants reported that advisers
rarely discussed these issues with them in any great depth and did not
take any action to overcome them or work around them. Similarly,
ONE provided little advice and assistance to those individuals facing
multiple barriers to work. These often involved complex combinations
of hard, soft and personal barriers, occurring simultaneously.

6.4 Lessons from ONE

Recognising that ONE has impacted on some, but not all, participants,
it must be the case that some aspects of the service work better than
others, or better in particular circumstances. This section determines which
aspects of the service influence participants’ choices about working and
claiming benefit.

6.4.1 Work-focused interviews

A key issue for ONE is how to achieve a balance between resolving the
claim and providing a tailored service in relation to finding work. There
is a tension between the needs and expectations of participants and the
pressures on PAs to provide a work-focused service. Participants’
expectations are that ONE is essentially about claiming benefit and their
immediate needs relate directly to securing an income in the absence of
work. PAs on the other hand, are charged with delivering a work-
focused interview. The management of this tension falls to individual
PAs.

6.4.2 A tailored service

PAs seem sympathetic to participants’ overriding concern with their claim,
because resolving the claim comes to the fore of the initial meeting.
However, emphasising the claim is often to the detriment of a work-
focused interview. This is especially so when, as is apparently the case
for many participants, the length of time they spend with their PA is
somewhat limited.

Furthermore, a number of participants have been alienated from ONE
because the service provided by PAs was not tailored to meeting their
whole needs. That is, it did not have the appropriate balance between
claiming benefit and advice and support about jobs.
PAs appear to make individual judgements about how to structure the initial meeting. In many cases the result is that the service is tailored according to the benefit(s) being claimed rather than the individual’s circumstances. This means work may be raised and probed when this is not appropriate, and conversely that work may not be discussed when it would be appropriate.

An important lesson is that PAs need to establish routinely, and early on in their meeting, whether or not it would be appropriate to discuss work with the participant. They cannot make any assumptions about whether or not a work-focused interview will be appropriate on the basis of benefit(s) being claimed. Instead they need to explore personal circumstances, attitudes and aspirations, and (of course) whether or not the participant is already working, or involved in education or training. Participants too need to be involved in setting the agenda. Yet to do this effectively, they need to be informed at an early stage about the range of advice and support available through ONE.

6.4.3 Addressing individual needs

PAs can only provide appropriate advice if they are informed about individual circumstances. The evidence from this research is that PAs cannot rely on participants being forthcoming with information. Many individuals find it difficult to be candid about their personal strengths and weaknesses, and the sorts of factors that might make finding or sustaining employment difficult. Indeed, there is strong evidence that individuals do not recognise the full extent of barriers to work. Some PAs are very good at establishing a rapport with their clients, and with drawing out information. Others are not as good.

There is, too, strong evidence to suggest that the skills of PAs in probing individuals is important. On many occasions PAs appear to have accepted what participants have said without question. They have not challenged unrealistic aspirations, or encouraged individuals to be more ambitious. Neither have they sought to establish fully the extent of barriers to work. As a result PAs are not fully informed about barriers to work, and hence do not address them.

As part of the above, but also reflecting an earlier point about PAs tailoring the ONE service according to the benefit claimed, is that many participants have not had advice or support in relation to addressing fundamental barriers to work, even though they have expressed a desire to work. For example some carers, lone parents and others with young children needed advice about ways of combining working with caring/family life; individuals with health concerns needed advice about alternative occupations. Others needed information on the availability of in-work benefits to address concerns over the financial benefits of working.

Where advisers identify particular barriers, they usually offer advice and support. Participants generally find this constructive, but not if they do
not feel it is appropriate to their individual circumstances and goals. PAs tend to react to requests for advice though, and there is scope for them to be more proactive in proffering advice and information.

**6.4.4 Jobsearch**

An important aspect of the PA’s job is to determine whether, and if so when, work will be a realistic option. When work is an option, PAs need to help participants find work that is appropriate to their skills and qualifications, and which meets aspirations. Sometimes there is a fine line to be trod between the two.

A number of participants who moved into work following ONE were already job ready prior to the intervention. However, the strategies they employed for finding work were often ad hoc whilst they waited for the ‘right job to turn up at the right time’. Where participants clearly articulated their work related plans to their adviser, PAs were often able to suggest a more focused, targeted approach. This was particularly true when PAs had detailed knowledge of the area of work sought by the participant. Yet, at the same time, the service offered to job-ready participants was sometimes lacking. Advisers did not systematically explore the methods and coverage of job search adopted by participants and so, in some cases, did not address a fundamental barrier to work.

Similarly, PAs provided practical advice, guidance and general support to enable some participants improve their chances of finding a job and moving closer to the labour market, in both the short and long-term. Again, however, opportunities were missed where participants reported that they would have been interested in these options but they had not been offered by their PA.

**6.5 The ONE experience**

As with earlier policy-orientated research completed under the voluntary participation of ONE, many participants expressed support for the principle and theory. However, for many their experiences were often strikingly different to the original ONE design.

Where ONE has helped participants think or move into, or towards work, they have appreciated the personal tailored support they felt they received from their PA. Many will return for further advice, either benefit or work related, since they have established positive, personal working relationships with their adviser.
The methodological decision-making involved in the preparation for this stage of the project was influenced by three main factors:

1. Meeting the specific information requirements of the client.
2. Collecting the information in a way which would capture as much usable data as possible.
3. Classifying the data collected in such a way as to allow the opinions of participants to be delineated and represented in as robust a way as possible.

It was felt by the project team that the chosen methodology described below represented the best way of gaining an authentic insight into the experience and opinions of the respondents and subsequently presenting it robustly to those working in a policy-making context. The purpose of the fieldwork conducted was not to produce a positivist construction of statistical ‘truths’ about client experience. Instead, it was the intention to capture examples of participant experience against the background of a known context (the benefit system, claiming regimes and the intended functioning of ONE), through an interactionist interpretation of responses resulting from a semi-structured interview process.

Interactionism and the research process

Interactionist discourse posits that individuals construct and experience their social worlds as subjects, and that therefore there are no absolute ‘hard facts’ to be gleaned from an analysis of experience. However, much can be learned through engaging directly with individuals and attempting to define the quality of their experience of the social world. Thus, it was important in the context of this research to gain as much insight as possible into the way in which participants interpret their interaction with the social provision they experience. The best way to capture this type of interaction is felt to be semi-structured interviewing, in which interviewer and respondent engage in ‘an observational encounter… [representing] the coming together of two […] persons for the purpose of focused interaction’. Previous research has shown that the success or otherwise of the ONE intervention is based to a large extent on the quality of interaction between the user (participant) and the provider, represented by the Personal Adviser. Thus, semi-structured interviewing based on an interactive ‘encounter’ would seem to be the most productive way of capturing useful experiential data on this relationship.

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In structuring the interviews, the study team had proper regard for the objectives of the study as defined by the client:

- to consider the impact of ONE on an individual’s attachment to the labour market
- to consider if there has been a reduction in inactivity
- to consider how far participants can be re-focused on work as a first priority
- to consider whether more people get jobs and whether they get them more quickly than they would otherwise
- to see if people stay employed for longer periods
- to look at the effectiveness of the Personal Adviser in identifying barriers to work and considering participants’ whole needs and in offering appropriate advice

The chosen method of approach has three notable advantages in terms of these project objectives:

1. Allowing an insight into the unique interactions and experiences of individuals, and defining these in a focused way according to the study objectives.

2. Treating the interview as a ‘conversation’, allowing respondents to speak freely (within reason).

3. Allowing respondents to raise issues that could not be anticipated in a detailed interview schedule.

However, since it is a common fallacy to confuse immediacy of response with truth (when, as Silverman\(^{10}\) contests, it is perhaps possible to describe interview responses as the repetition of a ‘cultural script’ defined by the perceived status of the interviewer and an imagined ‘required’ response), certain semi-statistical tests of validity and techniques for classifying responses are employed in the build-up to the interview. These were used to give direction to the interview itself and to ensure a broad cross-section of respondents, and also to ensure that a wide range of experiential material can be collected on the participant’s behalf. This accounts for the use of purposive sampling in the methodology, in which respondents are targeted according to an agreed definition of their experience of ONE and their labour market position at the time of the interview. Purposive sampling also has the welcome side effect of making reporting of results more focused and robust, in that it allowed the grouping of responses — however, it must be stressed that these groupings were defined very loosely in terms of labour market attitudes and position to avoid prejudicing the study results. This approach, in contrast to true random sampling, was felt to yield better results in terms of sample breadth and variety, without

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succumbing to the problems of prejudgement inherent in deliberate selection.

A system of initial purposive ‘response coding’ was used by researchers as part of the interview set-up process, to ensure a spread of experience. This was done in order to add value to the research results, and to retain good access to the actual words and experiences of the subjects. This process was repeated in diagrammatic form after the interviews were completed in order to visually represent the variety of experiences reported by respondents, and ensure that revealing insights were accurately reported. This also reduced the reliance on interviewers’ memories and the opinions of research analysts in selecting data for reporting.

There now follows a detailed description and discussion of the research methodology.

In response to changes in policy emphasis since the first tranche of fieldwork, new ‘client’ groups were included in this new phase of the research. Thus, in addition to the purposive sampling groups, an adequate representation of the following client types was required:

- Jobseekers (i.e. current Jobseeker’s Allowance claimants)
- Lone parents (who had been referred to ONE as a result of an Income Support or other similar claim)
- Sick or disabled clients (claiming either Income Support, Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance)

The two ‘new’ client groups selected for specific emphasis in this tranche of fieldwork were:

- Widows (i.e. those who entered ONE to claim widows’ benefits)
- Carers (i.e. those with significant caring responsibilities for a person solely dependent upon them)

There were also three ‘overarching’ client types to be taken into consideration, who might belong to any of the above client groups, and it was our policy to attempt an equal representation of them in each where possible and appropriate:

- Ethnic minorities – whilst they are not a distinct ‘claimant type’ in themselves, it was vital to include an adequate minority representation across all client groups within the sample.
- Claimants living in rural areas, to explore whether those living in rural areas had specific difficulties engaging with local labour markets or experienced a different service from those living in urban or suburban areas (defined by population within specific postcode areas).
- ‘Hard-to-reach’ clients, again across all client groups if possible – see below for a definition.
Interviewees were also classified according to the benefits they had claimed to ensure a good spread of claiming experience – for example: Income Support; Incapacity Benefit; Disability Living Allowance etc.

### The study areas

The study was carried out in six of the 12 areas in which different models of the ONE delivery process are being piloted:

#### Figure A.1 The study areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Delivery Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lea Roding</td>
<td>Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clyde Coast and Renfrewshire</td>
<td>Basic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calderdale and Kirklees</td>
<td>Call Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Gwent</td>
<td>Call Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeds</td>
<td>Private-Voluntary Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Nottinghamshire</td>
<td>Private-Voluntary Sector</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The design process

The initial task for the study team was to design a methodology which allowed for optimal reporting of qualitative data relevant to the study objectives defined by the client. Lessons learnt from the previous tranche of fieldwork were incorporated into the new methodological approach, both in the new method of sample selection and in terms of engaging with the study target groups.

As with the previous tranche of fieldwork, interviewing was the primary method of data collection, a process which had to be structured in such a way as to deliver robust experiential evidence of the action of ONE, and to make it as simple as possible to draw lessons from the responses reported in terms of the ONE experience and labour market outcomes.

It was necessary to integrate into the methodology mechanisms for balanced representation of the various claimant types, ethnic groups and benefits claimed within the interview sample. In addition to ensuring balance between claimant types, it was decided to design a process of initial purposive sampling into the interview arrangement procedure, in order to allow an appropriate degree of targeting towards different classes of experience, without prejudicing the wider representativeness of the study as a methodological entity.

Alongside the purposive sampling process, additional efforts were made to contact those participants who were defined by the client as ‘hard to reach’. In the previous tranche of fieldwork, the sample of claimants supplied to ECOTEC often omitted some claimants’ telephone contact details or gave them incorrectly, making these individuals very difficult to contact for interview. This situation was due in some cases to the unstable accommodation arrangements experienced by some benefit claimants. In many cases, hard to reach individuals were excluded from the interview sample despite the best efforts of the study team, due to the difficulty experienced in contacting them. In this tranche of fieldwork,
however, the study team set themselves the demanding goal of making sure that at least 10% of the interview sample was made up of individuals who fell into this ‘hard to reach’ category. This was felt to be important, in that the experiences of individuals falling into this category were possibly distinctive, and would in any case be just as valid as those of individuals who happen to be easy to contact. Every step was therefore taken to avoid discriminating against this group – details of the mechanisms designed into the methodology to achieve this are given below. Purposive sampling was undertaken in tandem with the administrative task of interview set-up, to optimise the use of researchers’ time.

After consideration of all these issues, a four stage methodological process was decided upon:

1. Interview organisation and an initial process of purposive sampling according to agreed criteria.
2. A process of strenuous attempt to contact ‘hard to reach’ clients.
3. The qualitative interviewing process itself.
4. Reporting based on the response data collected.

The purposive sampling process

The initial phase of research combined into one process the arrangement of telephone interviews and the purposive selection of the interview sample. Purposive sampling describes a process in which respondents are positively selected prior to interview, in line with the purposes of the research brief, in order to capture those clients whose responses are likely to provide relevant data. Since the study has certain clearly defined goals in terms of the reporting of response data, in line with the priorities of the client, it was advantageous to select the sample in line with responses to carefully-chosen multiple-choice questions asked during the initial telephone contact. This allowed the selection of respondents ‘to concentrate on instances which will display a wide variety [of cases, and] illuminate the research question at hand’.11 The pro-forma used by ECOTEC researchers when arranging interviews, and including the questions asked in the purposive sampling element of the process, is included at Appendix D.

The six central questions asked by the client as part of the research brief are outlined above in the introduction to this section. The central issues which underlie these specific questions can be classified as:

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Labour market issues (attitudes to the labour market, type of activity, refocusing on work)

Issues related to the ONE experience and ONE outcomes (effectiveness of the Personal Adviser, attitude change, sustainability of employment)

Therefore it was decided to group the respondents on the basis of these two overarching issues, using two simple multiple-choice questions. First of all respondents were asked to choose a statement which best described their attitude to work at the time of making their claim:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I was very focused on getting a job as soon as possible</td>
<td>LM+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hoped to get a job in the near future although I had other things on my mind as well</td>
<td>LM+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wasn’t particularly concerned about getting a job at that time</td>
<td>LM-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t want to get a job at that time</td>
<td>LM-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second question relates to the labour market or other outcome. Respondents were asked to choose a statement which relates to their current activity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Symbol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have a job now or I’m about to start one</td>
<td>Outcome+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m on a training course or in education or doing voluntary work</td>
<td>Outcome+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have a job but I’m looking as hard as I possibly can</td>
<td>Outcome+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have a job, I’m looking for one but not very hard</td>
<td>Outcome-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have a job and I’m not looking for one</td>
<td>Outcome-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something else (probe –what? How does it relate to job search?)</td>
<td>Outcome depends on circs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the case of the respondent choosing the final option, the study team member conducting the study would use their judgement to determine which of the outcome classifications best describes the respondent.

The intention behind the purposive sampling was to determine the attitude to work of the respondent at the time of their ONE interview (the initial question) and subsequently to ask about current activity (the second question). This allowed the telephone interviewer to characterise their attitude at the time of their ONE interview as either a positive (‘LM+’) or negative (‘LM-’) attitude to the labour market, and then to compare this with the outcome of the ONE intervention, classifying this as either positive (‘Outcome +’) or negative (‘Outcome –’).

The initial question shows, broadly, whether the respondent was oriented towards or away from the labour market at the time of their PA interview. The responses to this question often have as their determinant the status of the respondent (for example, carers and lone parents may have no option but to orient themselves away from the labour market due to other demands on their time and energies), and this had to be borne in mind by the study team in the conduct of the later interviewing process.

Comparison with the response to the second multiple-choice question
allowed the study team some indication of ‘distance travelled’ since the
ONE intervention, without overcomplicating the line of questioning at
the initial stage. Screening in this way allowed a balance in the sample
between different experiences of the intervention by the ONE service
and the PA. Whilst it is recognised that some subtlety is lost in classifying
experience in this way, we feel it to be a valuable tool in differentiating
the sample prior to the semi-structured interviews, when this experience
can be explored and fleshed out. Additionally, the classification of the
respondents was reconsidered by the study team personnel conducting
the semi-structured interview, on the basis of the experiential details
gleaned during the interview itself. This provided a truer picture of the
range of experience within the study sample.

A target quota of respondent types was set for each of the pilot areas and,
within the pilot areas, for each client group. Whilst it was unrealistic to
expect that it would be possible to adhere to this quota absolutely, the
respondents contacted and interviewed were broadly consistent with the
quota and exhibited a balanced cross section of experience. Where
substitution was necessary to reach our quotas, as a result of the dynamics
of the sample provided and the availability of respondents for interview,
clients were always substituted within models. For example, a shortfall
in lone parent respondents in Calderdale and Kirklees would be made
good by recruiting additional lone parents to the sample in Gwent, the
other ‘call centre model’ pilot area.

The semi-structured interview

The interview was structured, as far as possible, as a naturally-developing
informal conversation, which would allow the respondents to express
themselves freely and reduce the level of perceived cultural inequality
between interviewer and interviewee. It was considered advantageous
for the research to be conducted in this way, due to the nature of the
clients involved, who may have had previous negative experience of
‘official’ interviewing and may thus be negatively predisposed to overly-
structured questioning. At the same time, however, it was vital to design
the topic guide in such a way as to gather as much experiential detail as
possible within the time limits defined by the research timetable.

It should be noted at this point that respondents were offered a small
incentive payment for their participation. ECOTEC’s experience in
this type of research suggests that this increases the response rate, without
any significant evidence to suggest, as some researchers claim, that payment
encourages a certain type of response (disproportionately positive).

Each interview was conducted by a study team of two researchers, with
one conducting the interview and the other taking written notes and
posing additional questions. The interview was also recorded, providing
the permission of the respondent could be gained – it was stressed that
this recording was made solely for the convenience of the researchers
and would not be passed on to any other authority.
In order to promote ease of use for the interviewer, the topic guide was broken down into a number of sections.

- **Introduction to interview**: defining the subject matter, assuring the participant of confidentiality, obtaining their consent to tape-record the interview;
- **Personal details**: confirming the information already given over the telephone;
- **Recent work and training history**: to gain a snapshot of recent (in)activity and to allow an insight into the respondent’s level of ‘labour market attachment’;
- **Recent/Current claim**: to determine the type of benefits claimed, whether there have been recent changes to the claim, and what their intentions were at the time of making their most recent claim;
- **The ONE experience**: the chain of events which led up to the ONE PA interview, the level of understanding of ONE (and thus the quality of communication), the content of the PA discussion and subsequent PA contact;
- **Barriers to work and job search**: encouraging the respondent to discuss their perceived and actual barriers to work, obtaining a detailed description of their job search or training activities designed to overcome these, and ascertaining the role of the PA in promoting any such actions;
- **Impact of ONE**: discussing the extent to which ONE has changed their view of work, their job search activity or their ability and propensity to access training, and whether more could have been done to help them – along with particular focused questions depending on their current activity;
- **Effectiveness of the PA**: whether the quality of interaction and information provided by the PA suited the participant’s needs, and whether this intervention altered their attitude to work or their perceptions of their own possibilities;
- **Close of interview**: general comments and payment of incentive.

In addition to suggesting the lines of questioning and the order of discussion (although this was left, within reason, to the discretion of the interviewer), the topic guide also prompted the interviewer to probe for specific classes of information required by the client. This allowed information to be collected to a good degree of depth in a consistent way by all members of the study team.

The full Topic Guide used in the fieldwork is attached at Appendix E of this report.
September 2000

Dear Miss SMITH

I am writing to ask for your help. The Department of Social Security and the Department for Education and Employment want to improve the services provided to people claiming benefit. We have therefore asked ECOTEC, an independent research organisation, to carry out some one-to-one discussions with people claiming benefit, or who have claimed benefit recently. ECOTEC is completely independent of government departments and political parties.

Your name has been selected at random from the records of people visiting selected offices. We would like to know about your experiences of claiming benefit and what you think of the advice and assistance you have been given whilst claiming. We are interested in your contribution, whether you are claiming benefit, or whether you have now moved off benefit.

An interviewer from ECOTEC will be contacting you some time during the next few weeks, to explain more about the study. The interviewer will ask you a small number of questions over the telephone concerning your claim and may ask you to take part in a face-to-face discussion. This is a voluntary study and anything you tell the interviewer will be treated in the strictest confidence. The findings will not identify you or your family and the names of those who take part will not be passed on to the DSS, or DfEE, or anyone outside ECOTEC. If you do take part in the face-to-face discussion, you will receive £15 in cash, as a ‘thank-you’ gift for your help with this study. This will not affect your entitlement to benefits in any way.

I hope you decide to take part in the study. If, however, you do not wish an interviewer from ECOTEC to contact you, please write (remembering to give your name) to Vicky Davies at ECOTEC, using the Freepost envelope provided, by no later than October 6th. Whatever your decision, it will not affect your benefit entitlement or any dealings you may have with DSS, the Benefits Agency or Jobcentre, either now or in the future.
I do hope you will be able to help with this important study and that you will enjoy the opportunity of giving your views. If you’d like to know more about the research, please call either Vicky Davies at ECOTEC on 020 7630 6090, or myself, at the DSS Social Research Branch on 020 7962 8003. We would be pleased to answer any queries you may have.

We hope you will be able to take part in the research.

Yours faithfully

Jo Bacon

Research Officer
02 November 2000

Dear «Title» «Surname»,

You may recall that the Department of Social Security sent you a letter last month about a piece of research that we are doing for them on your recent experiences of claiming benefit and your views on the advice and assistance you have been given.

It is important that as many people as possible are given the opportunity to participate in this research and put their views across. We are especially interested to hear your own views on the matter. Remember that you will receive £15 as a cash gift. This will not affect your benefit status in any way. Unfortunately, we have not been able to contact you by phone, so we are writing to give you the opportunity to speak to us on this matter.

A couple of researchers are going to be in your area from Monday the 30th October. If you would like to participate in a short interview about the ONE service, lasting around 45 minutes, could you please contact Jenny Steels on 0207 6306090, or myself (Jean Taylor) on 07932 074287- I will call you back immediately so not to involve any extra phone costs to yourself. We are happy to visit you at your house, and would prefer this arrangement. However, if you would like to meet us elsewhere, that is also possible. Please let us know when you write or phone.

We will of course treat all the information in the strictest confidence, any comment you make will be made anonymous and it will not affect your entitlement in any way.

We do hope to that you will agree to participate in this important piece of research and that we will be hearing from you in due course.

With all good wishes,

Jean Taylor

Researcher
**APPENDIX D**

### TELEPHONE QUESTIONNAIRE

#### Name of ONE Participant:

- **Completed telephone screen?**
  - Yes [ ]
  - No [ ]

- **Appropriate for in-depth interview?**
  - Yes [ ]
  - No [ ]

- **Arranged in-depth interview?**
  - Yes [ ]
  - No [ ]

#### Demographic and Other Criteria

- **Please Note:** This data is available in the Excel spreadsheets with contact details for clients.

**Model**

- **Basic**
  - Lea
  - Roding
  - Clyde

- **Call centre**
  - Calderdale & Kirklees
  - Gwent

- **PVS**
  - Leeds
  - North
  - Notts

**Claim**

- **JSA**
- Income Support
- Council Tax Benefit
- Housing Benefit
- Incapacity Benefit
- Severe Disablement Allowance
- Invalid Care Allowance
- Widowed Mothers Allowance
- Widows Pension
- Other

**Gender**

- M [ ]
- F [ ]

**Age band**

- 18 – 24 [ ]
- 25 – 40 [ ]
- 50+ [ ]

**Rural**

- Y [ ]
- N [ ]

Please specify ethnic group (if appropriate): [ ]

**Client Group**

- (from database)
  - Living in Ethnic minority
  - Other

**Rural Area**

- Unemployed Jobseeker (JSA)
- Lone parent (LP)
- Sick & Disabled Client (S&D)
- Carer (C)
- Widow (W)

### Introduction to Telephone Conversation

**Explain that ECOTEC recently sent you a letter asking if you would be interested in participating in some research about claiming benefits. We’d like to ask you a few questions over the telephone – this should take a few minutes – and everything discussed will be treated confidentially.**

1. **If unemployed, please tick one of the following statements as closest to how you felt towards work at the time of your claim.**
   - I didn’t want to get a job at that time [ ]
   - I wasn’t particularly concerned about getting a job at that time [ ]
   - I hoped to get a job in the near future although I had other things on my mind [ ]
   - I was very focused on getting a job as soon as possible [ ]

2. **What are you doing now?**
   - If employed, determine the nature and/or pattern of employment.
   - If not employed, find out which benefit is being claimed.

---

Please note: This template is subject to the exact spreadsheet with contact details for clients.
Jobseekers' Allowance – unemployed (seeking work and available)

Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, Invalid Care Allowance, Widowed Mothers Allowance or Widows Pension – inactive – determine whether the individual wants to work and whether they have been looking for work.

STATUS Tick Box

I am unemployed (Seeking work and available):

= Outcome -

I am employed:

Full-time employed = Outcome +
Part-time employed = Outcome +
Self-employed = Outcome +
On a government training programme = Outcome +
In Education = Outcome +

I am inactive:

Seeking work, but not available = Outcome +
Not seeking, but would like = Outcome +
Not seeking and would not like = Outcome -

Quota position

LM + Outcome +
LM - Outcome -

Check with quota requirements:

- if still needed, recruit.

Check with your colleagues:

Other useful information:

If not needed, thank them for their time and close.

Check with your colleagues:

If not needed, thank them for their time and close.

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INTERVIEW GUIDE

APPENDIX E

Topic Guide for 2nd Tranche of Fieldwork

Model:  _______ Area:  ________ Client:  _________ Client ref:_____

Notes for Interviewers

The overall aim of the qualitative interviews is to consider the policy impact of ONE on the individual – in terms of their attitudes and behaviour towards the labour market and benefit system (welfare to work, reducing ‘dependency’ on the state). More specifically, the objectives are:

- to consider the impact of ONE on an individual’s attachment to the labour market;
- to consider if there has been a reduction in inactivity;
- to consider how far clients can be re-focused on work as a first priority;
- to consider whether more people get jobs and whether they get them more quickly than they otherwise would;
- to see if people stay employed for longer periods;
- to look at the effectiveness of the Personal Adviser in identifying barriers to work and considering clients’ whole needs and in offering appropriate advice.

Introduction to Interview

First of all, thank the individual for agreeing to speak to us.

Explain that you work for ECOTEC, an independent research organisation with no links to government department or political parties.

The Department for Social Security and the Department for Education and Employment want to improve the services provided to people claiming benefit. They are funding ECOTEC to talk to people like yourself to find out how the new services provided to people claiming benefit have changed their lives, and to find out if the services provided to people claiming benefit have made you think differently about being on benefit and looking for work (either now or in the future). Can you tell me what you are doing now and looking for work (other than the job you are doing now)?

The interview should last no longer than one hour and there are a number of questions I need to ask. Before we start, it is important to explain that everything discussed during the interview will be treated as confidential.

Is that all clear? Do you have any questions you’d like to ask before we start?

Check that it is OK to record the interview – reassure the individual that the tapes will only be used by ECOTEC and will not be passed onto the DSS or any other government department.

Part One: Personal Information

Can I just check some of the information you gave over the telephone:

- Age
- Ethnic Group (where relevant)
- Current status (in work, on certain benefits, other)
- Household – do you live alone or with family/friends?

If you are sharing your home, please give me the age, status (in work, benefit claiming) and whether they are dependent on the interviewee.

Part Two: Recent Work & Training History

Interviewer Notes: These questions allow you to explore the recent history of the individual being interviewed. These serve two purposes: to ease the individual into the interview by talking about themselves, and to provide you with a picture of their attachment to the labour market / dependency on benefits.

Depending on the age of the respondent (for those aged 18-24):

- Can you tell me what you’ve done since leaving school?
- Can you tell me whether you have worked at all during the last two years?
  (Probe: No. of different jobs in these two years and how they found them. Ascertain level of priority work is given in individual’s circumstances. Collect more detail on two areas of work: type of work conducted, duration of employment (spells), reasons for leaving.)
- Can you tell me what, if any, training or education you have started over the last two years?
  (Distinguish between in-work training and independent learning. Probe: motivation for undertaking training/education, how did the client find out about the course and enrol, subject areas, vocational or non-vocational, did the individual complete the course.)

Notes for Interviewers

**Theme Guide for 2nd Tranche of Fieldwork**

**Theme:** Attachment to the labour market

**Model:**

- **Area:**
  - **Client:**
  - **Case ID:**
  - **Date:**

**Notes:**
Part Three: Recent/Current Claim

What benefits are you currently claiming?

(Use showcard of ONE benefits and check what is determining respondent's eligibility for that benefit. Clarify discrepancies with benefit information drawn from sample data – use use... have been made since. Probe: reasons for change, who initiated it and whether the client felt this was appropriate.)

Original ONE Claim Current Benefit Comments:

Jobseeker's Allowance
Income Support
Council Tax Benefit
Housing Benefit
Incapacity Benefit
Severe Disablement Allowance
Invalid Care Allowance
Widows and Bereavement Benefits

Further comments on any changes to benefits and whether this was appropriate:

If the client is currently in work:

Are you currently receiving any of the following:

Housing Benefit
Council Tax Benefit
Working Families' Tax Credit
Disabled Person's Tax Credit

Reason for recent claim: Can you explain for me the events which led up to your recent claim (which initiated ONE contact) (Probe: made redundant, widowed, began caring responsibilities, relationship broke up, fell ill or became disabled – please state on the interview guide the nature of disability or illness, indicating the level of severity, other)

Is this a new claim or a repeat claim? (Confirm whether this was an entirely new claim or if the client was changing from one benefit onto another.)

Have you claimed any benefit at any other time over the last two years? (Probe: reasons for claiming, details of different benefits claimed and length of receipt of these benefits)

Further comments on any changes to benefits and whether this was appropriate:

What were your immediate plans at the time of making this claim?

to look for work
(probe: motivation, type of work, occupation, nature of activities, part-time or full-time, why this choice, what job search methods were used, how intense were these efforts and how likely does the individual feel they would be in finding work in this area – why they would be likely, and why not (barriers to work)).
to start some training or education
(motivation, subject of training/education, part-time or full-time, intended length of course).
to remain at home
(probe: is this due to personal circumstances, caring responsibilities or attitude towards the benefit system/work?
to do other
(probe: what and why?
Further comments on any changes to benefits and whether this was appropriate:

Ways of improving your general health

Severe disability

Has the claimant had a recent spell of work?

Can you explain why you have been out of work for the last three months?

If work was not an immediate plan:

Was work an option for you at the time of your claim? (Explore the reasons for responses given, such as other responsibilities or personal circumstances. If work was an option, probe level of priority/activity/focus given to work, job search methods used.)

If work was not an option:

Did you feel that work might be an option for you in the longer term (at the time of your claim)? (Explore the reasons for responses given, try to ascertain when work may become/became an option – if at all – and the type of jobs the individual would be interested in.)

If you have not been granted the benefit you requested, please explain why...

If you have not been granted the benefit you requested, please explain why...

What time were you granted the benefit, and why?

If you have not been granted the benefit you requested, please explain why...

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What time were you granted the benefit, and why?
Part Four: Experience of ONE

Interviewer Notes: Some of the questions here refer to the delivery of ONE. This allows the individual to explain what happened to them and will help to focus their mind on the service they received and how it helped them ... and why they were (or were not) appropriate. Collect concrete evidence to support claims of appropriate focus or not.

Can you describe what happened when you started your current claim?

(Distinguish between start-up and PA meeting. Probe: method used to start claim, how this was handled, arranged a meeting with a PA, where this was held, was the timing and location appropriate for the individual concerned, and why this was or was not appropriate.)

Start-Up: PA meeting:

Was the PA meeting explained to you before you attended?

(Please probe: who explained it, what did they say, where was the emphasis placed – benefits, work, other.)

What did you think the Personal Adviser was going to do for you?

(Focus of the interview, type of help to be provided, reasons for perceptions – lack of explanation, detail given, word-of-mouth from elsewhere.)

Can you remember what you discussed with your Personal Adviser?

(Again, distinguish between start-up and PA meeting. Start by probing personal circumstances and support needs before mentioning employment etc. Probe: the focus of discussions, why this focus and whether this was appropriate ... Collect evidence to support claims of appropriate focus or not. Please probe under the following prompts if necessary)

Personal circumstances

(Housing, family, other responsibilities)

Support needs

(Level of support wanted by client.)

Benefit claim

(advice, help with forms)

Employment

(work history, job readiness, type and level of employment sought/considered, work as a future option or a long-term goal, advice on other jobs available, where to look for jobs, how to look for work.)

Barriers to work

(housing, basic skills, confidence, self-esteem, substance misuse, access to transport, mental health issues, finance/debt issues, childcare, other skill needs)

Training needs

Calculation of in-work benefits

Were you offered any further help with another agency or member of staff?

(i.e.: Disability Employment Adviser, Lone Parent Adviser, other training organisation. Please probe: Reason for help being offered, who offered this help, was it appropriate for the client.)

Have you had any contact with your PA since your first meeting?

(Please probe: Type/nature of contact, how many times, who initiated the contact, timing of meeting in relation to first contact.)

What did you discuss on these occasions?

(Again, start with the individual's personal circumstances and support needs before probing on employment. Please probe the focus of discussions, why this focus and whether this was appropriate for the individual at this later time. Collect evidence to support claims of appropriate focus or not. Please probe under the following prompts if necessary)

Personal circumstances

(Housing, family, other responsibilities)

Support needs

(Level of support wanted by client.)

Benefit claim

(advice, help with forms)

Employment

(work history, job readiness, type and level of employment sought/considered, work as a future option or a long-term goal, advice on other jobs available, where to look for jobs, how to look for work.)

Barriers to work

(housing, basic skills, confidence, self-esteem, substance misuse, access to transport, mental health issues, finance/debt issues, childcare, other skill needs)
If individual has not met with the PA since the first meeting:

- Have you been offered another meeting with your PA?
  - Probe: attitude towards another meeting, reasons for decline / non-attendance if relevant.

- Have you thought about trying to contact or to arrange another meeting with your PA since your first meeting?
  - Probe: motivation/reasons for contact or no contact, outcome/response of any attempt at further contact, level of client ownership/empowerment/proactiveness.

Part Five: Barriers to Work and Jobsearch

Interviewer’s Notes: Please probe clients for details about their jobsearch activities, the client’s perceived and real barriers to work. Less probing may be required for some clients, such as the severely sick or disabled and carers. Please also collect specific information on individual’s illnesses, disabilities and other barriers to work.

What have you been doing since your ONE interview?

If in Work:

- Collect details of the job: number of hours worked
- Main roles and responsibilities
- How did they find the job? How do they feel about it? How long do they intend to stay in the job?
- If intend to leave, why and what are the client’s plans and how will they achieve this?

If in Education or Training:

- Collect details about the course: number of hours per week
- Subject area
- How did the interviewee find the course and get enrolled? Do they enjoy it? How long does the course last?
- How will the knowledge gained be used (in relation to work)?

If Caring (Carers and Lone Parents):

- Ascertain the nature and level of their caring responsibilities
  - Caring for children, caring for elderly relatives or another type of caring – specify.
  - How extensive are these caring responsibilities? Number of hours per week.
  - Is work a priority?

If Looking for Work / Unemployed:

- Has the interviewee been looking for work? Collect detailed evidence of the nature and level of jobsearch activities – newspapers searches, CV writing, attending interviews, writing speculative letters.
  - How much time is spent looking for work per week?
  - What are the barriers preventing the client from securing employment. Has the client done anything to overcome these barriers. Has the client sought help or support with their jobsearch.

Other responses:

- Probe: what and why?
- What are these other activities
  - How do they relate to work? If at all
  - What are the client’s longer term goals? When would the client seek to achieve these? Is work a priority?

What would you like to achieve in the longer term?

- Is work a long-term goal. When would the client like to move into work. Does the client want to move into education and/or training. When and what to do.

What actions, if any, have you taken to achieve these goals?

- What was the motivation to take action, who initiated action, role of the ONE PA, was it appropriate at this time.

What actions, if any, do you think you might take in the future to achieve these goals?

- What are the milestones or trigger points, how has the client decided upon these actions, what is the timeframe for action.
Part Six: Impact of ONE

Interviewer's Notes: It is vital that individual's responses to questions in this section are fully probed. We need to be very clear what has, or has not, influenced changes in individuals' behaviour and attitudes. Be careful not to assert that changes in behaviour have occurred before, where an individual feels that something is, or is not, appropriate, draw out the reasons why they feel this way.

When you started your claim you (refer to what the individual said their plans were - refer back to section 3)

Now, you're (refer to current activity)

If there HAS BEEN A CHANGE in status, activity and/or attitude since starting recent benefit claim:

What do you think has caused this change?

(Probe: identify specific actions/events that cause changes to behaviour and attitude. Have there been any changes in attitude towards benefit and/or work.)

If there HAS BEEN NO CHANGE in status, activity and/or attitude:

Why do you feel that your activity has not changed?

(Probe: are labour market goals more long-term than current, reasons for no change, level of activity currently engaged in – job search methods, training, caring responsibilities.)

What impact, if any, do you feel the service you received from ONE has had on your current situation?

(Probe: Identify specific actions of support or assistance that have helped/hindered the client. Collect evidence to support claims – identify instances where the service received has made a clear impact. Has there been a change in attitude towards benefits and/or work?)

Do you feel there was anything more that the ONE service could have done to help you?

(Probe: What would have helped, and determine exactly how it would have helped this client. Is this something peculiar to the individual, client group or to all ONE participants.)

Part Seven: Effectiveness of Personal Adviser

Can you tell me how your Personal Adviser dealt with your personal circumstances and your particular needs?

(Probe: Effectiveness of adviser in identifying and overcoming barriers to work.)

What were your impressions of your Personal Adviser?

(Probe: how understanding, how helpful, how approachable.)

Did you feel that the PA tailored their advice and support to your needs?

(Probe: find out why people feel certain actions were or were not appropriate, the reasons for this and what would have been more appropriate.)

Was there anything that you wanted to discuss with your Adviser but did not?

(Probe: reasons for not discussing, what are the implications.)

Did the PA suggest any useful courses of action that you had not considered before?

Did your experience of the PA alter your view/understanding of what ONE could offer you?

(Probe: what about the PA – actions, approach to the client, and how did this change the individual's understanding/perceptions. As far as possible, try to establish a clear link between the individual's experience of the PA and their view of ONE.)

Part Eight: Close of Interview

What do you think of the ONE service? How do you think ONE could be improved to help people in your situation?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your time and help.

Incentive payment
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