A report of qualitative research carried out by Social and Community Planning Research on behalf of the Department of Social Security, Department for Education and Employment, Benefits Agency and the Employment Service

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On 7th October 1996 the Jobseeker’s Allowance, a unified benefit, replaced Unemployment Benefit and Income Support for unemployed people. As part of the Department of Social Security, Department for Education and Employment, Benefits Agency and Employment Service’s programme of research to collect baseline information prior to the introduction of the Jobseeker’s Allowance and the Back to Work Bonus, the Department of Social Security commissioned Social and Community Planning Research to undertake a qualitative study into the role of part-time and voluntary work among unemployed people and lone parents receiving Income Support and/or Unemployment Benefit.

The study, comprising 104 in-depth interviews, was conducted during August and September 1996, amongst a wide range of individuals: people who were currently unemployed, receiving IS and/or UB, and were either working part-time, or were involved in voluntary work, or were not involved in either of these activities; former unemployed people who, during their period of unemployment, had either worked part-time or had participated in voluntary activities; and lone parents, receiving IS, who were either working part-time or were not involved in any paid work. The lone parents included a small number who were engaged in voluntary work.

As context for the research it is important to recognise that the decision to look for work, and the type of work which is sought, whether it is full- or part-time, a new job, a second job or a change in a current job, is underpinned by a range of factors. For lone parents and unemployed people, these included:

* attitudes towards unemployment and employment aspirations;
* which may in turn be influenced by employment and unemployment history, including, for unemployed people, the circumstances in which they became unemployed;
* state of mind;
* the point in the life-cycle;
* child-care responsibilities; and
* financial circumstances.

Also taken into account in decision-making were perceptions of the local labour market and the rates of pay currently on offer together with perceptions of the value of personal skills and qualifications. A number of external ‘barriers’ may also be present which can prevent or hamper finding and taking up work, for example:
• the cost and availability of child-care facilities;
• the ability to travel and access to transport;
• lack of knowledge or understanding of the benefit system; and
• the state of the job market, locally and in relevant skill areas.

Such barriers set the parameters within which decisions about work were made. It is against this back-drop that attitudes towards part-time work and volunteering whilst claiming out-of-work benefits were developed.

**Part-time work**

For claimants and their partners, the decision to work part-time was influenced by two sets of factors: a claimant’s perceptions of part-time work as a worthwhile activity, and a related set of barriers and concerns that can prevent the take-up of part-time employment.

Part-time work can be seen as ‘working for nothing’, in both financial and personal terms. The reasons for this were numerous and included:

• the low threshold of the earnings disregards that can act as a disincentive to work;
• the extra costs incurred when working, notably child-care and travel costs;
• low levels of pay that are offered;
• reluctance to disrupt care of children and other dependants for minimal financial gain;
• a view that any part-time work is exploitative, often insecure, and therefore unlikely to lead to further or full-time employment; and
• related to the above, a perception that part-time work whilst claiming IS and/or UB can divert a person from their preferred job direction.

Claimants and their partners also experienced a number of barriers to taking up part-time work, which were in part related to the limited financial benefits of such work, notably:

• lack of part-time work in relevant skill areas;
• difficulties finding part-time work which matches child-care arrangements;
• the cost of part-time work, for example child-care and transport costs, exceeding the amount earned after earnings disregards are accounted for;
• a lack of qualifications and relevant experience; and
• employer preferences and prejudices.

As well as disincentives posed by the earnings disregards, there was evidence of other disincentive effects of the benefit system, notably a lack of awareness and understanding about the activities that can be undertaken whilst claiming and worries about disrupting benefit payments for relatively small
amounts of earnings. For some, the experience of Jobcentres actively dissuading claimants from working part-time gave the impression that the benefit system was conspiring against them in their attempts to find work. The perception among claimants that the receipt of benefit was dependent on following many rules left some fearful of exploring part-time work in case this was construed as something ‘wrong’ in the eyes of the Jobcentre.

However, claimants did work part-time, even in low-paid jobs, but tended to do so only where one of the following conditions were met:

* part-time work has little or no impact on the amount of benefit received;
* the extra income derived from part-time work is not declared;
* individuals work as a means of increasing their self-esteem, an opportunity to keep busy and take a break from household responsibilities; and
* where part-time work was felt to enhance job prospects in the long term.

One way of increasing the financial value of part-time work would be to take-up undeclared work. This was not an option claimants wanted to pursue from choice. Whilst there was empathy for those who undertook undeclared work, there was a strong view that such work was ‘wrong’ and that people were forced into undeclared work, generally for relatively small amounts of money, due to desperate financial circumstances, unfavourable earnings disregards or because employers would not offer legitimate employment. Due to the risks attached to such work and the view that it was ‘wrong’, the stress caused by undeclared work would often outweigh any perceived gains, financial or otherwise. Those who did have undeclared earnings had weighed up the risks and benefits, but were not immune to the associated stress and worry.

Views about whether part-time work could be a stepping-stone to full-time work were mixed. There was a tendency to consider the stepping-stone effect only in terms of whether it would lead directly to an increase in hours or the offer of full-time work with the same employer. Those who did regard part-time work as a potential stepping-stone included those who were looking for a career change and were using part-time work as a means to gain extra skills and experience, and those for whom their activities had a direct relevance to their future employment.

Others, however, were convinced that as part-time work was usually permanently designated as such, the stepping-stone effect was unlikely, or felt that it was disruptive to their employment ambitions. The latter included people who had considerable experience in a specific area of expertise and whose chosen occupations did not offer part-time opportunities. The low levels of pay associated with part-time jobs also influenced the opinion that part-time work could not lead to financially viable full-time work. For this reason casual, odd and undeclared jobs were rarely regarded as potential stepping-stones.
When making decisions about the financial value of jobs, claimants who saw themselves as breadwinners generally calculated that they would need to earn an amount which could support the household. Such amounts were usually around current benefit levels, sometimes lower, or slightly higher to accommodate work-related costs. Despite setting low reservation wages, the low hourly rates associated with part-time jobs meant that few claimants could envisage how such part-time jobs could be built up into a full-time wage.

In-work benefits, particularly Family Credit, were claimed by the former unemployed who had been working part-time whilst claiming Income Support and/or Unemployment Benefit and had since left these benefits. Among the current unemployed, judgements about the financial viability of a job were made with little or no reference to in-work benefits, generally claimants calculated an amount which would replace any ‘lost’ benefit payments. Lack of awareness of in-work benefits, uncertainty about their value and a reluctance to pursue employment options which would entail further benefit claims partly accounted for the exclusion of in-work benefits from calculations of reservation wages. For other claimants, in-work benefits could not be considered because benefits for housing costs were unavailable for those with mortgage payments and an equivalent of Family Credit did not operate for people without children. The lack of any in-work benefit towards mortgage costs was considered a deterrent to taking up low-paid work with a view to it leading the claimant off benefits.

Involvement in part-time work had a mixed effect on job search activities. In some cases such activities were enhanced (increased overall motivation), or more focused on specific types of work as claimants had a clearer idea of what they wanted to do. In others, job search activities had ceased altogether (a recognition that the barriers to employment were insurmountable whilst their circumstances remained unchanged, particularly for lone parents); or had declined (whilst acquiring skills, building up a business, or in anticipation of the next job move). Among the latter group, there was a view that making applications for jobs was a restrictive definition of job search and that the pursuit of qualifications or self-employment should be regarded as equally valid ways of fulfilling the ‘actively seeking’ rule.

A range of changes were identified by respondents that they believed could enhance the take-up of part-time work and its role in enabling a move to full-time work. These included:

* changes to the earnings disregards
  - increase earnings disregards to £20 or £30 per week;
  - transport and child-care costs to be added to the amounts disregarded;
  - the level of disregard to be increased in direct proportion to earnings,
  - rather than a fixed cut-off;
  - allow claimants to work one day a week before benefits are affected (a weekly equivalent of the Sunday earnings rule);
amending Family Credit such that mortgage interest is paid;

- a ‘job on trial’ arrangement such that an individual can try a job for a specified trial period with either no effect on their benefits, or if the job proves unsuitable, benefit entitlement is immediately re-instated at the original level;

- benefits advice that is accurate, impartial and enables individuals to gauge whether they will be better off in part-time work whilst claiming Income Support and/or Unemployment Benefit; and

- job search advice that is tailored to the individual and takes into account their skills, experience, financial needs and long-term employment aims.

Voluntary activities

Volunteering is not an activity that is only associated with unemployment, with participation in such activities often pre-dating periods of unemployment. The reasons for becoming, or continuing as, a volunteer whilst claiming out-of-work benefits were threefold:

- Direct work-related reasons - voluntary activities were seen as part of a considered plan to find work;

- Indirect work-related reasons - the experience of taking part in voluntary activities was considered to enhance job prospects but plans made about employment were usually longer-term and less considered; and

- Non-work-related reasons - volunteering was undertaken partly for philanthropic reasons and partly as a way of breaking the tedium of unemployment and providing an interest.

Claimants and their partners did not participate in voluntary activities for one, or more, of five reasons:

- narrow or negative perceptions about volunteering and volunteers;

- a lack of familiarity with the concept of volunteering, or voluntary work has not been considered at all;

- the link between participating in voluntary activities and securing work, together with the potential indirect benefits of volunteering, remain unrecognised;

- a number of concerns and barriers that impede an individual’s ability to volunteer, including transport and child-care difficulties, a lack of awareness about opportunities, a concern that they might be out of pocket, and a worry that they may not have the right set of skills to offer; and

- voluntary activities being seen as incompatible with, or irrelevant to, their particular plans for employment.

There was some evidence to indicate that the advice and actions of Jobcentre staff had dissuaded some individuals from pursuing voluntary activities. Knowledge of the impact of voluntary work on benefits was generally sparse.
There was considerable confusion, on both sides (claimant and staff), about the amount of time a person could spend on voluntary activities and the amount of notice they would be required to give their 'voluntary employer' should they wish to take a job.

Fear of not being perceived as 'available for and actively seeking employment' by Jobcentre staff was a concern for some, leading to reluctance in informing the Jobcentre about voluntary work. There was also fear of being wrongly reported for undeclared paid work. Those engaged in voluntary work included those who did not have such concerns, some to the extent that they did not regard voluntary work as 'any of their [the Jobcentre's] business'. Others were confident that the benefits of voluntary work to their employment prospects outweighed any concerns which may be raised by the Jobcentre about fulfilment of the 'availability for, and actively seeking work' rules.

The question of whether voluntary activities were perceived as a stepping-stone to employment was related to a number of factors and included:

- whether volunteering was part of a claimant's definite plans for job search;
- the degree of similarity between the type of voluntary work undertaken and the type of work desired by the individual;
- whether volunteering was an acceptable (to an employer) route into employment (more likely to be acceptable for caring professions than, say, engineering);
- the extent to which an individual saw volunteering as a direct stepping-stone to the same type of work; and
- likely employer intentions (do these jobs exist only because they are done by volunteers?).

Volunteer work was an important factor in maintaining motivation and confidence during job search, and some felt that it increased job search activity. For others, the voluntary activity itself was regarded as a form of job search: either a necessary, sometimes long term, stage of acquiring specific skills or becoming 'job-ready'; or was regarded as a prerequisite for some occupations. As a result, fewer job applications were made and job search was targeted on specific areas. For others, voluntary work was maintained alongside job applications and other job search activities.

Respondents suggested a number of changes they thought would enhance the role of volunteering in obtaining paid work. For example:

- breaking down the stereotyped image of volunteering;
- making access to voluntary activities easier;
- offering volunteering advice that is tailored to the claimant's needs and reflects the individual's skills and long-term goals;
• recognising that participation in voluntary activities will not be to everyone’s taste and will not necessarily meet their job search needs;

• promoting both the indirect, as well as the direct, benefits of voluntary activities;

• promoting the benefits of volunteering without unduly raising people’s expectations;

• ensuring that both Jobcentre staff and claimants are aware of the regulations that govern voluntary work whilst claiming Income Support and/or Unemployment Benefit; and

• ensuring that a claimant’s out-of-pocket expenses are covered.

Interviews were conducted jointly with claimants and their partners in order to explore the influence of partners on claimants’ decisions about employment; and to explore partners’ experiences of, and attitudes towards, part-time work during the claim.

The influences of partners on claimants’ decisions were informed by the following considerations:

• male claimants’ commitment to the role of breadwinner for the household dominated the nature of any influences from female partners, such that:

  • partners generally supported and shared claimants’ search for a full-time job with a ‘family’ wage;

  • the financial dependence of partners on claimants informed concerns about the financial viability of part-time work and agreement with the view that the earnings disregards were a financial disincentive; and

  • the possibility of swapping the breadwinner and child-care roles whilst the claimant was unemployed was not a strong factor in partners and claimants’ decisions.

• partners in full-time work could reduce the financial pressure on claimants, supporting them in their search for the ‘right’ job or a job that fitted in with child care.

Female partners’ attitudes towards part-time work were, on the whole, heavily influenced by their role as the main provider of child care within the household; they did not always regard themselves as unemployed:

• partners and claimants shared the view that it was important for at least one partner, usually the mother, to be available for the children with child-care arrangements pre-dating the onset of unemployment;

• the (male) claimant was perceived to be the household member with the greater earning potential, so increased involvement in child care was not regarded as financially sensible; and
where existing part-time work had been undertaken which fitted in with child-care arrangements and school hours, partners were reluctant to increase hours and did not regard the work as a ‘stepping-stone’.

Those partners with older children who were considering part- or full-time work experienced a number of barriers:

- child-care costs and lack of jobs with hours which complemented child-care demands;
- out-of-date skills and qualifications, and lack of confidence in skills;
- financial disincentive posed by the earnings disregards.

Although the level of the earnings disregards were resented by those in part-time work, partners and claimants were reluctant for this work to be given up because:

- partners’ part-time earnings would be useful once the claimant found work;
- claimants were reluctant to disrupt the partners’ life; and
- partners enjoyed the work.
1.1 Background

On 7th October 1996 the Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), a unified benefit, replaced Income Support (IS) for unemployed people and Unemployment Benefit (UB).

The policy objectives of the JSA when introduced were to:

- improve the operation of the labour market by helping people in their search for work, while ensuring that they understand and fulfil the conditions for receipt of benefit;
- secure better value for money for the taxpayer by a streamlined administration, closer targeting on those who do need financial support and a regime which more effectively helps people back into work; and
- improve the service to unemployed people themselves by a simpler, clearer, more consistent benefit structure, and by better service delivery.

A wide range of changes to the benefit system for unemployed people were made, of which the most significant in relation to this research were: changes in the structure and levels of earnings disregards; changes to the number of hours that can be worked by partners whilst receiving benefit; and the introduction of the Back to Work Bonus (referred to as ‘the Bonus’ hereafter).

The aim of the Bonus is to encourage IS¹ and JSA claimants and their partners to undertake, stay in or increase small amounts of work whilst claiming out-of-work benefits and eventually to move off benefit into work. Claimants who have been entitled to IS or JSA for over 91 days can build up a tax-free lump sum, subject to a maximum, which is equal to half of any earnings above the disregard. This can be claimed when the claimant or their partner increases their hours or earnings so that their entitlement to benefit (IS or JSA) ceases. Further information about the recent changes may be found at the end of the report in Appendix III, pages 74 to 75.

As part of the Department of Social Security, Department for Education and Employment, Benefits Agency and Employment Service’s programme of research to collect baseline information prior to the introduction of the Jobseeker’s Allowance and Back to Work Bonus, the Department of Social Security (DSS) commissioned Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR) to undertake a qualitative research study into the role of part-time and voluntary work among unemployed people and lone parents receiving Income Support and/or, Unemployment Benefit. The focus of this research is to look at claimants’ knowledge, attitudes, decisions and behaviour concerning part-time and voluntary work whilst claiming UB and/or IS. A

¹ Income Support claimants under age 60 are eligible to participate in the Bonus scheme.
topic of particular interest is whether, and how, part-time and voluntary work can act as a 'stepping-stone' between benefits and full-time employment. The research has been designed to inform subsequent evaluations of the impact of the JSA and the Bonus on the activities of claimants during unemployment, and will complement the findings of the Departments’ recent JSA Claimant Survey (conducted by SCPR and the Centre for Research in Social Policy, at Loughborough University, see Bottomley et al, 1997).

1.2 Research aims The aims of this research study are threefold:

* to provide baseline information about attitudes towards, and experiences of, part-time and voluntary work among people receiving out-of-work benefits;

* to identify whether part-time work or voluntary activities can provide a 'stepping-stone' to work and earnings which take the claimant off benefits; and

* to explore the effects on job search of participation in part-time work or volunteering.

The research sought to address the following issues:

* claimants’ and their partners’ attitudes towards different types of activities, particularly part-time work and volunteering in relation to claiming out-of-work benefits;

* the role of the benefits system in any decisions claimants or partners make about whether or not to undertake these activities;

* whether part-time work and voluntary activities can provide a stepping-stone from benefits to full-time work, and under what circumstances;

* the impact of participating in part-time work and volunteering on job search activities;

* awareness of the nature of the work activities that individuals can do whilst claiming out-of-work benefits; and

* from the claimant’s perspective, what would facilitate greater participation in part-time work and voluntary activities whilst claiming out-of-work benefits.

1.3 Sample design The research was conducted among lone parents and people who were unemployed and engaged in different work activities whilst they were claiming IS and/or UB. The sample design is summarised in Figure 1.1. The sample comprised seven sample groups encompassing a range of claimant and activity types. Fourteen to sixteen people were recruited within each sample group (104 in total). Additional quotas were set to ensure the presence within each sample group of: a range of benefits claimed, duration of benefit claims, occupations and skills, household types and age groups. A full sample profile is provided in Appendix I.
The sample included:

- claimants with experience of different types of part-time work, including those currently involved in regular part-time work, occasional part-time work, and odd jobs, as well as those who had previously worked part-time at some point either before, or during, their current claim;

- unemployed claimants and a number of lone parents with experience of volunteering. Voluntary work was considered in its widest sense and included any unpaid work (or expenses only) for charities and other organisations and individuals, but excluded care provided for family, neighbours or friends;

- ex-claimants who had participated in part-time or volunteer work whilst they were unemployed and claiming IS and/or UB but had since signed off and moved into work. This group was included specifically to look at the potential stepping-stone effects of part-time work and voluntary activities; and

- partners of claimants and ex-claimants, in order to explore the impact of partners’ views and circumstances on claimants’ decisions to do part-time work whilst they are unemployed; and to investigate the impact of claimants’ unemployment on partners’ decisions concerning part-time work.

Figure 1.1 Sample composition

Currently unemployed
- **working part-time in this claim (14)**
  - engaged in regular or occasional part-time work, either now or earlier in the claim.
- **voluntary work in this claim (15)**
  - currently involved in voluntary work, or had done so earlier in the claim.
- **not working part-time or doing voluntary work in this claim (16)**
  - includes some people who had worked part-time or had been a volunteer before the start of this claim.

Former unemployed
- **working part-time in last claim (15)**
  - may have been regular part-time work or occasional work.
- **voluntary work in last claim (15)**
  - includes people who had been involved in regular and ad hoc voluntary work.

Lone Parents
- **working part-time in this claim (15)**
  - engaged in regular part-time work or occasional work.
- **not working part-time in this claim (14)**
  - includes some people who did voluntary work.
1.4 Research methods

The research was conducted in the catchment areas of three Employment Service Jobcentres and the corresponding Benefits Agency Local Offices, selected to ensure coverage of different labour market characteristics and levels of unemployment. Participants in the research were drawn from four sources:

- unemployed claimants visiting one of the three Jobcentres to sign on during August 1996;
- Income Support Computer System records of lone parents currently in receipt of Income Support;
- Jobcentre records of former unemployed claimants who had been working part-time whilst they were claiming out-of-work benefits and had signed off into a job during the previous 12 months; and
- respondents to the JSA Claimant Survey who had been unemployed and involved in voluntary work up to 12 months prior to the qualitative fieldwork and had since signed off into a job.

Full details of the sample design are in Appendix I.

Participants were recruited from the Departmental records and the JSA Claimant Survey using a screening interview conducted by telephone. A two-stage approach was adopted for recruitment of the sample of unemployed claimants visiting Jobcentres. Claimants were initially approached inside the Jobcentre by SCPR research staff when they visited to sign on. At this point basic details were collected together with a contact address and telephone number. Claimants were later telephoned and screened to determine their eligibility for inclusion in the study.

The fieldwork, 104 depth interviews, was conducted during August and September 1996, using a topic guide designed in agreement with the Department. Claimants were interviewed jointly with their partner where present in the household. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Each interview was analysed using ‘Framework’, an analytical tool for qualitative analysis developed by SCPR.

Copies of the recruitment and fieldwork documents are in Appendix IV.

1.5 Structure of the report

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 provides an overview of the factors that play a part in the process of finding and securing work. Against this backdrop Chapters 3 and 4, respectively, consider the role of part-time work and voluntary activities whilst claiming IS and/or UB including whether these activities are perceived by claimants and their partners as stepping-stones from benefits to employment. As the study was carried out just prior to the introduction of the Jobseeker’s Allowance, respondents’ awareness of, and any views about the impending changes were sought. These are presented, in summary form, in Appendix II. Much of the research focused
on claimants' views and experiences, but interviews were also conducted with their partners. Throughout the report 'claimant' refers to the person in the household making the claim for benefit (either for themselves alone or for both themselves and their partner). 'Partners' of claimants are referred to separately. A glossary of other terms is provided at the end of the report.
A central focus of this study is to consider whether part-time work and participation in voluntary activities whilst claiming out-of-work benefits can act as a 'stepping-stone' to full-time work, and the circumstances in which this is likely to happen. In considering this it is important to set the process of finding work into context. A considerable body of research evidence is now available to suggest that a wide range of factors play a part in the process of finding, and securing, work. It is not the intention of this report to discuss these in full, but rather to present a brief summary of the key issues raised by claimants and their partners, as a way of setting the scene for the research. These factors are conceptualised, in outline, in Figure 2.1.

As other research studies have shown, despite their various experiences and circumstances, people who are unemployed on the whole dislike being out of work and are keen to find work. Sometimes a job may be the immediate aim, for others (particularly lone parents) the goal of work may be rather longer term. Unlike unemployed claimants, lone parents are not required to be available for and actively seeking work as a condition of benefit receipt. Many lone parents are however involved in, or planning, activities which would eventually lead them into paid employment.

The process of moving towards full-time work is rarely straightforward and is affected by a range of features: an individual's attitudes towards employment; a number of aspects that can act as barriers towards securing work; and the decisions an individual makes.

2.1 Attitudes towards unemployment

Experiences of unemployment were generally described in negative terms, although some individuals were more negative than others. In part the experience of unemployment reflects the way in which claimants had become unemployed - individuals who had been made redundant generally felt more depressed about their situation than those who had given up work because they were moving area or a family problem required them to do so.

'I was made redundant last year. Been in the job, well it would have been 30 years next year. The whole place closed down. At the time I just didn't know what hit me...I'm feeling better about it now, but I don't expect to work ever again. Not round here anyway.' (No activities; unemployed; male, 48, married)

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‘I do get really fed up being out of work... but it was my choice in a way 'cos we split up and I decided I wanted to be back near my family and so I gave up my job to come here.’

(No activities; unemployed; female, 35, separated)

‘I thought that when I left University with a degree it would be really easy to get a job. I left a year and a half ago now and I’ve had a couple of interviews - one where I was the second choice for the job - but I’m getting really worried now. I’m young and I’m not stupid, but I worry now whether I’m going to find a job.’

(Part-time work; unemployed; female, 22, single)

The age at which an individual became unemployed was also important, with older people feeling less positive about their future than some of the younger individuals. Family circumstances also had a considerable impact on attitudes to work. For example, while lone parents with pre-school children were interested in work in principle, it was not something they were able to consider until their youngest child was at school.

‘I definitely want to work. [Son] is at school now and when [daughter] goes to school in two years time then I’ll look for something... but it will have to fit in with the [school] hours... I just feel I should be here for them and I couldn’t leave her with anybody while I worked. It just wouldn’t be fair on them... Childminder? Couldn’t afford that.’

(No activities; lone parent; female, 22)

The experience of being unemployed was often cyclical in nature with levels of confidence, hopefulness, and motivation to find work moving through peaks and troughs. Sustaining job-search activity can be particularly difficult when faced with numerous job rejections, but there was evidence of high levels of job seeking despite continued rejection or lack of response from employers. As a consequence, attitudes towards work were said to vary according to how well individuals felt about their current situation.

‘I’ve been out of work for so long. I had a spell [of feeling down] and got in a rut. You know, it’s hard to get out of... A few years ago I got in a rut. Getting up, telly was on ‘till the dot went off - that was before we had all night telly. And it’s so easy to get into and it’s so hard to get out of it.’

(Volunteer; unemployed; male, 37, married)

2.2 Barriers to work in general Claimants found themselves coming up against a series of external barriers when they were seeking work in general. These barriers restricted access to jobs, for example due to employers’ preferences for different types of people or the types of qualifications / skills in demand; or prevented take-up of jobs, for example due to lack of suitable and affordable child care. These have been amply documented in previous research⁴. However, it is important to note that such barriers apply to both part-time work and full-time work. For

some, employment options were restricted following such changes in the local labour market as closure of major employers, shifts in the industrial base and lack of demand for certain skills. Employers’ attitudes and recruitment practices could further restrict access to jobs, for example:

- claimants felt that employers preferred women for some jobs, particularly those part-time jobs in retail and care;
- some perceived a disinclination to employ lone parents or other women with child-care responsibilities; and
- age restrictions were specified in advertised jobs, particularly against those aged 45 years or more.

For lone parents and others with child-care responsibilities, there were a number of barriers related to child care:

- the high cost of child-care facilities relative to potential earnings;  
- lack of child-care services which complemented working hours; and
- few jobs with hours (and travel time) which could be accommodated within school hours.

A key factor taken into account in deciding whether to pursue a job was whether an individual felt the job would be financially viable. Many advertised jobs seen by this sample of individuals had hourly rates of pay between £2 and £2.50. Few could envisage how such jobs could provide an adequate wage to support themselves and their family, even with a considerable amount of overtime. Decisions about the financial viability of a job were informed by hourly rates, the number of hours of work available, whether full-time hours were guaranteed and the availability of overtime and by the cost of transport, child-care and other work-related expenses. The contribution of in-work benefits or partners’ earnings were rarely included in such calculations, although some had contemplated taking two jobs at once. In-work benefits were not considered for a number of reasons:

- lack of awareness about such benefits or about extended payments of Housing and Council Tax Benefit;
- uncertainty about the amount such benefits could contribute;
- a perception that in-work benefits would not enhance the financial viability of the job; and
- lack of in-work benefits for mortgages or an equivalent of Family Credit for people without children.

In households where there was an unemployed partner the claimant generally calculated that a wage would be required which could support

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5 Child-care costs up to £60 are disregarded in calculations of Family Credit entitlement.
themselves and their partner. Partners' experiences of, and attitudes towards part-time work are discussed more fully in Section 3.5.

The changes in the job market perceived by claimants, which included a trend towards part-time staffing, split shifts, and temporary or contract work provided additional major barriers to people wishing to move from the relative security of benefits to the perceived insecurity of the job market. This was a particular concern for those claimants with dependants or a mortgage. Taking into account these perceptions and the realisation that they would have to pay their housing costs (rent or mortgage interest), travel-to-work costs and child-care expenses (where appropriate) the decision to move from benefits to work was seen as very risky indeed.

The Jobcentre was perceived by respondents to be a further obstacle to the pursuit of their employment objectives. Claimants generally held very negative views about the function of the Jobcentre. Associated with the policing of benefits, Jobcentres were seen as being concerned more with reducing the unemployment count than providing genuine help. Despite the staff being described as 'nice and helpful' there was a feeling that job counselling and advice rarely took into account the needs and circumstances of the individual and was more concerned with 'getting you off the register'.

Contact with the Jobcentre was regarded with some trepidation. Despite evidence of high levels of Jobsearch, claimants were fearful of being accused of not 'actively seeking work'. This led to a reluctance to discuss employment options, including the viability of either part-time work whilst claiming out-of-work benefits or working full-time and claiming in-work benefits. There was some fear of discussing concerns about different employment options with Jobcentre staff in case such concerns were perceived by staff as evidence that claimants were not 'actively seeking, and available for, work'. There was also a perception that staff were too busy to provide adequate advice, some claimants being reluctant to seek advice when there was a long queue of people behind them.

2.3 Decisions about work in general

The barriers outlined in the previous section provided the framework within which claimants considered the different options available, how worthwhile they were, and how they might secure work. For some, the barriers were such that despite continued job search, they did not feel that they had any options, some believing that they would never find work. Individuals took a wide range of factors into account in considering their working future. These included their perceptions of the amount and type of work available in the locality, their work aspirations and the sort of work they were looking for, the relevance of jobs available to the type of work they wished to do or were skilled for, and - most importantly - the rate of pay that was offered.

Each of these factors would vary in their salience according to how an individual felt about themselves and their personal situation at that time. So,
for example, perceptions of the local labour market may swing from positive to negative according to how an individual felt about their skills and abilities in relation to the length of time they had been unemployed. Finally, evidence of the number of factors taken into account whilst seeking employment should not leave the impression that claimants were making decisions based on a great deal of choice. The barriers outlined in Section 2.2 suggest that the choice of vacancies was restricted. Much of the decision-making process applied to the focus of job-seeking activities rather than the amount, and very rarely did claimants have the opportunity to apply such criteria to actual job offers. In the next two chapters the role of part-time work and participation in voluntary activities whilst claiming IS and/or UB is discussed against this back-drop of attitudes towards, and decisions about, unemployment and finding work.

Figure 2.1  From benefits to work: attitudes and decision-making

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attitudes to unemployment</th>
<th>Decisions about work</th>
<th>Finding work</th>
<th>Full-time work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Underpinning factors</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Current situation</td>
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<tr>
<td>e.g. care responsibilities</td>
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<td>age</td>
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<tr>
<td>skills</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>age of children</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>* 'State of mind'</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>* How became unemployed</td>
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<tr>
<td>– point in the lifecycle</td>
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<tr>
<td>– continued feelings about unemployment</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Duration of unemployment</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Financial circumstances</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Factors taken into account</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceptions of local labour market</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Work-related aspirations</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>– type of work required</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>– nature of skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Perceptions about whether</td>
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<tr>
<td>'work-ready'</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Rates of pay offered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Relevance to proposed career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Perceptions/experiences of</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>negative aspects of benefit system – may not be better off</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Barriers</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Child care issues (mainly cost)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Low pay</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Availability of jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Ability to travel</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Lack of confidence or relevant/up-to-date skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>* Employer's attitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Lack of job search help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The decision to work part-time is influenced by two sets of factors. The first concerns a set of barriers and related worries that can prevent an individual looking for, and taking up, part-time work. These barriers and concerns provide a framework for a second set of factors which relate to the perceptions that claimants and their partners have of part-time work and whether they see it as a worthwhile activity.

This chapter explores the role of part-time work whilst claiming IS and/or UB and considers why some people do, and others do not, take up part-time work during IS and/or UB benefit claims. The focus of the interview was on part-time jobs under 16 hours per week, the maximum number of hours permitted during IS and UB claims. Respondents were asked to consider a wide range of part-time jobs including both odd and regular part-time jobs whilst claiming IS and/or UB and jobs within and outside their usual occupation.

Some claimants who were not working part-time had clearly considered the disadvantages of undertaking part-time work whilst claiming out-of-work benefits and demonstrated awareness of the types of jobs advertised locally and in Jobcentres. Some had applied for part-time jobs, but had then discovered they would lose benefits. Others excluded part-time jobs from their job search because they regarded the level of the earnings disregard a disincentive. Another group of claimants had not considered part-time jobs because they had focused their job search on full-time jobs which would take them completely off benefits; or because they did not believe there to be any part-time jobs in their chosen field. Among this latter group were those who had not considered part-time work at all before the interview. For these claimants, their focus on full-time work was such that the concept of part-time work was outside their job search framework.

Many of the negative perceptions claimants held about part-time jobs which could be done during the out-of-work benefit claim were drawn from

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6 At the time of the research, up to 16 hours of work per week were permitted whilst claiming IS. UB did not have a remunerative work rule. Payment of UB was based on whether a particular day ranked as a day of unemployment. Part-time work of 16 hours per week or more could attract Family Credit.

7 See Appendix III (page 73) for an explanation of earnings disregards. Earnings disregards are the amounts of money claimants can earn before IS is reduced. At the time of the research the weekly IS earnings disregard ranged from £5 to £15. The money earned above the disregarded amount was deducted from benefit. For UB claims, UB ceased for any week where earnings exceeded £61 or for days where earnings exceeded £2 (different rules applied to Sunday earnings).
Table 3.1 Views and circumstances of those who do and do not work part-time whilst claiming out-of-work benefits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Financial Disregards</th>
<th>Reasons part-time work is not done</th>
<th>Limitations of part-time work expressed by both those who do and do not work part time</th>
<th>Reasons why part-time work is undertaken</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No financial incentive</td>
<td>Earnings deducted from benefits</td>
<td>Earnings close to disregard levels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low pay</td>
<td>Low pay (under £4 an hour)</td>
<td>Some earnings undeclared</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High work expenses</td>
<td>Transport and work expenses diminish earnings</td>
<td>Misinformed about disregards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low work expenses</td>
<td>Child-care costs can be high</td>
<td>Income will be useful in future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste of experience / qualifications</td>
<td>Irrelevant to career / job prospects</td>
<td>Wage is a stopgap between Gos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would not lead to more work</td>
<td>Relevant to career plans</td>
<td>Any money is better than nothing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detracts from job search</td>
<td>Possibility of more hours / full-time work</td>
<td>Misled about pay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could harm job prospects</td>
<td>Relevant to career plans</td>
<td>Low / nil expenses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less time for family</td>
<td>Less time for family</td>
<td>Child care not needed / free</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploitative / low pay relative to other employees</td>
<td>Dislike form-filling</td>
<td>Local work / access to free transport</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor and dangerous working conditions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal value</td>
<td>Reporting earnings / form filing</td>
<td>Form-filling not a problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less time for children / partner</td>
<td>Less time for family</td>
<td>Complements child-care arrangements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low esteem / demeaning work</td>
<td></td>
<td>Less hassle about job search from jobcentre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exploitative / low pay relative to other employees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Poor and dangerous working conditions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hassle</td>
<td>Concern about loss of benefits</td>
<td>Child care not an issue / accessible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to affordable, regular, flexible child care</td>
<td></td>
<td>Undeclared earnings / initially unaware of rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions of benefit system</td>
<td></td>
<td>Work obtained through friends and ex-colleagues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer preferences</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flexible hours / complement other commitments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of work available</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relevant to occupation / change in usual occupation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only available in certain occupations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Always worked part-time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same barriers apply as for full-time work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse off after work-related costs deducted</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
and did not interfere with pre-existing (free) child-care arrangements.

The mismatch between the low rates of pay and earnings disregards and the high levels of child-care costs proved to be a fundamental problem for lone parents. They could not afford child-care costs from their £15 disregard, so part-time work was only a viable option for those lucky enough to have access to free, or very cheap child-care, a scenario which was rare. One lone parent was planning to move away from the area to be near friends who indicated they could provide free child-care which would enable him to seek work.

The disincentives posed by child-care costs once the claimant had become unemployed did not lead any of the partners of claimants in this study to give up existing part-time work. Given that partners already had ongoing child-care and household responsibilities which preceded the spell of unemployment, and that part-time jobs attracted low levels of pay, the part-time jobs they had found had been taken up partly because of the low work-related costs involved and because these jobs complemented existing domestic arrangements. Child-care costs were more of a disincentive for those who wanted to take up part-time work, or extend the hours they already worked. When partners had ceased part-time work, this had coincided with other changes in circumstances, for example pregnancy, or had occurred when the job was disrupting family commitments (see page 18). The views and experiences of partners are discussed more fully in Section 3.5.

In terms of poor levels of pay, while claimants and partners considered low-paid jobs in their job search, many of the part-time jobs they saw advertised were for low rates of pay. Reports of hourly rates of £2.00 and £2.50 were common. Such rates of pay were considered exploitative and demeaning whether the work was done during the benefit claim or outside the claim. Among claimants seeking full-time work as a breadwinner for the household, the association between part-time work and low rates of pay informed other perceptions about part-time work:

* even with full-time or with overtime hours, these rates of pay would not provide a viable wage (i.e. a wage at least equivalent to benefit levels);
* such jobs could never lead to full-time work;
* acceptance of low-paid work placed a low value on the skills and worth of the claimant; and
* low levels of pay suggested that the work was aimed at people who only wish to top-up their income and was not therefore suitable for breadwinners.

These perceptions applied to part-time hours which exceeded the limits for out-of-work benefits, but they were relevant to views about work whilst claiming such benefits. Among those claimants committed to finding full-
am I going to do? … I would feel I was wasting their [employer’s] time doing this part-time job when what I really, really want is to be in a full-time job … when you’ve gone through the effort of having the interview, setting it all up, knowing full well that, well it’s an honesty thing, knowing that I would only be there a few weeks."

(Part-time self-employed; former unemployed; female, 40, single)

Claimants’ concerns about the impact of part-time work on job search are discussed in Section 3.4.

3.1.2 Barriers to part-time work

The previous section has described why claimants and partners regarded part-time work whilst claiming out-of-work benefits as ‘working for nothing’. Financial aspects were influential in the formation of judgements about the value of part-time work, but these aspects also formed major barriers to the consideration and take-up of part-time work. The barriers to the take-up of part-time work were numerous. As they have been well documented elsewhere they will be presented here only in summary form (Figure 3.2).

Those barriers which were specific to part-time work whilst claiming IS and/or UB included work-related expenses and the benefit system. These were experienced across all groups of claimants, but child-care costs were more salient for lone parents and female partners. Section 3.1.1 has outlined the problems arising from transport and child-care costs and lack of an earnings disregard which takes account of such costs. This section will focus on other barriers arising from the benefit system.

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Bars which apply to any work

- Age restrictions were advertised in both full- and part-time jobs, for example 18 to 35 or 45, or under 50;
- Lack of qualifications and relevant experience - some claimants did not feel they had relevant qualifications or experience for either full- or part-time jobs; others with specific skills could not find part-time work in their relevant area due to changes in the labour market (for example closure of large employers, lack of demand or over supply of some skills, or shifts in the industrial base);
- Lack of confidence and motivation (the consequent effects of relationship breakdown or disruption, long-term unemployment, periods of ill-health, redundancy); and
- Availability of acceptable, affordable and flexible child care.

Bars which apply to part- and full-time work, but are perceived to be worse for part-time work

- Employer preferences and prejudices (e.g. ‘part-time work is considered by employers as women’s work’) and perceived gendering of the labour market, particularly part-time jobs in care or retail;
- Cost of child care relative to earnings; and
- Mismatch between the times a person can work, because of child-care responsibilities, and the hours an employer requires.

Bars which apply specifically to part-time work whilst claiming IS and/or UB

- Work expenses (for example transport and child-care costs) exceed earnings disregards (see 3.1.1.)
- The benefit system:
  - lack of knowledge
  - discouragement.

Poor understanding of the benefit system

The experience that ‘they [staff] don’t tell you anything’ left claimants with mixed levels of knowledge about the type of activities they could do whilst unemployed, leaving them reliant on friends and family for information that was not always correct.

Claimants were generally aware of the disregards, and quoted figures between £5 and £15 per week, although some, including those working part-time, were only aware that ‘up to a certain amount’ could be earned. Claimants appeared to become aware of the disregards when they were following up jobs. Some of those working part-time remained unclear about the precise nature of the rules until they had been working for some weeks.
Among those working part-time, some had taken the job and then enquired about the benefit rules when they next signed on. Among those who were not working part-time, some had come very close to taking a part-time job until they had found out about the level of the earnings disregards.

Awareness of the number of hours which could be worked whilst claiming out-of-work benefits was less clear cut. There was some confusion and perplexity expressed by those who could not equate the level of the earnings disregards with the hours limits: ‘It sounds wrong to me, if they say you’re allowed to earn 15 hours, surely you’re allowed to keep the 15 hours money’. Generally, part-time jobs were equated with the equivalent in hours to half a full-time job: ‘the most you do is 20 hours a week’. Although some claimants were aware that part-time work could be done within certain limits, there appears to be some confusion given the differences in definitions of part-time work. Some jobs did not fall neatly into part- or full-time definitions: ‘it’s three-quarters, more than part-time but less than full-time’.

Despite general awareness of the earnings disregards, some claimants were unaware that any part-time work (casual or more regular) could be combined with out-of-work benefit claims. Similarly, awareness of the availability for, and actively seeking rules had a mixed impact on decisions about part-time work; some claimants recognised that work could be combined with job search, while others thought there would be a conflict between the two activities.

‘I liked gardening, I suppose it’s always been my passion … people kept saying to me wouldn’t you like to come round and do some for me and I’d say to them well I’m on the dole, I’m not allowed to work … nobody said to me look you can do 15, up to 16 hours a week and still get all your benefits … in the end I got fed up with people coming to me and saying come and do our gardens, I thought let’s go down and see what I’m entitled to do.’

(Part-time work; former unemployed; male, 49, married)

Misconceptions and incorrect interpretations of the benefit rules regarding part-time work could lead to claimants rejecting it as an option. For example, some claimants thought that they would have to sign off if they were working part-time; others felt that the DSS ‘frowned’ upon day-time activities whilst claiming out-of-work benefits partly because such activities were thought to be incompatible with claiming and partly because it was felt to compromise job search activities.

In some instances, the impression had been given in Jobcentres that ‘… you’re not allowed to do anything’, partly as a result of the questions claimants had been asked when signing on for benefit. This had led, in some instances, to claimants turning down part-time work that had been offered to them, or not pursuing such job offers further in case any discussion with the Jobcentre staff affected their benefit claim. In one case of a claimant who had a part-time job during the out-of-work benefit claim, the claimant
found that the travel costs exceeded the earnings. This claimant was reluctant
to give up the part-time job, or to even discuss this as an option with the
Jobcentre, in case this was construed as not being ‘available for’ work.

Lone parents appeared to be better informed than most and were generally
aware that ‘you can’t earn more than £15’. There was some misunderstanding,
for example, a view that ‘you’re allowed £15 before you have to declare it’. This
suggests that some lone parents misunderstood the benefit rules, believing
that the DSS only had to be informed of earnings worth more than £15 per
week. Despite awareness of the disregards, claimants and partners continued
to be unsure about the impact of earnings on other benefits, such as One
Parent Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

For those considering part-time work which could enable a move from
Income Support to Family Credit, levels of knowledge about in-work
benefits were patchy. In-work benefits were often seen to be more trouble
than they were worth once the length of time to resolve claims, dealing with
the CSA and maintenance, and lack of benefit for mortgage interest costs,
were taken into account. Some said that they were worse off claiming
Family Credit because of the effect on Housing Benefit, Mortgage Interest
Payments and Council Tax Benefit. These claimants had only discovered this
once they had made the move to part-time work, and some had returned to
Income Support as a result.

There were mixed views about using part-time work to move from Income
Support to Family Credit: some felt that a gradual move from benefits to
work with the support of Family Credit was a realistic option (and had been
one of the outcomes for the former unemployed); others did not regard this
as a positive step and wanted a job which would take them from benefits
completely. For the latter group calculations about viable wages rarely
referred to in-work benefits. When making decisions about the financial
value of jobs, claimants generally calculated that they would need to earn an
amount which could support the household. Such amounts were usually
around current benefit levels, sometimes lower, or slightly higher to
accommodate work-related costs. Such calculations were made with little or
no reference to in-work benefits (see Section 2.2). Generally claimants
calculated an amount which would replace any ‘lost’ benefit payments. The
lack of any in-work benefits towards mortgage costs was considered a deterrent
to taking up low-paid work. Lack of awareness or negative attitudes
concerning in-work benefits influenced decisions to reject part-time work as
a potential stepping-stone, but were not the main factors in such decisions
(see Section 3.3.1).

Discouragement to take part-time work
Claimants indicated that Jobcentre staff had sometimes actively dissuaded
them from pursuing part-time work. For example, one claimant was told
that she could not continue with a regular Saturday job whilst claiming IS.
Others were discouraged from part-time work either because the Jobcentre staff indicated that claimants were unlikely to be much better off financially, or because of the amount of paperwork involved.

'I worked in a bank ... my job gave me three months unpaid leave [to care for mum who was terminally ill], but my mum lasted five months so the job went. After my mum died they took me back as a casual worker on a Saturday. That had to finish because the Jobcentre said I couldn't have a regular part-time job, but I used it to keep my hand in for any other employment coming in ... They said you can't have a regular part-time job, you've got to be going for full-time ... I said yes, but it's only Saturday and it's not stopping me from looking, in fact it's helping me ... and then when I had to not do it I had to fill in a thing saying that I won't be doing it anymore, but she [Jobcentre staff] said that I'll have to word this right because you can't be seen to be packing it in either because if you pack a job in [it will affect your benefits].'

(Part-time work; unemployed; female, 24, single)

For some claimants, such discouragement was perceived to arise from a lack of interest on the part of the Jobcentre staff in the employment prospects and plans of claimants. Older claimants in particular felt that they received little or no attention compared to younger claimants. Due to this perceived lack of interest, some claimants were reluctant to discuss their work options with Jobcentre staff or did not believe that staff would be able to provide advice.

'They [Jobcentre staff] stop people going on [to do part-time work] by saying you can't do this and you can't do that. Give people more encouragement and a lot more would do it ... instead of just sitting down and tapping into their old computers ... if they sat down and spoke to you .... They speak to you as if you ain't got a job so you're nothing.'

(No activities; unemployed; male, 19, single)

Claimant's needs not recognised

There was a view that Jobcentres operated less in the interests of claimants and more in the interest of reducing the unemployment register. This view informed the perception that Jobcentres took a short-term, rather than a long-term approach to claimants' needs. Consequently, while claimants wanted help to pursue options which would enable them to move away from benefits permanently, they felt that the Jobcentres were only interested in short-term solutions. Those claimants who regarded training, volunteering, or part-time work as a potential passport from benefits into permanent work did not always feel that the Jobcentre encouraged these activities. Instead they felt pressured to take a job, or attend a scheme, which could jeopardise their long-term plans, and result in only the short-term removal of benefit dependency.

3.2 Why people do work part-time whilst claiming out-of-work benefits

Claimants and partners tended to work part-time, even in low-paid jobs, where one or more of the following conditions were met:
part-time work had little or no impact on the amount of benefit they received;

- the extra income from part-time work was considered to be worthwhile, even when declared;
- earnings were not declared;
- personal values and non-financial needs predominated; and
- part-time work was felt to enhance job prospects in the long-term.

The decision to work part-time during an out-of-work benefit claim was made not solely on the basis of income, although financial considerations were extremely important. Consequently, while claimants and partners were less likely to take a part-time job if it meant they would be financially worse off, small monetary gains as well as the perceived non-financial benefits of part-time work (listed in Sections 3.2.3 and 3.2.4) could, in combination, result in the decision to work part-time.

When part-time work was taken up, the jobs pursued were generally those that did not disrupt benefit payments, were close to the earnings disregard (or only a small amount over) and complemented the claimants’ family circumstances such that no extra expenditure was required for travel or child-care costs.

Some people worked for little, or no, financial gain. For example, those (generally partners and lone parents) who had held the same part-time job for many years before claiming out-of-work benefits were reluctant to give it up despite some anger about the ‘loss’ of earnings after benefit deductions. When a partner’s earnings had reduced the Social Security benefits coming into the household there was a reluctance to give up such work because of the value placed on the partner’s employment and to avoid disruption to the partner’s life. In some cases the loss in benefit income was cushioned by access to savings or redundancy money.

Others maintained the job with long-term, or indirect, benefits in mind. In some instances any extra income was used as a stopgap between benefit payments, helping to ease cash flow problems. There was still some resentment at the loss of earnings after benefit deductions had been taken into account, but for this group of people a small increase in income of £5 or £10 was still considered a valuable resource - ‘better than nothing’ - particularly those people with children or a mortgage to pay. Examples included lone parents with school-age children working as school dinner ladies and women employed as ‘morning only’ packers or ‘school hours’ shop assistants.

Unemployed claimants in receipt of IS, their partners and lone parents were reluctant to pursue additional work that took them above the earnings disregard. Partly this was because they perceived additional earnings as...
'working for nothing', and partly because they felt that the disruption to family life could not be justified without any financial gain to the household, sharing the views of those who did not work part-time. Similarly, offers of increases in pay above the disregard level were generally regarded as having no value to the claimant and were invariably declined.

By contrast, recipients of Unemployment Benefit, or those involved in community work which attracted different benefit conditions, found part-time work more worthwhile financially. Those receiving UB thought it more worthwhile to earn up to £50 without benefits being reduced, as long as the hours they worked were controlled. In some cases, there appeared to be some confusion about the hours of work permitted for UB claimants.

There were a small number of instances of people who had taken part-time work because of misleading, or poorly understood, information about the financial gains. For example:

'They [Jobcentre staff] said I can work up to 16 hours and still claim my full Income Support. I took that job and my Giro went straight in half ... I was a bit peeved off.'

(Part-time work; unemployed; female, 22, single)

3.2.2 Undeclared earnings

Undeclared earnings were a potential, though sparsely used, way of increasing one's income whilst claiming out-of-work benefits. Although recognised as an illegal activity there was considerable empathy for those who did not declare their earnings and undeclared earnings were not seen as morally wrong, given certain conditions. However, the fear of discovery and perceived risks were sufficient to prevent many from not declaring their earnings. Views about undeclared earnings are summarised in figure 3.2.
Benefits of undeclared work

Financial
Important income source
Necessary if desperate for money
Benefits unaffected

Stepping stone to more work
Possibility of legitimate work

Risk
No concept of risk
Reduces money worries and stress
Less hassle with Jobcentre forms
Employer’s payment methods reduce risk

Limitations of undeclared work

Low pay
Unreliable

Exploitative conditions
No choice other than undeclared
No prospects
Can’t even find undeclared work
Less likely to fit in with child care

Fear of being caught and repayments
Guilty conscience
Criminalised
It’s wrong

Attitudes towards undeclared work

Although there was empathy with people ‘forced’ to do undeclared work, there was a prevailing view that people should not have to do such work and break the rules because it was ‘wrong’, in a legal sense if not in a moral one.

Some respondents were very much against undeclared work and thought that it was wrong under any circumstances. They disliked the assumption that because they were unemployed they would be seen as contemplating working on the side - it was bad enough being unemployed without being considered a ‘criminal’ as well.

Others did not consider themselves to be the ‘type’ of person to do such work because they were ‘too honest’ and could not do something which involved breaking the law. They did not necessarily believe it morally wrong for others to do so. By declaring work they felt they were reducing the stigma attached to being a benefit recipient. Those involved in, or considering, such work were angry that they had to earn money in this way.

Despite a conditional condemnation of undeclared work there was a strong belief that people should not be pursued or penalised for doing undeclared work, so long as the level of earnings did not amount to an abuse of the system. This view was underpinned by certain conditions: undeclared work should only be undertaken when a person could not afford to provide for their family and they were financially ‘desperate’; the work was irregular and part-time; the amount of money involved was small (£30 maximum); and
the undeclared income was so small that disruptions in benefit payment could not be justified.

Views towards undeclared odd jobs were more lenient. There was greater support for the view ‘the odd £5 or £10 here and there’ did not have to be declared, although odd undeclared work was still considered to be ‘wrong’ by some:

‘I don’t think you should abuse it by working five or seven days in a week regular, I don’t think you should abuse it by bringing more than the state is paying. If you’re bringing in £50 or £60 or a £100 a week, that’s pushing your luck … but the odd fiver here and there’s not going to do anybody any harm … went strawberry picking one morning [earned £12] … I should have declared that but we decided to keep it.’

(No activities; unemployed; male, 62, married)

Differences in views concerning undeclared work did not differ widely between those who did and those who did not do part-time work, declared or undeclared. Some of those who reported their earnings almost wished they had not done so when they discovered how little they could ‘keep’, whereas some with undeclared jobs deeply resented having to earn money in this way.

The risks associated with undeclared earnings

The perception of risk attached to undeclared earnings varied, although mostly there was considerable fear and worry attached to earning an undeclared income. The high awareness of the DSS Benefit Fraud telephone line (introduced a few weeks before fieldwork) contributed to these perceptions. Perceptions of risk were also fuelled by stories of other people who had been reported by neighbours or followed by ‘snoopers’, as well as by past experiences.

‘It was an advertised job [in the Jobcentre] … and I got the job! … [but employer only wanted someone cash-in-hand for a few weeks] … I thought “Oh God not again” [only offered cash-in-hand in the past, but declined] … but I stuck it for three weeks, but it was causing me that much tension I just couldn’t cope with it … I walked into town [to sign on, thinking] do they know I’ve been working, you’re looking at people you see every day of the week and you think “I wonder if they know I’ve been working” … I feel as though everyone is looking through the window to see whether I’m getting ready for work.’

(Part-time work; former unemployed; male, 39, married)

Despite the view that undeclared work was understandable for those with families, claimants with dependants were concerned about taking risks which could jeopardise the household income. There was also a view that this type of work was very menial, and the earnings too low to be worth the risk.
The perceived risks attached to undeclared work included: imprisonment, heavy fines, repayment of benefit, and a potential threat to future employment. Risks were considered to be reduced when the job was paid cash-in-hand, but undeclared work was not restricted to casual work. Some with cash-in-hand wages still reported such earnings.

Some individuals were less aware of the risks, or felt they were in a position where they could cope with the consequences of being found out.

‘I do three nights a week ... £15 a time ... I guess I’d have to re-pay my benefit ... that’s okay.’

(Part-time work; unemployed; female, 25, single)

Frustration and anger was expressed towards those employers who offered jobs only on a cash-in-hand basis.

‘They advertised for a manager to run this particular place so I went, but he [employer] kept humming and hating ... he said “we don’t pay no stamps or tax, we just give a set amount cash-in-hand”. I said that’s no good to me, what if they [DSS] find out. He more or less said well that’s your problem.’

(No activities; unemployed; male, 62, married)

Who does undeclared work?
Invariably those who engaged in undeclared paid work had weighed up their views of the rights and wrongs of undeclared work with their perceptions of the risks involved and the benefits to be gained. Those who did undeclared work did so because they:

* needed additional money - for family; to fund studies; to get by, rather than for luxuries:

‘I defy anybody to have a home and two growing children and live on what they give you. It’s impossible. You cannot do it and stay within the law ... I hate breaking the law, which I know I am. I’m not that kind of person, but I cannot survive without doing it ... there is no light at the end of the tunnel that I can see.’

(Part-time work; lone parent; female, 42)

* were promised a full-time job after so many weeks and a chance of signing-off for good;

* they risked losing benefit, particularly mortgage interest benefit if their casual work was declared;

* they considered the sums too small to declare (but did declare regular work):

‘We were there early morning and finished after dark, and we were paid a tenner. I was exhausted, but I don’t mind as long as I get something for what I’ve done ... I didn’t declare that.’

(Part-time work; lone parent; female, 33)
• did not want to move onto Family Credit and disrupt their Housing Benefit; and

• judged that the advantages outweighed the risks involved.

3.2.3 Non-financial personal benefits of part-time work

Despite the small financial advantages of working part-time whilst claiming out-of-work benefits those with experience of this type of work identified a number of non-financial personal benefits. These included:

• increased self-esteem and feeling ‘better off in yourself’;

• a sense of purpose and an opportunity to get out of the house:

  ‘It’s worth it because it gets you out, it helps stop you getting depressed … but it takes away your sense of worth because you are working and you are not getting anything out of it.’

  (Part-time work; unemployed; male, 31, single)

• a sense of reward and enjoyment from involvement in work, particularly with children and the elderly;

• feeling happier and less depressed:

  ‘I’ve picked up, I’m happier and not so depressed, I love it … I know it’s only a cleaning job … I don’t mind at all, it’s fine.’

  (Part-time work; unemployed; female, 22, single)

• an opportunity to ‘keep busy’ and overcome ‘boredom’;

• a break from the household and child-related responsibilities – ‘it’s my night out, or ‘therapy’; and

• a feeling of ‘paying my way’ and of providing a top-up to the household income.

Odd jobs were undertaken for relatively very small amounts of money, token payments, or ‘beer money’. Such jobs were done ‘as a favour’ to keep busy or help friends and family. ‘Payment’ was offered rather than sought, and was not at the going rate.

Given the number of factors which influence the take-up of work, and overriding financial needs, it is difficult to differentiate between the original reasons for taking up part-work and the benefits once the work was ongoing. For unemployed claimants, immediate job prospects were one of the more pressing factors, whereas for partners responsible for child-care and for lone parents, jobs were taken with longer term prospects in mind. There was some evidence of jobs being taken which did not match initial financial expectations, but the jobs were continued due to the non-financial benefits. It is also important not to lose sight of the fact that for many claimants there was little ‘choice’ as such about the types of jobs they found. Although claimants had a number of criteria for the jobs they wanted, the time between making decisions about which jobs to look for and actually being offered a job was considerable, during which circumstances and perceptions
can change. It is also noticeable among these claimants that finding a job was often ascribed to luck, contacts or ‘being in the right place at the right time’.

3.2.4 Enhanced job prospects

Views were very mixed about whether part-time work during out-of-work benefit claims could enhance job prospects. One of the factors in judgements made by claimants about whether such work was worthwhile was its relevance to job prospects. Claimants who were not working felt that part-time work with a limited financial return was only worthwhile if there was some guarantee of full-time work. For those considering employment in a freelance or self-employed capacity, part-time work whilst they were unemployed had been the only way in which they had been able to build up their business. Others did not perceive any relationship between the part-time job and subsequent full-time employment.

Although there was some evidence to suggest that some people (including those who did and did not do part-time work) thought part-time work could have a negative impact on job search (Section 3.1.1), others felt that their participation could have a positive impact. Generally, where part-time work was considered to enhance job prospects this was for four main reasons:

* a view that the number of hours they work may be increased;
* they would be in a good position should a different job vacancy arise with the same employer;
* a view that employers look favourably on people who have used their time productively; and
* for lone parents, part-time work can be the first step towards becoming ‘jobready’ once children are at school.

However, those who had found that part-time work could lead to further employment remained constrained by the mismatch between the amount they could earn (even full-time) and the increased costs that being in full-time work would incur, particularly the loss of mortgage interest payments, Housing Benefit, and the increased costs of child-care facilities.

Even though some respondents had been offered more than one part-time job, there were some concerns about combining part-time jobs in order to build up a full-time equivalent. First, any decrease in hours in one of the jobs would put them in a difficult position financially. Second, they were concerned that employers would not welcome such an arrangement because it would restrict employee flexibility in a traditionally flexible area of work.

Odd jobs were not generally thought to enhance job prospects, unless they arose from freelance work in a previous occupation, but there was evidence that requests for, and involvement in odd jobs boosted confidence and self-esteem.
3.3 Can part-time jobs be a stepping-stone to employment?

3.3.1 Claimants’ perceptions of the labour market value of part-time work

There was a tendency to consider the potential of part-time work only in terms of whether it would lead directly to an increase in hours or the offer of full-time work from the same employer (this view corresponds with respondents’ views, outlined in previous sections, concerning the main ways in which part-time work could enhance job prospects). Few could envisage part-time jobs with hourly rates which would lead to a financially viable alternative to benefits (hourly rates of £2.00 and £2.50 were reported by claimants, £4 an hour was seen as more appropriate). Some had applied for two part-time jobs at once in an attempt to build up the equivalent of a full-time wage.

The lack of a perceived stepping-stone effect was one factor in decisions not to consider part-time work - as outlined earlier in this chapter - and this factor was related to financial disincentives. It was not the only factor in decisions to take up part-time work, and for some part-time work was considered an important stepping-stone, or the only route into their chosen area of employment. Not all of those working part-time were seeking ‘stepping-stones’ towards further employment, particularly partners and lone parents. Intended destinations of those working part-time included:

- continued child-care role for the immediate or long term future;
- continued job search in unrelated areas;
- gradual build-up of part-time work towards self-employment or freelance work;
- continued training and studies;
- continued job search in similar areas of work;
- consideration of training for a new career or to improve current skills; and
- uncertainty about the future or waiting to see how part-time work develops.

The outcomes for the former unemployed included:

- self-employment arising from: franchise work, portfolio of related part-time jobs, or full-time free-lance work;
- increase in the number of hours of part-time work;
- full-time work in an area related or unrelated to the claimants’ previous part-time work;
- temping and supply work; and
- college studies.

The benefits of part-time work to job search and job prospects were not considered by, or apparent to, many people, or only became apparent once claimants began to experience the positive impact of part-time work on their self-confidence, esteem and motivation. Although the part-time occupation
may not have led directly to a full-time job, it did maintain motivation and confidence. It is difficult to differentiate between the original reasons why claimants took up part-time work, and subsequent developments, particularly given that finding suitable part-time jobs was also judged by claimants to be related to 'being in the right place at the right time'. Reasons for taking up specific jobs varied with the circumstances and employment plans of claimants:

- continuation of previous full-time occupation
  - part-time or occasional temping / supply work a stopgap until full-time work found;
  - part-time work represented a change in working arrangements, for example a move from employee to self-employed status;

- gradual build-up of a new job on a freelance or self-employed basis;

- receiving job offers from friends, relatives and colleagues, partly to 'help out'; and

- always worked part-time to fit in with children and other domestic responsibilities.

Whilst it may not have been a claimant's intention to use the job as a stepping-stone, this view can change with hindsight, for others, although it appeared that the part-time job was influential, they remained unconvinced of a stepping-stone effect. Recognising that 'luck' plays a considerable part in finding secure employment, respondents' perceptions of whether part-time work could be a stepping-stone can be categorised into four types.

First, one group of claimants - both those who were and were not working part-time - felt that part-time work was unlikely to act as a stepping-stone to more permanent, full-time work.
Case study 1: Part-time work unlikely to be a stepping-stone

This former unemployed man, age 39 and married with three children, was working full-time earning £161 per week and receiving Family Credit and Housing Benefit. He was employed as a welder, a temporary job he obtained through an employment agency. Since redundancy in 1981 he had been participating in training schemes and welding courses. Through the welding courses he obtained work placements: 'I was there for placement nine and a half months and at the end of it the boss turned round and said there’s a job here if you want it, £2 an hour. Labourers get more than £2 an hour, I said you’re joking … We worked it out and I would have been worse off taking that job than being unemployed'. During 15 years of unemployment he had odd patches of labouring and factory work through agencies, but this work did not lead to other jobs: 'all you do is go in and do the job … they have regular workers … a few of us went in there [factory] and thought if you show them you can do the job they’ll take you on full-time, but they don’t'. He felt that he obtained his current job because of the skills he acquired during the training courses rather than through the part-time work: 'If I hadn’t done that course there’s no way I would have felt confident in the current job I’m doing … the course helped me get my skills and stopped my skills getting rusty'. This current job, at nine months, is his longest spell of employment in 15 years, but, as a temporary contract, it could end at any moment.

The view that part-time work was unlikely to be a stepping-stone was partly based on the opinion that part-time jobs are designated as such and do not become full-time jobs. Retailing was given as a good example of this. Part-time work was also associated with the casual labour market, so if a full-time job did become available, it would be short-term. This group included those who had found work in a related area, but attributed their success to their qualifications rather than the part-time job. Worries and uncertainties about the impact of earnings on benefits carried over into claimants’ concerns about using casual part-time work as a stepping-stone towards a move off of benefit into similar full-time work, or into full-time work and in-work benefits.

'You see that’s another barrier … people won’t take a job on a short-term contract because they think in three months time I’m back on the benefit system, I’ve got to fill in loads of paperwork and then I may not get my money for six weeks … I think that’s another hindrance we find.'

(Volunteer; unemployed; male, 57, married)

Jobseekers who had experience of broken promises, unfulfilled expectations from employers, and 'dead-end schemes', were not convinced of any stepping-stone effect. Casual and odd jobs were not considered a stepping-stone and were rarely undertaken for this purpose, unless they were part of a portfolio of jobs leading to full-time self-employment. There were also those, primarily partners and lone parents, for whom part-time work was an
achievement in itself, or a long-term option, or the first of many steps yet to be taken towards securing full-time work.

The second group of respondents felt that part-time work was disruptive.

**Case study 2: Part-time work disruptive**

A single man, aged 22, who lived at home with his parents. He had been unemployed since graduating 12 months ago, during which time he had not been involved in any part-time or voluntary work. Having been unsuccessful in his search for work so far, finding few posts to apply for in the area of biology in which he specialised, he decided to adapt his job search and had applied for local laboratory work to obtain experience. He sent off two or three job applications per week and two or three speculative letters. He has had some positive feedback, and had been short listed for a few posts, but had no firm offers yet. He is determined to find work in this area: ‘It’s a passion, I wanted to do it since I was nine years old’ and was concerned that if he pursued unrelated part-time jobs he would lose sight of fulfilling his career objectives: ‘I’ve seen it happen before with people, they get on part-time and they stick to that and their other field becomes further and further away …. I’m going to have to keep up with current events in my field if I’m going to get there’. He had also followed evening classes to improve his CV.

The second group included focused jobseekers who had either worked in the same trade for many years, had specialist experience, or had re-trained. For them, part-time work was a distraction from their focused employment ambitions. Similarly, jobseekers using other stepping-stones, such as volunteering or training, felt that non-relevant part-time work could harm their long-term employment ambitions.

The third group, while recognising that part-time work could possibly be a stepping-stone to more hours - not necessarily full-time - were not in a position to increase their hours while the earnings disregards remained unchanged. This was because they did not have the means to pay for any increases in child-care or transport costs. Such work expenses limited the extent to which additional work could be undertaken.
Case study 3: Part-time work could possibly be a stepping-stone

A lone parent, following divorce five years ago, age 38 with two children age 15 and 10. Her last full-time job was a VDU operator, before she had children. She currently had a part-time Saturday job as a shop assistant. She would love to work full-time, but was constrained by: child-care costs; replacing benefits which currently meet mortgage costs; finding full-time work which allowed her to be at home with the youngest child; and the need to retrain to bring her VDU skills up-to-date: ‘I want to get back to work, but you’re torn between the devil and the deep blue sea, because if you go out to work, then you’ve got to get someone to look after the children and so the problems start, you’ve got to have money to pay the childminders and it’s a vicious circle… the more you earn the more they take… I’ve got basic keyboard skills but you need £2-300 to lay out [for a course]’. She would like to work part-time in the shop but regarded the job as: “a stepping-stone mentally … it’s soul-destroying being on Income Support … but not a stepping-stone towards another job … I’ve got a ten-year-old that I have to pick up at a certain time, I want to be there when the children get home from school … you have to be careful when you’re a lone parent, it’s all down to you … Childminders charge £3.50 or £5.00 an hour and then there’s the mortgage …’.

The fourth group did see part-time work as a stepping-stone and included claimants:

* considering a career change, either to pursue new skills or to escape a declining industry;

* engaged in part-time work that was relevant to their future employment, perhaps by providing skills, impressing employers, and building contacts;

* working part-time as a way of changing working conditions and exploring new working lifestyles: ‘a new path that I’d actually realised was there through my previous [full-time] job’;

* with part-time work accompanied by training and a full-time job guarantee; and

* those who thought that part-time work could lead to either an increase in hours or a full-time job (in the same or in a new post) with the same employer.
**Case study 4: Part-time work is a stepping-stone**

This 32-year-old single man had been unemployed since working in a temporary job four months ago. He had been in and out of work since 1992 when the company he worked with went bust. He was currently working part-time in a job unrelated to his usual line of work which he obtained through a friend. He also had occasional, casual work in his previous line of employment. He expected to find work in his usual area, and had a job lined up, but he was also applying for other quite different jobs. He had explored training opportunities, but was not eligible for some courses, and had too many debts to secure finances for a degree course. He was hopeful that his previous line of work could be built up into a new job: ‘The idea is to eventually get a job which is over a long period of time that pays you so much money so you don’t have to sign back on when the work finishes. The only way to do that is to keep doing jobs for people and then actually building up a reputation in the business’. Although his new job was in an unrelated area, the job had improved his self-esteem. He was also hopeful that it could lead to a full-time job, and thought that a change in career might be beneficial: ‘I’m not sure that it would be my career choice, but it’s certainly a job I could hold down until I go full-time. There’s lots of other things they do as well, and the more I’m working for them, the more chance there is when a vacancy does come up.’

Among the former unemployed, perceptions of the role of part-time work ranged from those who viewed part-time work merely as an unrelated stopgap to those for whom part-time played an integral part in reaching their employment aspirations.

‘It was only to start with something like two hours a week … I was doing the two hours a week work, of which I earned £8.75 and they stopped £20 of my benefit. So you have to think “is it worth it”, but I did think along the lines that you literally do have to start from somewhere. I realised that if one person has got your name, then a lot of other people would soon have your name as well … it literally snowballed from there.’

(Part-time work; former unemployed; female, 40, single)

For some, the stepping-stone effect was apparent only with hindsight, and other factors were considered to play an important role in securing work for example: relevant, certified, retraining; business contacts; and luck.

One of the aims of the JSA and the Bonus is to strengthen the links claimants have with the labour market. However, there are a number of reasons why this link is likely to remain weak. First, low earnings disregards are designed to reduce benefit dependency by quickly reducing benefits as earnings increase. This approach leaves claimants and partners unable to take up part-time work due to the transport and child-care costs that arise from working. Thus, the potential for increased contact with the job market is reduced.
Second, inflexibilities in the job market limit the opportunities to take up part-time work. For lone parents and partners there were few jobs offering hours which complemented the school day. Prejudice from employers had been encountered by lone parents, unemployed claimants and older claimants. Such employers were reluctant to employ older men or lone parents and regarded the unemployed with suspicion. This view is borne out in other studies which suggest that employers attach some risk to employment of unemployed applicants. This work also suggests that such risks are related to concerns about motivation, confidence, discipline and familiarity with ‘working life’, all of which could be overcome with part-time work. Employers also seem to be aware that part-time jobs may be used as a stopgap or stepping-stone, which may not always suit their workforce needs. Some claimants considering part-time work as a route into full-time work had been required to reassure employers that they were genuinely interested in part-time work as a long-term option rather than a stopgap.

Third, part-time work was considered to be irrelevant to the job prospects of many claimants, particularly those with specialist skills, experience, or a trade. For these claimants, part-time work was linked to a job market they were either trying to escape, avoid, or did not consider financially viable. This was particularly so for odd jobs which were invariably in completely unrelated areas, for example DIY or fruit picking, to usual occupations. Those in non-manual or professional occupations did find odd days work in their usual profession which had been built up into supply or temporary contracts.

Fourth, where part-time work was not available in some trades there was little opportunity for people to keep in touch with the job market.

Claimants’ plans regarding the type of job they wanted were based on perceptions of their own skills in relation to the job market, of the labour market in general, and reactions of employers to their job search, for example, focusing on jobs related to recently acquired skills or retraining in response to redundancy or a decline in demand. Perceptions of the job market were one of many factors in claimants’ decisions about work. Some had retrained, but were still unsuccessful in finding work, others adopted a policy of exploring as many different avenues as possible.

The experience of part-time work had varied in its impact on job search activities. Recognising that job search behaviours are rarely constant and vary with how an individual feels about themselves and their employment prospects, the following effects were recorded:

3.4 The effects of involvement in part-time work on job search

The experience of part-time work had varied in its impact on job search activities. Recognising that job search behaviours are rarely constant and vary with how an individual feels about themselves and their employment prospects, the following effects were recorded:

an increase in self-esteem (improving claimants’ sense of their own value and potential) helped to raise awareness of the potential range of job opportunities with the consequent effect that job search activities were widened in scope;

an increase in skills and the generation of business contacts meant that, for some, job search activities were enhanced, but also focused more clearly on a particular type of occupation;

concentration on the development of new skills and the acquisition of experience had the effect of reducing job search activities until the claimant was ready for the next step on the employment pathway;

job search activities were reduced as claimants felt that the Jobcentres had lessened the pressure on them to look for work because they were now working part-time; and

a cessation in job search activities on recognising that specific barriers, particularly the cost of child-care facilities, would mean they could not consider full-time work until their circumstances changed (an issue for lone parents and partners).

With the exception of partners with child-care or domestic responsibilities and lone parents, those who worked part-time whilst claiming out-of-work benefits still regarded themselves as unemployed and continued searching for full-time work. Those who had lessened job search activities were still looking for work, but had focused their job seeking on specific activities, or were taking stock and waiting to see how the part-time work would develop. These claimants had taken up part-time work to try out new areas of employment and possible career options, and were hopeful that a full-time vacancy would be offered, or were steadily building up contacts and small amounts of business towards becoming fully self-employed. Some had successfully made the transition from unemployment to self-employment, others were close to reaching this point, but were fearful that pressure from the Jobcentre to undertake more traditional forms of job search would undermine their efforts to leave state benefits in the long-term. Rarely did they inform the Jobcentre of such intentions, and those who did felt that their plans were under threat:

‘When they ask the question “are you prepared to do anything?”’. Of course you have to say yes or you feel that’s what they want you to say, but I had decided this was the type of work I wanted to stay in [and shortly signed off after obtaining a contract in that line of work].’

(Former unemployed, part-time work; female, 40, single)

Among those not working part-time there was some concern that time spent on part-time work could be detrimental to job seeking activities. Concerns about the disruptive effect of part-time work on job search were voiced for a number of reasons. For some claimants, job search activities took up a great deal of time. Although claimants described themselves as bored, this was
Participate in the labour market. This is not, however, the only explanation. Firstly, an alternative interpretation of such data is that those households where the female partner is not earning or where children are present, are vulnerable to change, and therefore more likely to claim benefits during a period of financial upheaval than other households. Secondly, those households where claimants are of working age are also likely to comprise partners with children and other responsibilities which compete with employment demands. The gap in the proportions of women who participate in the labour market is lower when comparisons are made with married women with pre-school children rather than with married women in general. This suggests that decisions about work are not made solely in relation to the claimant’s employment status.

Partners’ decisions are influenced by circumstances, career objectives, attitudes towards combining work and parenthood, and perceptions of children’s needs. The probability of employment declines for women with children under five and under thirteen, but also for older women where labour market participation is historically low, and employer prejudices regarding age have an impact. Claimants’ attitudes and perceptions are also influential. Research evidence suggests that claimant reservation wages are in part informed by an assumption that the partner will not be earning. This assumption may arise from attachment to the breadwinner role or perceptions of the earnings potential of each partner.

Female partners are subject to similar labour market conditions as their unemployed husbands: partners generally share the claimants’ education levels and skills and therefore their low earning potential; and are both affected if they live in an area where there is a low demand for labour in general.

Nevertheless, there is also evidence of a disincentive effect arising from the earnings disregards. Studies have demonstrated the disincentive effect of earnings disregards, including one which suggested that the wives of unemployed men would have to work longer hours than the wives of employed men in order to gain any financial benefits. However, the jobs available to women, particularly those who have not worked for some years due to child-care responsibilities, tend to be part-time and low paid.

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This body of research suggests that while there clearly is an inverse relationship between male unemployment and female labour market participation, which can in part be attributed to the disincentive effect of the earnings disregards, other factors are also relevant. These include partners’ perceived earning potential (and related to this, skills and qualifications); career objectives; attitudes towards employment and child-care; claimants’ attitudes towards employment; child-care and other responsibilities; financial vulnerability; the local labour market; historical factors; and employers’ attitudes. This is borne out by the attitudes and experiences of the partners included in this study.

Where the claimant had been the main breadwinner, attachment to this role dominated and informed the nature of influences from the partner. Partners were closely involved in claimants’ decisions about jobs and, in some households, job search activities were regarded as a joint enterprise between claimant and partner. Partners spoke of asking friends about work for the claimant, helping to look through newspapers, discussing jobs together, helping with the completion of application forms, and helping to build up the claimant’s self-employment. Many partners demonstrated considerable awareness of the local labour market and wage levels, and shared the frustration and anger experienced by claimants in response to unsuccessful job applications. Similarly, male partners of female claimants who had always worked full-time were supportive of claimants’ decisions.

Partners who were financially dependent on the claimant (due to disability or responsibility for child-care) shared the financial concerns of claimants regarding part-time work, outlined in Sections 3.1 and 3.2. In these households, the claimant was seeking a job which would provide an income to support the partner and any dependent children.

'We’ve got no money in the bank, it’s a hell of a struggle on what we’re on now and it’s making me ill to be honest, that when you feel they [part-time jobs] are only going to pay you about £50 a week, well you can’t live on that and pay the mortgage as well, so I’m inclined to say to him [claimant/husband], well no, don’t touch it, it’s a full-time job he needs.'

(Claimant - No activities, unemployed; male, 62; Partner - No activities, retired, 71)

Although some partners also looked for work, and had offered to swap roles, claimants were reluctant to relinquish the breadwinner role: ‘I’ve always been out early and earned more’. This response partly stemmed from claimants feeling degraded by such options, but also because the claimant was considered able to command a greater earning potential. Some households had given more active consideration to the prospect of swapping roles than others and different partners had supported each other financially in the past when one or the other was unemployed.
When partners were in full-time work (and claimants were in receipt of UB rather than IS), there could be reduced financial pressure on unemployed claimants. In some instances this could involve the partner in taking on more overtime to maintain living standards and was not always without friction or some hardship. An employed partner could support the claimant during a period of reduced earning capacity whilst the claimant was: in pursuit of long-term career plans; taking on child-care responsibilities; or ‘waiting for the right job’. In such situations the claimants’ job search criteria could focus on non-financial benefits and seeking work (part- or full-time) which could complement domestic commitments.

The intensity of job search varied among these claimants and depended on their financial need, domestic commitments, and own attitudes towards work and towards child-care. For those claimants responsible for child-care with a partner in full-time employment, decisions about jobs also had to take into account whether or not the job would provide sufficient income to cover child-care costs. This restricted access to jobs: ‘if I wasn’t a mother I’d jump at the chance [offered by a job]’. Other family members were also influential, for example where parents or in-laws could provide help with child-care and condoned mothers combining work and child-care.

This section is based on the interviews with the 16 households where the partner was not in full-time work and was not unavailable for work due to sickness, disability, study or retirement. Partners’ attitudes towards part-time work during the out-of-work benefit claim were informed by: child-care responsibilities, division of labour within the household, claimants’ attitudes towards the ‘breadwinner’ role, cost of child-care and earning potential.

Divisions of labour within the household

Child-care responsibilities between couples were informed by traditional gender roles. The view that it was important for a mother to be at home was widespread. Decisions about who should care for children pre-dated claimants’ unemployment and there was evidence that child-care arrangements which were in place when the claimant was working continued into unemployment, for example male claimants only taking more responsibility for the children at weekends rather than during the week.

When there was greater involvement in child-care from the claimant, the partner was already more than fully occupied with the family and unable to take on other work. In households where couples had considered swapping roles regarding full-time work and child-care, there was still an expectation that one partner would be required to be available for the children virtually full-time. So while the responsibility for child-care could be swapped, the same disincentives to working part-time applied. Further, claimants’ and partners’ descriptions of how they spent their time suggested that female
partners had an established routine for dealing with child-care, whereas claimants' job search activities did not always complement child-care arrangements.

Among those partners who did work part-time during the claim, partners' part-time work invariably pre-dated the onset of claimants' unemployment. The decision to work part-time was linked to the view that motherhood and full-time work were incompatible: 'I'm old fashioned'. There was little evidence of plans to seek full-time work - these partners did not consider themselves as 'unemployed' and were not using part-time work as a 'stepping-stone' to other activities.

Commitment of the claimant to the role of breadwinner for the household

Partners' and claimants' attitudes towards divisions of labour within the household and towards work were also informed by pragmatic decisions about which partner had the greater earnings potential and probability of finding work and by a commitment to the claimant's role as breadwinner for the family. This commitment was considered to be at odds with the claimant taking on increased responsibility for child-care and a corresponding decrease in job search. Some partners were receptive to swapping roles with the claimant, whereas the claimant preferred to retain their breadwinner status, but strong disagreements between partners concerning this issue were rare.

In households where partners did work part-time there was limited support for role reversal through an increase in part-time hours or take-up of full-time work by the partner, and strong support for the role of claimant as breadwinner.

Wife 'It's not me that's under issue'
Husband 'It's me because I want a full-time job. I've always done it, I've always been that way so we've always been able to look after the kids.'
Wife 'I've worked all my life ... but at the end of the day he wants a job with a wage to keep us.'

(Claimant - no activities, unemployed; male, 47; partner - female, age 46, children 13 and 16, part-time work as a dinner lady for ten hours per week earning £33, for the past eight years)

Child-care responsibilities and costs

The disincentive effect of child-care costs experienced by lone parents is also of relevance to partners. Some partners, now that children were older, were considering work 'just for the sake of getting out of the house'. For those who had spent five, ten or fifteen years engaged in more or less full-time child-care, part-time work was not an easy option due to lack of recent experience, or up-to-date qualifications. The jobs which partners did feel qualified for were low paid. Coupled with high child-care costs, the take-up
of part-time work was not a financially realistic option. Further, few part-time jobs offered hours which were compatible with child-care.

Similarly, among those already working part-time, full-time work or an increase in part-time hours was not an option due to child-care commitments; out-of-date skills ('I've not done it [typing] for 16 years'); low earnings potential and high child-care costs. The part-time work of partners differed from their usual or previous full-time occupation. These part-time jobs, for example classroom assistant and dinner lady posts at local schools, had been chosen because they involved low or nil travel costs and complemented child-care arrangements, 'I'm here in the morning to see them to school, I'm here when they come home and I'm off in the holidays with them'.

Some partners had experience of working part- and full-time in the past, but had given the work up following changes in circumstances, for example the birth of a child, redundancy, or parents becoming too old to provide (free) child-care.

**Level of earnings disregard**

The level of the earnings disregard was another disincentive and partners shared claimants' views about the low value attached to part-time work.

'I was thinking [about a job] now he's [youngest child] at school full-time, but if he's [husband] signing on, whatever I earn would be taken off what he earns. So if he can get a job, I can get a job as well, as long as it's in school time ... I was looking for one [a job] when he [husband] started in business ... but I've not got enough expertise in anything. I started driving lessons ... because a lot of them [vacancies] say you've got to have your own transport.'

(Claimant - no activities; unemployed; male, 40; was self-employed; partner - no activities, 42; children aged 5, 14, 16 and 18)

Partners working part-time shared the view that the earnings disregards posed a financial disincentive to work whilst the claimant was unemployed and there was anger at the 'loss' of benefit due to partners' earnings. Both claimants and partners were reluctant for the part-time work to be given up, despite some severe financial disincentives (for example, ineligible for Income Support for mortgage payments). In some cases, financial hardship was cushioned by: minimal housing costs; access to savings or redundancy money; the claimant's part-time earnings; and an expectation that unemployment would be for a short period of time. Some households were only able to maintain part-time work because of such additional financial support. In addition, partners and claimants thought it important to maintain the partner's part-time work because the partner enjoyed the job; there was a reluctance to cause further disruption to the household, 'no use burning all your boats'; and in the hope that the wage would form an important contribution to household finances once the claimant found a job.
In order to consider the role of participation in voluntary activities whilst claiming out-of-work benefits, the study specifically recruited individuals who were either currently volunteering whilst claiming IS and/or UB, or had done so in the recent past and were now in work. In addition, there were also respondents who, while not specifically recruited as part of the volunteer sample, had some experience of volunteering whilst unemployed and claiming out-of-work benefits, and a small number of lone parents carrying out voluntary work.

Within the study sample there were also individuals who, although participating in activities on a voluntary basis, did not immediately recognise themselves as volunteers. These included, for example, women with young school-age children who provided free help and assistance in their child’s school on a fairly regular basis and youth club leaders.

A small number of individuals in the study were unaware of the concept of volunteering and were surprised to hear that individuals would give their time free for the benefit of others.

‘Never heard of it … didn’t know you could do such things … sounds interesting though, doesn’t it?’

(No activities; unemployed; male, 27, single)

Volunteering was not an activity which went solely hand-in-hand with unemployment. Indeed, the starting point of many people’s voluntary experiences was whilst they were working. Activities included: running a youth club, operating an environmental hot-line, and membership of the local parish council. These were often continued into the period of unemployment, sometimes with more time being given as they ‘now had more time to spare’.

However, periods of unemployment were also associated, for some individuals, with the start of their volunteering experience. Their reasons for becoming a volunteer can be grouped into one of three types (which apply to both the unemployed and lone parents):

* **Direct work-related reasons** - voluntary activities were seen as part of a considered plan to find work;

* **Indirect work-related reasons** - the experience of taking part in voluntary activities was considered to enhance job prospects but plans were usually longer-term or less considered; and
- **Non-work-related reasons** - volunteering was undertaken partly for philanthropic reasons and partly as a way of breaking the tedium of unemployment and providing an interest.

Figure 4.1 Pros and cons of volunteer work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefits</th>
<th>Limitations</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Job prospects</strong></td>
<td>Can not lead to paid work or paid jobs unavailable in the same line of work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enhance general and specific skills</td>
<td>Perception that volunteer jobs will always be designated as such</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide relevant experience</td>
<td>Perceived as 'working for nothing'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide contacts</td>
<td>Can become exploitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve job prospects in related field</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase motivation and confidence</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Practical help with job search</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Training</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training provided</td>
<td>Transport, meal and child-care costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquire skills and certificates</td>
<td>Lack of awareness of opportunities or relevance to job search</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>Unavailable in relevant occupations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce boredom</td>
<td>Worries about 'actively seeking and available for work' rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevant to employer</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhance CV</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Impress employers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assistance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenses sometimes available</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Limitations

- Perception that volunteer jobs will always be designated as such
- Perceived as 'working for nothing'
- Can become exploitative

- Can not lead to paid work or paid jobs unavailable in the same line of work

Barriers

- Transport, meal and child-care costs
- Lack of awareness of opportunities or relevance to job search
- Unavailable in relevant occupations
- Worries about 'actively seeking and available for work' rules
- Child-care responsibilities

**Training**

- Training provided
- Acquire skills and certificates

**Time**

- Reduce boredom

**Relevant to employer**

- Enhance CV
- Impress employers

**Assistance**

- Expenses sometimes available
For some individuals volunteering had a specific part to play in their search for work. Characterised by having a very clear idea of the type of work they wished to do and participation in a highly focused area of volunteering, this group of mainly young individuals saw voluntary activities as the key to their employment prospects. For particular types of jobs, primarily the caring professions such as counselling and youth work, the need for voluntary experience was felt to be 'almost a rite of passage nowadays' with there being little chance of securing such work unless they had the right type of experience. Voluntary work could provide that experience.

Three cases exemplify this group of volunteers. The first, a recent graduate, had been associated with youth theatre for many years. With a desire for employment as a youth worker, on returning home after graduation the link with the local youth theatre was re-kindled. Initially offering to work on a voluntary basis, some of this work is now paid for. In considering the future, this individual continued to focus activities on youth work in a theatre context as well as exploring the opportunity to work towards a youth work qualification through the part-time employer.

The second case, a 25-year-old graduate, also used voluntary activities as a means of directly enhancing their job prospects. Wishing to work for the police force, this claimant worked voluntarily for a Citizen's Advice Bureau, specifically because the application form for entry into the police force was said to mention this as being useful experience.

Third, a 21-year-old woman, planning a career working with people with special educational needs, required experience and sought voluntary work as a way of gaining that experience and placing her in a good position to enter that specific area of employment.

There is some evidence to indicate that unless claimants were sure that their voluntary activities were going to enhance their ability to secure the type of job that they required they would not be volunteers.

'If I didn't think it was going to get me some paid work then I wouldn't do it. There would be no point would there?'

(Volunteer and part-time work; unemployed; male, 25, single)

Lone parents had also taken up voluntary work for direct work-related reasons. One lone parent had decided, now that her youngest son was at school, to pursue a career in the police force. She was a volunteer for the special force and participated in training programmes. Take-up of this activity had been possible because expenses were provided, and the work took place in the evening whilst her children were asleep, so she did not feel concerned that she was neglecting her children.

For the second group of individuals, while participation in voluntary activities was also work related, their reasons for volunteering were more
diffuse and their work aspirations less focused. Typically, this group of individuals did not have a particular ‘target’ job in mind, although they may have narrowed their interests to ‘something officey’ or ‘an administrator of something’. Their reasons for becoming a volunteer were as follows:

- to increase existing skills, or learn a new skill;
- to maintain existing skills – ‘stops me getting rusty’;
- to gain, or enhance, experience;
- ‘looks good on the CV’;
- ‘avoids gaps on the CV’;
- generally enhance job prospects by demonstrating initiative and a motivation to work; and
- as a way of promoting oneself to potential employers ‘making sure employers know who you are’.

While recently unemployed people were using voluntary activities in these ways, sometimes to provide an opportunity to consider their future direction, people who had been out of the job market for some time were also using these experiences as a way of getting themselves ‘job ready’. Lone parents, often with much longer employment time scales, were also found to be doing voluntary work as a way of developing skills, getting ready for work, and thinking about their future job options.

Typified by professional, older, claimants as well as lone parents, this group of individuals were involved in voluntary activities for reasons other than finding work. For those people who had taken early retirement or had been made redundant from a professional job in later years, their emphasis was no longer on work but on occupying their time in a productive and useful manner. In some instances, their involvement was a continuation from times when they were employed, and the activity was not always recognised as voluntary work by the claimant. In others, volunteering provided:

- ‘something to do … a break’;
- an interest and a way of ‘telling the difference between a weekend and a weekday’;
- a means of gaining self-respect and boosting one’s confidence; and
- an opportunity to ‘put something back’ and to do ‘something for the community’.

‘I knew I would be leaving work [early retirement after 30 years with the same company], thinking I’ve got the time to fill in, so it crossed my mind [to do more volunteering]. Probably would have done it anyway eventually, some sort of charity work … It gives you some satisfaction … something that needs to be done.’

(Volunteer; unemployed; male, 52, married)
‘To be honest, I can’t take a job ‘cos of the kids being half time at play group ... and I just thought what am I going to do with myself, and then my friend said “Why don’t you come and help down at retirement home?” And I did... just a couple of hours a week ... and I really enjoy them old folks.’

(Volunteer; lone parent; female, 24)

Although individuals in the latter group were not involved in voluntary activities for work-related reasons, there were some examples of individuals beginning to think about future job opportunities as a result of their experiences: ‘It suddenly strikes you there are other opportunities.’

There was some evidence to suggest that a partner could influence participation in voluntary activities in a positive way. Where a partner was already a volunteer the claimant may already be pre-disposed towards volunteering, although this may simply have been a way of using their time productively rather than as a job search technique.

‘My wife has done voluntary [work] for years and so it just seemed natural.’

(Volunteer; unemployed; male, 44, married)

4.2 Why people do not participate in voluntary activities whilst claiming out-of-work benefits

People did not participate in voluntary activities for one, or more, of five main reasons:

• narrow or negative perceptions about volunteering and volunteers;
• a lack of familiarity with the concept of volunteering, or voluntary work has not been considered at all;
• the link between participating in voluntary activities and securing work, together with other potential benefits of volunteering, remains unrecognised;
• a number of concerns and barriers that impede an individual’s ability to volunteer; and
• voluntary activities being seen incompatible with, or irrelevant to, their particular planned employment.

There was no evidence to suggest that partners dissuaded claimants from participating in voluntary activities. Some (female) partners were more receptive to the indirect benefits of volunteering than the claimants were and disagreed with claimants who rejected voluntary work as an option.

4.2.1 Narrow and negative perceptions of volunteering

While there was a common understanding that volunteering entailed ‘doing good for others’, the perceptions that individuals held of volunteering differed markedly according to whether they had any experience of voluntary activities. Consequently, while those with experience of volunteering recognised that voluntary activities could cover a wide range of activities17 (social welfare, youth work, environmental, political, religious,

etc.) and were undertaken by a wide range of individuals (young and old, male and female, etc.), non-volunteers (both those who were and were not working part-time) were more likely to hold a much narrower view of volunteering. Generally associated with charity shops, caring activities, and helping the elderly, volunteering was seen as being primarily the remit of 'middle-aged women' and 'students with a guilty conscience'. As a consequence, volunteering was seen as 'not for me'.

Although there was a general recognition that volunteering could be exploitative, the non-volunteers were more likely to identify with this aspect of volunteering. For these individuals, including those with prior experience of voluntary work, volunteering was a way of 'being used', or being taken for granted as someone who will work for nothing, or an activity that 'takes away jobs' from other people. Negative views such as these were expressed by those non-volunteers who were not engaged in any activities whilst claiming out-of-work benefits, those who were working part-time, and by volunteers who felt that there was a danger that increased volunteer work was reducing opportunities for unemployed people.

4.2.2 Benefits of volunteering not seen

Akin to those who see part-time work during the out-of-work benefit claim as 'something for nothing' non-volunteers (including those with paid part-time employment) tended to see volunteering in the same light. Not recognising the potential benefits (skills development, experience, etc.) of volunteering, the link between participating in voluntary activities and securing work had not been made. As a consequence, volunteering was either 'not thought about' or not considered.

'It [volunteering] won't put food on the table.'

'What do I get out of it?'

'Why work for nothing?'

Few non-volunteers had actively considered volunteering prior to the interview, and few considered it as an activity which could improve a CV or impress employers, including some with experience of volunteer work. Voluntary work was regarded as a time-filling or 'worthy' activity rather than something that could improve job prospects or demonstrate to employers that claimants had relevant skills and motivation. Claimants who had not considered voluntary work were, however, receptive to the suggestion that voluntary work could improve CVs or impress employers, despite the common response of 'I never really thought of it in that way'.

Husband: 'It's [volunteer work] not going to lead you on is it ... I hadn't really thought about it ... it might look good on an application form so it's something to think about I suppose ...'

Wife: 'You used to do voluntary work.'

Husband: 'Not me.'

Wife: 'You did do.'
Husband: ‘I didn’t. It wasn’t really voluntary work. I know I didn’t get paid. I used to do martial arts ... I used to run my own club and any money from that club used to go to the main club ... so it was voluntary, but when you think of voluntary it’s all charities and things.’

Wife: ‘Well it was martial arts charity’.

(No activities; unemployed; male, 40, married)

Other non-volunteers had heard of volunteer work, but had not followed it up because it was ‘just an idea in the back of my mind since seeing the advert’; or they had not found suitable work; were pursuing different activities, ‘heard about it quite a bit from a friend, but not really pursued it’; or felt restricted by one or more of the barriers outlined in the next section.

Among those who had considered volunteer work, for example when suggested at an ES Job Club, there was some similarity with views held about part-time work. As with part-time work, volunteering was regarded as an activity at odds with the need to secure full-time work. Volunteers were regarded as people (‘older men’) who had given up hope of leaving the dole. Further, there was a view that volunteer work would detract from job search and would not enhance job prospects.

‘I’m young, I should be able to get a job and should be out there working instead of doing these schemes and things.’

(No activities: unemployed; male, 23, single)

4.2.3 Concerns and barriers

Partly because this group of individuals had not given very much thought to volunteering, they could see a number of potential difficulties should they wish to become involved. Some had considered volunteering, including specific advertised jobs. Others had not given much thought to the concept or were unaware of opportunities, but still generated a number of potential problems. Some of these concerns were similar to those expressed when discussing part-time work. The potential difficulties included:

* uncertainty as to whether travel and meal costs would be reimbursed with the result that they might be out of pocket;

* worry that they did not have the right set of skills to offer;

* concern that a criminal record might disqualify them from volunteering; and

* a perception that volunteering might be seen by Jobcentre staff as reducing the time spent actively seeking work and thereby disqualify them from benefit.

For others, the barriers were less hypothetical and experiences included:

* a lack of awareness about how to find voluntary opportunities;
• difficulties in arranging (free) child care, and sometimes a feeling that while they might be helping others they would be neglecting their own children;

• transport difficulties (particularly if they lived in a rural area with poor public transport services); and

• the advice and actions of Jobcentres which prohibited individuals from pursuing voluntary activities.

These barriers were also experienced by volunteers, some making judgements about the type of work they did in response to such barriers, for example, taking up evening work whilst children were asleep or during school hours. The disincentive effect of the benefit system is discussed in Section 4.3.

4.2.4 Relevance to plans made to obtain a job or pursue career objectives

The non-volunteers tended either not to recognise the job-related benefits of volunteering, or, considered volunteering only in relation to their usual occupation. For an unemployed refrigeration engineer, therefore, volunteering had no relevance because there was, in his view, unlikely to be any call for volunteer refrigeration engineers. Similar views were held by individuals with other, very specific, skills such as joiners and cleaners. As with views about part-time jobs, there was a view that once a job had been designated as voluntary, unpaid work it would remain as such, ‘if they’ll pay [in future] they would have paid in the first place’. The indirect benefits of gaining new, or additional skills, were not recognised by claimants, and there was a view that employers would not be impressed by voluntary work. Some claimants did not believe that voluntary work could provide additional proof to employers of the employability of a claimant.

‘I’ve employed a lot of people over the years and if someone had come and said to me [that they did voluntary work] it wouldn’t have made any difference to me … if they could do the job they would get looked at.’

(No activities; unemployed; male, 25, married)

Unconvinced by the potential of voluntary activities to develop new skills, other non-volunteers felt that there were more appropriate and productive avenues to be pursued. These included moving location to find work that was more appropriate to their skills as well as re-training opportunities and part-time work.

4.3 Understanding of the benefit system and volunteering

The main areas where misunderstanding about benefit rules and voluntary work arose related to: availability for work; actively seeking; and the number of hours claimants were allowed to work. Broadly, claimants fell into two camps: those who were fearful of any activity which could be construed by the Jobcentre as restricting their availability for work or the amount of active job search; and those who believed that because voluntary work was unpaid and done in their own time, it was none of the Jobcentre’s business.
4.3.1 Non-volunteers' experience of the benefit system

There was evidence to indicate that the advice and actions of Jobcentres had dissuaded some individuals from pursuing voluntary activities, for example, some individuals had been told by their Jobcentre that volunteering was not compatible with looking for work and that any time spent participating in voluntary activities would be deducted from their benefits. In other instances individuals were told to stop their voluntary activities if they did not want their benefit to be affected. Stories of claimant friends engaged in voluntary work who had been told to stop by the Jobcentres were also influential.

'It's not beneficial to do it because you are looked upon [by the Jobcentre] as if you are not really bothering because you are doing voluntary work ... My mate, for quite a while, done a bit for a charity and they [Jobcentre] told him that if he didn't get off his arse and get himself a job they were just going to make his life hell.'

(No activities; unemployed; male, 29, married)

Fear of voluntary work being mistaken for paid work and then wrongly reported as undeclared work was also a deterrent:

'I would willingly do it [gardening for elderly neighbours] for nothing while I'm doing nothing myself, but at the end of the day if I do it for nothing and they [Jobcentre] found out, I'd be in trouble ... they'd swear black and blue that you'd been paid.'

(No activities; unemployed; male, 56, married)

Knowledge of the impact of voluntary work on benefits was generally sparse or incomplete. There was lack of knowledge about the rules regarding payments for expenses incurred as a result of voluntary work (i.e. travel costs), including a belief that voluntary work would have to be given up if payments for such expenses as petrol costs were received. More importantly, claimants were unsure whether they would be ‘allowed’ to do any voluntary work whilst signing on due to fears of not being perceived as ‘available for, and actively seeking work’ by Jobcentre staff. Such fears were present among claimants (including those working part-time) whose experience of dealing with the Jobcentre had left them with the impression that ‘they [Jobcentre staff] make everything as difficult as possible’ and among claimants whose own interpretation of the benefit rules suggested that voluntary work would be incompatible with receiving benefit. In addition, there was uncertainty about how voluntary work would affect benefit payments, including fear that benefits would be cut following take-up of voluntary work.

'There's definitely a stigma against voluntary work, that they [benefits office] are going to cut our money.'

(Part-time work; unemployed; female partner, 31)

The impact of lack of knowledge in this area had two quite different outcomes: either individuals did not perceive any difficulties in combining voluntary work with claiming out-of-work benefits; or, implicit in interpretations of benefit rules was an assumption that voluntary work was
not permissible, and that changes to the benefit system were making it increasingly difficult to take up voluntary work.

‘I don’t think there are [any rules]. I think the only rules if you go for a voluntary job, it’s showing that you can get a job.’

(No activities; unemployed; male, 62, married)

‘You’re just told basically that whatever you do will affect your benefits and it’s put in such a way that you know it’s standard procedure – it’s the total atmosphere of the unemployment office. It doesn’t matter what you say or do it isn’t enough.’

(No activities; unemployed; male, 29, married)

I wanted to go into voluntary work, but you feel restricted anyway because of the Jobcentre, they put so many restrictions on you for doing so many things. You’ve got to be there at a minute’s notice if they have a job come up.’

(No activities; unemployed; female, 44, married)

‘I think if it didn’t affect my benefit too much and if it was something that I’d enjoy doing then I think I would consider it, but it’s never been mentioned to me at all at the Jobcentre … I’m not entirely sure what the rules are.’

(No activities; unemployed; male, 20, single)

Those engaged in voluntary work appeared to be generally less concerned with the impact of the voluntary work on their benefit. This was due to: a feeling that voluntary work was outside the remit of the Jobcentre’s business; lack of awareness of any rules regarding voluntary work; and confidence in the potential of volunteering to secure full-time paid employment. Those who did have concerns were reluctant to inform the Jobcentre of their activities. Benefit knowledge had little impact on decisions to take up voluntary work. Either it was an ongoing commitment pre-dating unemployment or the claimant had decided that it would be beneficial to job prospects in the long term.

Some were unconcerned to the extent that they did not regard voluntary work as ‘any of their [the Jobcentre’s] business’, holding the view that ‘what I do [in my spare time] is my own concern’.

‘I do it at night, so what’s it got to do with them [Jobcentre] it’s not going to affect anything at all as far as I’m concerned. I don’t get paid for it, it’s purely voluntary.’

(Volunteer; unemployed; male, 49, married)

Complete lack of awareness of benefit rules regarding voluntary work was common. Some did not ‘have a clue’ about the rules regarding voluntary work. There was an assumption that because voluntary work was unpaid, it did not attract any specific rules or regulations, did not have any impact on benefits and so the Jobcentre did not have to be informed. The assumption that voluntary work was ‘allowed’ was partly informed by the status of voluntary activities as unpaid work but also by the actions of Jobcentre staff.
Claimants felt that volunteer work was legitimate because staff had asked about it or had originally suggested such work; or, conversely, because staff had never asked about it or shown any interest in such activities; or because of the impression that the Jobcentre didn’t have any jobs to offer, so volunteer work was a legitimate alternative.

There appears to be some confusion about the availability for work rules. Some thought that because of this rule they were only allowed to work a maximum of 16 or 20 hours (or three out of five working days) in a voluntary job in order to be available for work. Others thought these limits only applied to paid work. There was uncertainty about whether full-time voluntary work was permissible or whether a full-time volunteer would be deemed available to take up work at 24 (or 48) hours notice.

Knowledge of the period of notice which volunteers are required to give should paid work become available was mixed. Some had no idea how much notice was required, others thought they would have to be available to start work within 24 hours, or thought ‘If a job comes up you have to stop voluntary work [at once]’. There was a view that such rules were irrelevant and did not correspond with the reality of job search, where the application process could be quite lengthy and the likelihood of a job being made available within 48 hours was remote: ‘I’m available for work and actively seeking, but it’s not going to happen tomorrow, it’s a long process’. Confusion also surrounded the ‘actively seeking work’ rule with few claimants being able to provide firm information about how this rule was applied in practice (there was also evidence of conflicting advice from Jobcentre staff).

Some were less confident in their understanding of the benefit system and were a little afraid of the implications of doing voluntary work. There was some concern that volunteers may not be regarded as ‘actively seeking’ work which led to a reluctance to inform the Jobcentre of voluntary activities or to be completely open about such activities and a general view that claimants ‘have to say what they [Jobcentre staff] want to hear.’

“The thing is you can’t actually tell the dole that you are doing voluntary work … even though ultimately I knew I would get some sort of job out of it eventually … but you can’t sit and tell them if I do this for two or three months … you know not to tell them … because then [if told the dole] they’d say ‘well you’re obviously not actively seeking work’ … then you’ll say ‘well I am because I’m working bloody hard for nothing to get a job’.”

(Volunteer, also does declared part-time work; unemployed; male, 25, single)

“This guy [at the Jobcentre] didn’t know anything about anything. [He said] do you do any voluntary work, and I said yes I do management committees at these two organisations at least once a month and other bits of work occasionally
… He wasn’t sure whether I would qualify for benefit or not if I wasn’t available for work because I was doing voluntary work.’

(Volunteer; former unemployed; male, 43, married)

‘I can do four or five hours a day [three times a week]. He [Jobcentre staff] said it might be deemed that you’re not seriously looking for work, because you’re doing voluntary work most of the week so you can’t be looking for work.’

(Volunteer; unemployed; male, 42, married)

Others were confident that the benefits of voluntary work to their employment prospects outweighed any concerns which may be raised by the Jobcentre about ‘availability for, and actively seeking work’ rules. This group included those who had little contact with the Jobcentre and had been left to their own devices with regard to job search activities, so had no need to inform the Jobcentre of their work. Others did not think there were any limits on the number of hours claimants could spend on voluntary work or had set their own limits depending on job search activities. There was a view that voluntary work should be regarded as a form of actively seeking work because of the positive impact it had on job prospects and the likelihood of being offered paid work.

There was some uncertainty about the treatment of expenses, on the part of claimants and Jobcentre staff. Some staff confused voluntary work with part-time work when expenses were paid to the claimant.

4.4 Can volunteering be a stepping-stone to employment? Can volunteering be a stepping-stone to employment? For those individuals who secured employment following a period of voluntary work, the answer is an unequivocal ‘Yes’. For others, however, views are mixed. For some individuals, the likelihood of a stepping-stone effect is felt to be minimal. Typically, these are either people who do not participate in voluntary activities, or do so but primarily to fill their time with a useful activity. For a further group of individuals, there is the hope that volunteering will act as a stepping-stone - they tend to be of the opinion that securing work is partly a skill and partly luck.

4.4.1 Volunteering is a stepping-stone For a number of individuals in the study their voluntary activities had led directly to paid work. For example, a divorced man, aged 55, had been made redundant from his managerial job. Providing his services on a voluntary basis to an unemployment advice centre he was subsequently offered, unexpectedly, the paid job as its co-ordinator. Similarly, a theatre studies graduate with an ambition to become a youth worker, having volunteered his services to the local youth theatre was subsequently offered part-time work.

Others, while not yet succeeding in securing a job were convinced that volunteering would offer a route into employment. For example, a 21-year-old female was helping out at a local nursing home on a voluntary basis with
the aim of securing work as a care assistant. Similarly, a 25-year-old female who had never had a job now works unpaid four days a week for the local office of a national charity. With the backing of the organisation she is now working towards an NVQ and is convinced that her voluntary activities and her qualification will lead to paid work.

While individuals recognised that in securing work there is an element of luck—"being in the right place at the right time"—there are a number of features that tend to be associated with the view that volunteering is a stepping-stone to work. First, the activities that are undertaken, on a voluntary basis, tend to be directly related to the type of employment desired by the individual. Second, the nature of the work sought tends to be in a social or caring profession—nursing, care assistant, youth work, policing, advice and counselling, etc. Third, many of these areas of work are increasingly requiring individuals to have direct experience—often through unpaid activities—before individuals are considered suitable for the job. Whilst for many individuals job search activities had increased or had been unchanged, for some this period of voluntary work was a time of reduced job search activity whilst they put their energies into the voluntary work in the hope that it would lead to paid employment. Fourth, and most importantly, this group of individuals generally had a clear idea of the type of work they wished to pursue and volunteering featured as part of their job search plan.

The view that volunteering is unlikely to be a stepping-stone was typically held by individuals who did not volunteer, but also those whose personal circumstances (typically age) or skills background were felt to reduce the likelihood of their working but they volunteered in order to ‘give something back to the community’ and to occupy their time in a constructive way. Individuals who had specific skills, such as engineering, journalism and management, tended to feel that volunteering would not be useful to them in finding work because the sort of employers that could make use of their skills did not generally use voluntary help.

‘Well, I can see that it [volunteering] might help if you want to work with kids or the elderly. But, my experience is in retail and that’s what I want to go back to. I can’t see voluntary work helping with retailing … I don’t think you could get voluntary work in retailing.’

(No activities; unemployed; female, 33, single)

In addition, there was a view that the likely intentions of employers were critical in considering whether volunteering could be beneficial. For example, some individuals argued that an employer is unlikely to turn a voluntary job into one that is paid - the economic argument was felt to be obvious. Similarly, there were felt to be some jobs that only existed because they were voluntary and could not, by definition, lead anywhere. Working in charity shops was the most commonly cited example of this.
Examples of this group of individuals include: a 49-year-old man who retired from the police force due to ill health and participated in voluntary activities as a way of occupying his time; and a 57-year-old male with journalistic skills who had been made redundant a number of years ago. Although desiring work, he felt that more appropriate stepping-stones were better qualifications and part-time work.

This group included those who took up voluntary work for non-work-related reasons generally before becoming unemployed, the voluntary activity being unrelated to their usual occupation. Since becoming unemployed some had found that the voluntary activity had indirect work-related benefits, for example increased motivation or enhanced CV. Others had become increasingly pessimistic about their chances of finding work, but at least found some solace in their voluntary work. Although voluntary work was not related to employment opportunities, it did help claimants maintain sufficient motivation and self-worth to continue job search.

The primary view amongst those who were engaged in voluntary activities was that their participation may be a stepping-stone to future work - it was a hope for the future rather than a firmly held belief. Using their voluntary activities as a way of gaining confidence, deciding where their skills lay, increasing skills, maintaining skills, networking, and meeting potential employers, this group of individuals tended to be less clear about the type of work they wished to do, with volunteering not featuring as part of their overall plan to find work. Rather, volunteering was a ‘holding mechanism’ - it allowed them to occupy their time productively in a job-related way whilst waiting for an appropriate opportunity to come along.

Among this group, volunteer work had been taken up for direct and indirect work-related reasons. Among the latter group were those who were involved in voluntary work to fill their time and do some good for the community, but were now increasingly hopeful that the voluntary work could open up another avenue of work alongside continued job search in their usual area of work. Those who had taken up voluntary work for direct work-related reasons were using voluntary work to explore different employment options and to help them to make decisions about their career.

The question of whether voluntary activities can be a stepping-stone is related to six main factors:

* whether volunteering is part of a definite job-search plan;

* the degree of similarity between the type of voluntary work undertaken and the type of work desired by the individual;

* whether volunteering is an acceptable (to an employer) route into employment (more likely to be acceptable for caring professions than, say, engineering);
* the extent to which an individual sees volunteering as a direct stepping stone to the same type of work;

* likely employer intentions (do these jobs exist only because they are done by volunteers?); and

* luck - ‘being in the right place at the right time’.

There were times when it was not possible for an individual to take the step from voluntary work to a paid employment opportunity as such paid work could impose different demands and constraints. For example, arranged to suit the times at which her children were at school, one lone parent in the study used her time to do some voluntary activities. She was subsequently offered a part-time job as a result of the skills and abilities she had demonstrated. However, to take the job would have required the use of a childminder and her travel costs and meal allowance would now be payable from her salary. She had calculated that she would be worse off by moving from benefits to employment (via voluntary work) and therefore, reluctantly, declined the offer of paid work.

4.5 The extent to which claimants looked for jobs varied according to how they felt about themselves and their employment prospects. As discussed in Chapter 2 hopes and motivations move through peaks and troughs:

‘You get to a point when you think “I’ve written to every employer I can think of and nobody wants to know” and so you stop looking for a bit.’

(Volunteer; unemployed; male, 38, married)

‘You get so disheartened.’

(Volunteer; former unemployed; female, 29, single)

Against this general backdrop of job search activity, the extent to which participation in voluntary activities had any effect on an individual’s search for work was considered. In terms of job search activities the volunteers in this study fell into one of three groups.

First, the perceived effects of being a volunteer – increased confidence, increased motivation to look for work, and a feeling of being ‘job ready’ combined to make some individuals look for work on a more regular basis.

‘I just feel better in myself, getting out of the house … I feel I could take on work now, which I didn’t feel before I came here … It’s [volunteering] helped me think about what I can do and what I want to do … yeah, so I tend to look [for work] more.’

(Volunteer; unemployed; female, 25, single)

The facilities offered by some organisations, in some instances, even helped to increase job search activities:
‘They are happy for me to use the photocopier and their envelopes, and provided I don’t send hundreds in one go they pay for the stamps as well … it helps me a lot.’

(Volunteer; unemployed; male, 49, married)

Even the idea of doing voluntary work could, it was felt, help to focus job search activities:

‘I’m thinking of doing some work [voluntarily] for one of the political parties … I think it might help me to think about what I really want to do in the future.’

(No activities; unemployed; female, 22, single)

The second group of individuals, while continuing to look for work, felt that as a result of their voluntary activities they were now looking less frequently for work, but their job search activities now tended to be more focused on particular types of work. In these cases the Jobcentre was unaware of claimants’ job search activities either because claimants’ concerns about being regarded as available for work in general had left them unwilling to discuss their activities openly with the Jobcentre; or because Jobcentre staff shared claimants’ confidence in their chosen job search and ability to find work and had not made enquiries since initial interviews. For those volunteers who were hopeful that their current ‘voluntary’ employer would offer them paid work, their job search activities had declined; for some of these volunteers the voluntary work was itself regarded as a form of job search and in one instance, a claimant was enjoying her voluntary activities so much that she was reluctant to look for work. Among this group were those for whom volunteer work was highly likely to be a direct stepping-stone into full-time work.

‘I only look for youth work … I don’t look that often either because I’ve got part-time work with them already and there looks as if there will be plenty in the future.’

(Volunteer and part-time work; unemployed; male, 33, single)

‘I can sit and spend the day sending off my CV to people and that, but to me working to get a job is getting in there and working hard and then thinking that you might get a job. Plus you’re working to keep your portfolio up.’

(Volunteer; unemployed; male, 25, single)

‘Well, the director has said that if the finances look all right they will probably take me on at Christmas … full-time … I do look for work but it’s a bit half-hearted ‘cos I’m pretty hopeful of something coming up here.’

(Volunteer; unemployed; male, 42, married)

The final group of individuals felt that their search for employment had not been affected by their voluntary activities.
‘No, I still do the same as I always did - Jobcentre once a week, paper every
day, and I’ve done two big mail-outs to local employers. No joy with that so
probably won’t do it again for a while. But no, no change really.’
(Volunteer; unemployed; female, 36, married)

‘Looking back [in employment now] I don’t think I did anything different. It
was just easier, more convenient really, to get to the Jobcentre because the place
where I worked [voluntarily] was nearby.’
(Volunteer; former unemployed; male, 43, married)

Typically, this group of individuals were unsure about the type of work they
wished to do. They were also hopeful, rather than convinced, that
volunteering would be a stepping-stone to future employment.

It is clear that volunteering can have an impact on an individual’s ability to
move into employment, although it is unlikely to be a panacea for all.
Barriers, such as the cost and availability of child-care facilities operated for
some individuals. For others, volunteering does not appear to be relevant to
their particular set of skills or for the type of employment they had planned
- engineers for example.

However, a number of changes were suggested by claimants that would, in
their view, enhance the role of volunteering in moving unemployed people
towards work. These included:

* breaking down the stereotyped image of volunteering;
* making access to voluntary activities easier;
* offering volunteering advice that is tailored to the claimant’s needs and
  reflects the individual’s skills and long-term goals;
* recognising that participation in voluntary activities will not be to
everyone’s taste and will not necessarily meet their job search needs;
* promoting both the indirect, as well as the direct work-related, benefits of
  voluntary activities;
* promoting the benefits of volunteering without unduly raising people’s
  expectations;
* ensuring that both Jobcentre staff and claimants are aware of the
  regulations that govern voluntary work whilst claiming out-of-work
  benefits, particularly the amount of time a person can spend on voluntary
  activities and the amount of notice they would be required to give their
  ‘voluntary employer’ should they wish to take a job; and
* ensuring that a claimant’s out-of-pocket expenses (travel and lunch costs)
  are covered.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Benefits Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bubbled</td>
<td>Sneaked / reported to the DSS</td>
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<td>Bonus</td>
<td>Back to Work Bonus</td>
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<td>CHB</td>
<td>Child Benefit</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT/CTB</td>
<td>Council Tax / Council Tax Benefit</td>
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<tr>
<td>DfEE</td>
<td>Department for Education and Employment</td>
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<td>DSS</td>
<td>Department of Social Security</td>
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<td>ES</td>
<td>Employment Service</td>
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<td>FC</td>
<td>Family Credit</td>
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<td>GHS</td>
<td>General Household Survey</td>
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<td>LO / Local Office</td>
<td>Benefits Agency Local Office</td>
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<td>Milk Tokens</td>
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<td>National Vocational Qualification</td>
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<td>OPB</td>
<td>One Parent Benefit</td>
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<td>UB</td>
<td>Unemployment Benefit</td>
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Married includes couples who are married or living together.
REFERENCES


Dawes, L. (1993) Long term unemployment and labour market flexibility. Leicester: Centre for Labour Market Studies


The key elements of the research design were:

- a qualitative approach exploring motivations, attitudes and behaviour in relation to part-time and voluntary work amongst claimants and their partners;

- purposive sampling designed to ensure a range of claimants and activities whilst claiming out-of-work benefits;

- sample recruitment from (i) departmental records and (ii) Jobcentres in three areas with different labour market characteristics and unemployment levels; and

- 104 depth interviews with claimants (unemployed people and lone parents) and ex-claimants, conducted jointly with partners.

Qualitative techniques, using in-depth and flexible questioning provide an interactive approach to collecting detailed research evidence. This technique is particularly suited to exploring the reasons why people behave in a certain way, allowing a detailed investigation of attitudes, experiences, and decision-making processes, together with the factors that influence them. The qualitative approach also allows participants to raise issues of salience to themselves, and provides an opportunity for a thorough, and in-depth, examination of behaviour and motivations.

In order to map out the range of issues, qualitative research samples are designed for diversity. Consequently, qualitative samples do not mirror the population, but seek to ensure coverage of all the constituent parts of the population. Qualitative research findings can, therefore, inform policy development by providing a comprehensive understanding of the range and detail of people’s views and actions and the factors that underpin them.

Face-to-face depth interviews were conducted with all participants in the study. The interviews were conducted in two parts. The initial section comprised a semi-structured questionnaire designed to collect background information about a respondent’s personal circumstances, tenure, receipt of benefits, employment and unemployment histories, and current day-time activity. The second part of the interview was exploratory and used in-depth questioning techniques. This part of the interview was conducted using a topic guide, an aide mémoire used to set the boundaries of the interview and guide the flow of topics. The focus of this part of the interview was the activities, attitudes and decisions of claimants in relation to part-time and voluntary work whilst claiming out-of-work benefits; the impact of the benefit system on these activities; and the relationship of the activities to job...
search and movement off benefit. Partners were interviewed jointly with
claimants. A copy of the topic guide is in Appendix IV.

The sample design

The sample was designed to ensure a diversity of individuals in terms of their
personal circumstances, and current day-time activities. The sample
comprised seven population groups, shown in Figure A1.

Figure A1. Sample design

1. Unemployed claimants not undertaking part-time or voluntary
   work
   - no experience of such activities in current claim
   - lapsed part-time or voluntary work prior to claim

2. Lone parents not undertaking part-time work
   - no experience of part-time work in current claim
   - lapsed part-time or voluntary work prior to claim

3. Unemployed claimants currently undertaking part-time work in
   current claim
   - regular part-time work
   - irregular part-time work and odd jobs
   - declared work
   - undeclared work

4. Unemployed claimants currently undertaking voluntary work in
   current claim
   - regular voluntary work
   - irregular voluntary work

5. Lone parents currently in part-time work in current claim
   - regular part-time work
   - irregular part-time work
   - lapsed part-time work earlier in the claim
   - declared work
   - undeclared work

6. Former unemployed claimants who were working part-time and
   have since ceased claiming IS and/or UB
   - currently in part- or full-time work (more than 16 hours)
   - or have since become unemployed again

7. Former unemployed claimants who were volunteers and have since
   ceased claiming IS and/or UB
   - in part- or full-time work (more than 16 hours)

Sample selection and recruitment

Given the sensitive nature of some of the topics covered in this study -
activities whilst claiming out-of-work benefits - the recruitment approach
was designed to re-assure confidentiality and aid the collection of
information about work activities, some of which may have been undeclared
to the ES or BA. The following methods were used:
the samples of former unemployed claimants who had been working part-time and
the lone parent sample were drawn from Jobcentre records and the Income
Support Computer System respectively. The DSS and ES made the initial
approach to the sample of individuals in order to explain the purpose of
the study. These individuals were given two weeks to opt out of the study,
after which time their names and addresses were passed to the research
team at SCPR. SCPR then carried out a telephone screen to further
determine their eligibility for inclusion in the study;

the former unemployed claimants who had been involved in voluntary work were
recruited from the JSA Claimant Survey using a telephone screen; and

the remaining sample of unemployed claimants was recruited directly from the
Jobcentres. First, individuals were recruited whilst signing on at the
Jobcentres by SCPR staff. Basic information and contact details only were
collected. Second, each individual was followed up, by telephone, to
determine whether they participated in any activities whilst claiming out-
of-work benefits and assess their eligibility for inclusion in the study.

Copies of the opt-out letters and recruitment documents are in Appendix
IV.

Fieldwork locations
The fieldwork took place between August and September 1996 in three
areas which provided coverage of different local labour markets, and
locations:

area 1 - inner city in North England
- above average claimant unemployment

area 2 - large (rural) town in Midlands
- below average claimant unemployment

area 3 - large town (rural / coastal) in South East
- just below average claimant unemployment

The sample of former unemployed claimants who had been involved in
voluntary work was recruited from these three locations as well as other areas
across England.

Conduct of fieldwork
The interviews were conducted by specialist interviewers and researchers
from SCPR’s Qualitative Research Unit, using a topic guide agreed with the
Department. Each respondent was given £15 as a ‘thank you’ for taking part
in the research. The interviews were tape recorded in full, with the
permission of the respondents, for subsequent transcription.

Analysis and Reporting
The analysis of the qualitative material was based on verbatim transcripts of
the interviews, as these afford a full and accurate record of all the material
obtained. The individual transcripts were analysed using a manual technique
called ‘Framework’, developed by the Qualitative Research Unit at SCPR.
Framework involves a number of different stages. First, key themes and issues which emerge from the data are identified through familiarisation with the transcripts and content analysis. Thematic charts are then drawn up with headings that relate to the key themes and issues that emerge from the data. Next, data from each interview are summarised by hand under the relevant headings, the context of the information being retained. A note is made of the page of the transcript from which each piece of information is taken so that it is possible to refer back to the transcript to explore a point in more detail and to extract text for quotation.

The ordering of the data in this way enables the full range of views expressed by participants to be identified - the extent to which they are consistent or divergent is also highlighted. The 'Framework' approach also enables the full pattern of an individual's attitudes and experiences to be reviewed, and attitudes and behaviours among different groups to be compared and contrasted. The final stage of the analytic process involves a detailed examination of the ordered data to build up a comprehensive picture of the issues emerging. A written report is prepared from the results of the analysis process reflecting the views and experiences of the participants.
## Sample profile - claimants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claimant type</th>
<th>Former unemployed</th>
<th>Lone parents</th>
<th>Unemployed</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity whilst claiming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS and/or UB</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time work</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No activities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income Support</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment Benefit</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Benefit</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of claim</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 to 12 weeks</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to under 6 months</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 to under 12 months</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Over 12 months</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Under 6 months</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 6 months</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 12 months</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 2 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 to under 5 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years and over</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usual or lost occupation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional / managerial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other non-manual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled manual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi / unskilled manual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 to 25 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 40 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>41 to 60 / 65 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Sample profile - partners of claimants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment status of partner</th>
<th>Total households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At home and / or looking after children full-time</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In part-time work</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In full-time work</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick or disabled</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Age of children in household                   |                  |
| Pre-school age (under 5)                       | 11               |
| School age (5-18)                              | 7                |
| None                                          | 17               |

| Usual or last occupation of partner            |                  |
| None                                          | 9                |
| Professional / managerial                      | 6                |
| Other non-manual                               | 14               |
| Skilled manual                                 | 5                |
| Semi / unskilled manual                        | 1                |

| Age of partner                                 |                  |
| 18-25                                         | 1                |
| 26-40                                         | 15               |
| 41-60                                         | 19               |

| Sex of partner                                 |                  |
| Female                                        | 25               |
| Male                                          | 10               |

| Total partners                                 | 35               |
While not a central research issue, the timing of the study allowed some exploration of respondents’ awareness of, and views about, the forthcoming changes to Income Support and Unemployment Benefit. Investigation of awareness and views of JSA and the Bonus also provides understanding of whether ‘baseline’ attitudes and decisions were already affected by the impending changes at the time of the interview. Awareness and views of JSA and the Bonus are presented here in summary form. There is no evidence that ‘baseline’ attitudes and behaviour were already affected by impending change.

Jobseeker’s Allowance

Overall, awareness of the Jobseeker’s Allowance, *per se*, was low although there was greater recognition that, unspecified, changes were forthcoming. Despite some respondents recalling the JSA leaflet that they had been given there was little evidence that the study participants either understood the nature of the changes, or the implications of the changes.

Concern was expressed that any new regulations that were designed to reduce the number of unemployed people signing on and claiming out-of-work benefits – for this was the primary perception of the changes – would be likely to make the life of an unemployed claimant more difficult. For example, there were perceptions that the JSA regulations would:

* force people into jobs that were not relevant to their skills and experience;
* make the task of pursuing one’s own employment goals much more difficult, and ignore their own aspirations;
* drive people into low-paid, insecure work; and
* increase the pressure to justify their continued unemployment and provide greater levels of proof of their job-search activities, against a perceived background of high unemployment and difficult living circumstances.

People did not know what effects the JSA regulations would have on them. While some assumed that the regulations were simply IS and UB with another name, others were convinced that they would not be affected because they ‘were already looking for work’. There was evidence to indicate that some claimants had already been notified of a change to their benefit. One claimant in receipt of UB, for example, had been told when signing on that he would not be entitled to any benefit following the introduction of the JSA.

Although comments were largely negative, the JSA was seen by some as a very positive move. Tightening the rules to exclude ‘scroungers’ was regarded
as one positive aspect of JSA. Others felt that the JSA heralded a move towards Jobcentres providing greater job search advice and help, a change that was to be welcomed.

Back to Work Bonus

The Back to Work Bonus was largely unheard of by the respondents in this study. Where there was awareness the messages of the Bonus were largely misunderstood. The Bonus tended to be confused with other schemes such as: extended payments for Housing Benefit; the Jobmatch scheme; or misinterpreted as a top-up for long-term unemployed people who return to work.

As part of the interview the Bonus was described in outline to the respondents. Reactions to the Bonus ranged from 'better than nothing' to laughter - 'the point of working is to get the money now'.

It was clear, overall, that given the low level of awareness of both the JSA and Bonus (prior to the regulations coming into force) claimants' comments about the new regulations tended to be quickly thought through, 'top-of-the-head', reactions.
UB had two earnings rules:
• a daily earnings rule - claimants lost benefit for any day on which they
  earned over £2; and
• a weekly earnings rule - claimants lost benefit for the whole week if they
  had earnings equal to or in excess of the NI Lower Earnings Limit (£61
  at the time of the research).

Work related expenses such as fares to work could be deducted from
earnings for UB purposes but no deductions were made for income tax or
occupational/personal pension contributions. Earnings were taken into
account on the day they were earned.

Because UB was not paid for Sundays, some claimants could earn up to
£61 on a Sunday without losing any benefit. If they took the same job on a
Saturday they would still have lost one day's benefit under the daily earnings
rule.

IS had an earnings disregard rule:
• most people had £5 of their earnings disregarded per week. The long-
term unemployed had a £15 per week earnings disregard. Lone parents
and long-term sick and disabled people have a £15 disregard;
• before 7th October 1996, each partner had an individual £5 disregard (in
line with the Housing Benefit disregard rules). Since October 1996,
couples have had the first £10 of their earnings disregarded regardless of
whether both or only one of a couple has earnings; and
• earnings in excess of the disregard were deducted on a 1p for 1p basis from
benefit.

Under IS, net earnings were calculated by deducting income tax, NI
contributions and half of any payments to occupational and personal pension
schemes. No deductions were made for work-related expenses such as fares
to work or childminding costs. Earnings were taken into account when they
were due to be paid.
To be eligible for JSA a person must be aged 18 or over and under state pension age. They must:

- be out of work, or working fewer than 16 hours a week;
- have an adequate National Insurance (NI) contributions record for contribution-based JSA;
- have, for income-based JSA, income and capital below defined levels (no entitlement for savings over £8,000; a reduction for savings between £3,000 and £8,000); and
- be available for, capable of, and actively seeking work.

Entitlement to income-based JSA ceases if a partner works 24 hours or more a week.

Claimants have to be ‘available for work’ and most must be willing and able to accept immediately offers of work. Claimants can restrict their availability for work to their usual occupation and earnings for the first 13 weeks of the claim. They then have to broaden the work they are seeking until they are fully available on grounds of pay after six months. Other restrictions, for example on grounds of location, are permitted providing the jobseeker continues to show reasonable prospects of finding work within these restrictions.

JSA, contribution- or income-based, is paid at a lower rate than that for a person aged 25 years or over.

Prior to 7th October 1996, unemployed people who were entitled to UB and/or IS could receive NI credits if they worked for less than eight hours a week. Under JSA this rule has been extended to include people who work for less than 16 hours a week.

Unemployed people in receipt of JSA have access to other Social Security benefits under arrangements similar to those which applied to UB and IS prior to 7th October 1996. People receiving income-based JSA automatically qualify for Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and help with NHS costs. People in receipt of contribution-based JSA have to satisfy a separate low income test. This reflects the position prior to JSA which recognised that many of those in receipt of contributory benefit may have other resources.
Volunteers

JSA has not changed existing provisions. Unemployed people claiming out-of-work benefits can undertake full-time voluntary work without affecting their benefit, provided they remain available for, and actively seeking employment. Any time during which claimants are engaged in voluntary work and the extent to which it may have improved their prospects of securing employment is taken into account in determining whether the active seeking steps they have taken are reasonable in their case and offer them their best prospects of securing employment. People undertaking voluntary work are, however, required to be available to respond to job offers and invitations to job interviews at 48 hours notice. In addition, claimants must be willing to give up the voluntary work to start a job.

Back to Work Bonus

The Back to Work Bonus is a work incentive which has been introduced alongside the JSA. It is part of a package of work incentive measures introduced to help people take up and remain in employment by ensuring they are better off in work. These work incentives include extended payments of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit (since April 1996); faster processing of Family Credit claims (since July 1996); and a child-care disregard in Family Credit (since October 1994).

The Back to Work Bonus can be accrued by those who have been entitled to IS or JSA for over 91 days and do some part-time work, and accrues at an amount equal to half their part-time earnings above the earnings disregard. Except in contribution-based JSA, partners’ earnings also count. The Bonus is payable as a tax free lump sum when the claimant or their partner increases their hours or earnings so that their entitlement to benefit (IS or JSA) ceases. Up to a maximum of £1000 can be accrued and claimed.
Can you help in a research project about the experiences of people who are unemployed?

We are visiting this Jobcentre to ask for your help with an important study about the experiences of people who are unemployed. We are from Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR), an independent research organisation which has been asked to carry out this study for the Department of Social Security and the Employment Service.

How you can take part
There are three researchers from SCPR in the Jobcentre today, Gillian, Wendy and Hilary. We would like just a couple of minutes of your time before you leave the Jobcentre to tell you about the research project and to ask you a few quick questions so that we can contact you in the next few weeks to arrange a time for one of the researchers to visit you for an interview. We would very much like to speak with you, but if you see that we are already talking to someone, we would be grateful if you could hang on a minute so that we can include you in the research.

What the research is about
The research is about people's experiences of being unemployed and their views on the types of services and benefits available to unemployed people. The research will involve an informal interview lasting about an hour, at a time convenient to you during the next 2-3 weeks. The researchers would like to hear the views of anyone who has been unemployed, including people who have been unemployed for just a short time, or for a longer time, and those who are now working.

It will be confidential
SCPR is an independent, non-profit making, social research organisation. We are quite separate from any government departments or political parties. As with all research, everything that you tell the researchers will be treated in complete confidence. No-one outside the researchers at SCPR will see any of the information you give or know the names of people who agree to take part in the research. Names will not be linked with the results or used in the report at the end of the study.

What's in it for you
We do hope that you can take part in this research. Your views will help improve things for unemployed people. We rely on the voluntary participation of as many different types of people as possible, which is essential if the research is to give a true picture of the experiences of people who are, or have been, unemployed in Britain today. We would be very grateful if you could spare the time to take part in this important study. Each person who is visited for an interview will receive £15 from SCPR to thank you for your time.

We hope that you enjoy meeting and talking to the researchers.

Gillian Elam, Wendy Duldig and Hilary Legard

What's in it for you
We do hope that you can take part in this research. We rely on the voluntary participation of as many different types of people as possible, which is essential if the research is to give a true picture of the experiences of people who are, or have been, unemployed in Britain today. We would be very grateful if you could spare the time to take part in this important study. Each person who is visited for an interview will receive £15 from SCPR to thank you for your time.

We hope that you enjoy meeting and talking to the researchers.
Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to ask for your help with an important study about the experiences of people who have been unemployed and what helps them to get back into work. Your participation will help improve services for unemployed people. The research is being carried out for the Department of Social Security and the Employment Service by an independent research organisation, Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR).

Your name was selected at random from Jobcentre records. One of the researchers from SCPR may contact you by telephone or at your home address sometime in the next few weeks to arrange a convenient time to come and talk to you. They would like to hear the views of anyone who has been unemployed including people who are now working. The researchers may not be able to talk to everybody, so if you have not heard from them by the end of September, you will know they will not be contacting you.

Everything you tell the researcher will be treated in complete confidence. No-one in the Employment Service or the Department of Social Security, and no-one outside the researchers at SCPR, will see any of the information you give or know who agreed to take part. The report at the end of the study will not identify anyone individually.

I do hope that you will take part in this research. However, if you do not wish your name, address and telephone number to be passed on to SCPR, please write to me at the above address by 26 July, giving your name, address and the reference number at the top of this letter. Alternatively, you can tell the SCPR researcher if he or she contacts you. Whatever you decide will not affect your entitlement to any benefits you claim, either now or in the future.

If you are approached, I hope that you will enjoy talking to the researchers.

Yours sincerely,

Tricia White
Senior Research Officer

Social Research Branch
Department of Social Security
FREEPOST PHQ5
London WC2N 6BR
Phone: 0171-712-2048
Fax: 0171-962-8542

Employment Service
Research and Evaluation Division (4)
Level 2
Rockingham House
123 West Street
Sheffield S1 4ER

12 July 1996
Experiences of people who are unemployed (P5602) - Jobcentre screening questionnaire

Aim
To recruit 15 unemployed people from those already approached in the Jobcentre during the w/c 5th August.
We need
5. claimants receiving benefits doing regular or occasional part-time or odd jobs in this claim
5. claimants receiving benefits not doing any part-time or voluntary work in this claim

Check quotas and book interview appointments for Jill, Kit, Gillian, Andrew (see schedule) from w/c 12th August. Anyone doing part-time or voluntary work is a priority.

Exclude - lone parents, anyone now in full-time work, people only signing for credits (unless an usual week for someone who works part-time and normally receives benefits), temporarily laid off, non-claimants.

Introductions
Thank them for their interest in the research so far. Explain who you are.
Explain that we are phoning everyone we spoke to in the Jobcentre to ask a few more questions and to arrange a convenient time for an interview. We are conducting a study about the experiences of people who have been unemployed in Britain today. We want to include different types of unemployed people, for example, people who have been unemployed for a short or long time, people with different benefits and needs, if they have a partner or children, people who are unemployed and doing different things, like voluntary work, courses, training, people who sign on in between odd and part-time jobs or people who are signing on for the first time. Remind that we are separate from the Jobcentre / ES / DSS and that no one else will see this information outside SCPR, that we just need to ask a few more questions before arranging the interview to make sure that we include different types of people in the study. (when booked check availability of partner too)

Age and benefits and length of claim
Check details collected at Jobcentre are correct.

Household
Can I just check, would you describe yourself as single, separated, divorced, widowed or married or living with someone as married?

and do you have any children living with you [check number and if in school]?

Usual occupation
What was your last job / type of employer? ……………………………………………………………

Activities whilst claiming
We want to include different types of unemployed people who have had different experiences whilst they are unemployed. Some people have not been able to do any work since they have been unemployed, other people may have been able to do some training or voluntary work or helping out a friend or part-time or odd jobs or some other thing. We want to include some of these other people to find out what it has been like whilst claiming, trying to do these things whilst unemployed and if you had any help or advice about doing these things.

Since you have been unemployed, have you been able to do any of the following? [If no, ever done before]

Full questionnaire available on request. (SCPR 5362)

We are here because the Jobcentre gave us permission to approach people in this way, but everything they say will be confidential and will not be seen by the Jobcentre or anyone else outside SCPR. Explain that we want to ensure that as many different types of people take part in the research, so we would just like to ask a couple of quick questions. How old they are and which benefits they have.

Experiences of people who are unemployed (P5602)
Jobcentre follow-up screening questionnaire - August 1996

Aim
To recruit 15 unemployed people from those already approached in the Jobcentre during the w/c 5th August.
We want
5. claimants receiving benefits doing regular or occasional part-time or odd jobs in this claim
5. claimants receiving benefits not doing any part-time or voluntary work in this claim

Check quotas and book interview appointments for Jill, Kit, Gillian, Andrew (see schedule) from w/c 12th August. Anyone doing part-time or voluntary work is a priority.

Exclude - lone parents, anyone now in full-time work, people only signing for credits (unless an usual week for someone who works part-time and normally receives benefits), temporarily laid off, non-claimants.

Introductions
Thank them for their interest in the research so far. Explain who you are.
Explain that we are phoning everyone we spoke to in the Jobcentre to ask a few more questions and to arrange a convenient time for an interview. We are conducting a study about the experiences of people who have been unemployed in Britain today. We want to include different types of unemployed people, for example, people who have been unemployed for a short or long time, people with different benefits and needs, if they have a partner or children, people who are unemployed and doing different things, like voluntary work, courses, training, people who sign on in between odd and part-time jobs or people who are signing on for the first time. Remind that we are separate from the Jobcentre / ES / DSS and that no one else will see this information outside SCPR, that we just need to ask a few more questions before arranging the interview to make sure that we include different types of people in the study. (when booked check availability of partner too)

Age and benefits and length of claim
Check details collected at Jobcentre are correct.

Household
Can I just check, would you describe yourself as single, separated, divorced, widowed or married or living with someone as married?

and do you have any children living with you [check number and if in school]?

Usual occupation
What was your last job / type of employer? ……………………………………………………………

Activities whilst claiming
We want to include different types of unemployed people who have had different experiences whilst they are unemployed. Some people have not been able to do any work since they have been unemployed, other people may have been able to do some training or voluntary work or helping out a friend or part-time or odd jobs or some other thing. We want to include some of these other people to find out what it has been like trying to do these things whilst unemployed and if you had any help or advice about doing these things.

Since you have been unemployed, have you been able to do any of the following? [If no, ever done before]

Full questionnaire available on request. (SCPR 5362)
Any schemes run by the Jobcentre / Employment Service
Any evening classes, or short courses or training or education
Any voluntary or unpaid work for a charity/other organisation/person Check details
Any occasional part time work or odd jobs Check details
Any more regular part time work Check details
Any other activities / like looking for work / looking after children

Check details

Regular part-time work
Type of activity / employer
Last time did this
How often / duration

Occasional part-time work and odd jobs
Type of activity / employer
Last time did this
How often / duration

Voluntary work
Type of activity / organisation
Last time did this
How often / duration

Household
Single/separated/divorced/widowed
Couple - no children
Couple - youngest child pre school
Couple - youngest child in school

Benefits
IS
UB/IS
HB
Rent rebate
No housing costs

Length of claim
4 - 12 weeks
3 - under 6 months
6 - 12 months
over 1 year

Usual occupation
Unskilled manual
Skilled manual
Non-manual
Managerial/professional
Local industry - growing
Local industry - decline

Experiences of lone parents who receive Income Support (P5602)
Telephone screening questionnaire - August 1996

Aim
To recruit 10 lone parents from those who have been sampled from DSS records for [location] and received a letter from the DSS from 12th July. We need

5 doing part-time work / odd jobs in this claim
5 not doing any part-time work / odd jobs in this claim

Check quotas and book interview appointments for Jill, Kit, Gillian, Andrew (see schedule) from w/c 12th August. Anyone doing part-time work or odd jobs is a priority.

Exclusions: anyone no longer a lone parent on IS e.g. now in full-time work, non-claimants, no longer a lone parent.

Introductions
Explain who you are. Check they remember the letter from the DSS.

Explain the purpose of the research and that we are phoning people to ask a few questions and to arrange a convenient time for an interview. Explain that we are conducting a study about the experiences of lone parents who have been receiving benefits in Britain today. They will receive £15.

We want to include different types of lone parent, for example those who have been lone parents for a short or long time, people with different benefits and needs, if they have young or older children, lone parents who are doing different things as well as looking after their families, like voluntary work, courses, training, odd and part-time jobs, like helping out at their children's school.

Reassure that we are separate from the DSS and that no one else will see this information outside SCPR, that we just need to ask a few more questions before arranging the interview to make sure that we include different types of people in the study.

1. Female / male
   Tick box
   Female ☐
   Male ☐

2. Age
   Can I just check your age... [enter number of years]
   18-25 ☐
   26-40 ☐
   41-60/65 ☐

3. Benefits
   and which benefits you receive...
   Income Support ☐
   Other benefit ☐
   Housing Benefit ☐
   Rent rebate ☐
   Mortgage interest ☐
   No housing costs ☐

4. Length of claim
   and how long have you been receiving IS as a lone parent?
   [write in number of weeks / months / years]
   under 12 months ☐
   1 to 2 years ☐
   3 to 5 years ☐
   over 5 years ☐

5. Household
   and how many children you have living with you and their ages [check if at school]
   pre-school ☐
   at school part time ☐
   at school full time ☐

6. Qualifications [ring one]
   None ☐
   GCSE / equiv ☐
   RSA / C&G ☐
   NVQ 1-2 ☐
   A level / equiv ☐
   Advanced C&G ☐
   NVQ 3-4 ☐
   Degree for more
   BEC/TEC (ONC / HNC / diploma)
   teaching / nursing / prof / business
   NVQ 5 ☐
7. **Activities whilst claiming**

- We want to include different types of lone parent who have had different experiences whilst they have been receiving benefits. e.g. some people may not have been able to do any work since they have been a lone parent, other people may have been able to do some training or voluntary work or help out a friend or do part-time or odd jobs or something else.

- We want to include some of these people to find out what it felt been like trying to do these things as a lone parent and if you have had any help or advice about doing these things. Have you been able to do any of the following during the last [insert] time since claim began?

- Any schemes run by the Jobcentre / Employment Service
- Any evening classes, or short courses or training or education
- Any voluntary or unpaid work for a charity or other organisation
- Any occasional work or odd jobs - Check details
- Any more regular part time work - Check details
- Any other activities / looking after children
- None

7a. **Part-time work**

**Type of activity / employer**

Last time did this

How often / duration / hours

7b. **Odd Jobs**

**Type of activity / employer**

Last time did this

How often / duration

---

**Check quotas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female [ ]</th>
<th>Male [ ]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age 18-25 [ ]</td>
<td>Youngest child pre-school [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-40 [ ]</td>
<td>Youngest child in school [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41-60/65 [ ]</td>
<td>Activities (during this claim)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits HB [ ]</td>
<td>Regular part-time work in last 2 months in claim [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mortgage interest [ ]</td>
<td>Part-time work earlier in claim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No housing costs [ ]</td>
<td>Qualifications None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of claim under 12 months [ ]</td>
<td>GCSE / equiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 - 5 years [ ]</td>
<td>A level / equiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 - 2 years [ ]</td>
<td>Degree / equiv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over 5 years [ ]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Household**

- Youngest child in school
- Regular part-time work
- Occasional part-time work
- No part-time work / odd jobs in this claim

**Check details** - Explain that one of the researchers from SCPR would like to visit for an interview in the next few weeks.

**Address**

- Full name Mr / Mrs / Ms / Miss

**Phone number or alternative contact**

---

**Experiences of previously unemployed - telephone screen - August 1996 (P5602)**

**Aims** - To recruit 10 people from those who have been sampled from ES records of ex-unemployed who were doing part-time or voluntary work and are now in full-time work from [location] and received a letter from the ES during the w/c 12th July.

We firstly need 5 currently employed who were unemployed and doing part-time work

and from later list 5 currently employed who were unemployed and doing voluntary work.

Check quotas and book interview appointments for Jill, Kit, Gillian, Andrew (see schedule) from w/c 12th August.

Exclude - anyone who did not move into full-time work after being unemployed (but can include a few who have become unemployed again), and those who were credits only signers.

**Introductions** - Explain who you are. Check they remember the letter from the ES.

- Explain the purpose of the research and that we are phoning people to ask a few questions and to arrange a convenient time for an interview.
- Explain that we are conducting a study about the experiences of people who have been unemployed and received benefits in Britain today and have since found work. They will receive £15.
- We want to include different types of people, for example those who had been unemployed for a short or long time, people with different needs, if they have children or not, people who were doing different things, like voluntary work, courses, odd and part-time jobs when they were unemployed.

- Reassure that we are separate from the Jobcentre / ES / DSS and that no one else will see this information outside SCPR, that we just need to ask a few more questions before arranging the interview to make sure that we include different types of people in the study. (Once agreed - check availability of partner for joint interview)

- Female / male Tick box

**Age** - Can I just check your age...

- [enter number of years]

- 18-25 [ ]
- 26-40 [ ]
- 41-60/65 [ ]

**Current occupation**

- What is/are your current job [and employer]?

**Hours per week**

- [enter number of weeks, months, years]

**Length of claim** and before then, how long had you been unemployed and receiving benefits that time?

- 4 to 12 weeks [ ]
- 3 to under 6 months [ ]
- 6 to 12 months [ ]
- over 1 year [ ]

**Benefits**

- and which benefits did you receive Income Support

- when unemployed?

- Unemployment Benefit

- IS / UB

- None

- and any benefits for rent or mortgage?

- Housing Benefit

- Rent rebate

- IS for mortgage interest

- No housing costs

**Household**

- Can I just check, would you describe yourself as single, separated..., married or living with someone as married?

- Single / widow / separated / divorced [ ]

- Couple [ ]

- and how many children you have living with you and their ages [check number and if at school]?

- pre-school [ ]
- at school part time [ ]
- at school full time [ ]

---
Activities whilst claiming

We want to include different types of people who have had different experiences when they were unemployed. Some people were not able to do any work whilst they were unemployed, other people may have been able to do some training or voluntary work or helping out a friend or do part-time work or odd jobs or something else. We want to include some of these people to find out what it was like trying to do these whilst they were unemployed. When you were unemployed, had you been able to do any of the following?

- Any schemes run by the Jobcentre / Employment Service
- Any evening classes, or short courses or training or education
- Any voluntary or unpaid work for charity / other organisation - check details
- Any occasional part-time work or odd jobs - check details
- Any more regular part-time work - check details
- Any other activities / looking for work / looking after children
- None

Part-time work / odd jobs
Type of activity / employer ..........................................................

Last time did this (during claim) ..................................................

How often / duration / hours .....................................................

Voluntary work
Type of activity / employer ..........................................................

Last time did this (during claim) ..................................................

How often / duration / hours .....................................................

Check quotas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>18-25</th>
<th>26-40</th>
<th>41-50</th>
<th>51-60</th>
<th>60-65</th>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>UB</td>
<td>IS</td>
<td>HB</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mortgage interest</td>
<td>no housing costs</td>
<td>Household</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Single/separated/widowed/divorced</td>
<td>Couplle - no children</td>
<td>Couple - youngest pre-school</td>
<td>Couple - youngest in school</td>
<td>Voluntary work in last claim</td>
<td>Odd jobs / occasional work in last claim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Length of claim |
under 6 months | over 6 months

Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unskilled manual</th>
<th>Skilled manual</th>
<th>Non-manual</th>
<th>prof/manger</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Contact details

- Explain that one of the researchers from SCPR would like to visit for an interview in the next few weeks.
- Full name Mr / Mrs / Ms / Miss ...........................................

Address ..................................................................................

Phone number or alternative contact ......................................

Outcome

1. Interview booked [date/time/interviewer] 2. Refusal/unavailable [reason]
TOPIC GUIDE SUMMARY

START FOR FORMER UNEMPLOYED ONLY - WORK BACK TO WHEN UNEMPLOYED

1. Current occupation [if since become unemployed, ask about activities now as well and work back to
   previous period of unemployment] - Brief background on occupation, hours long employed, how found job,

2. Experiences of being unemployed / lone parent / partner of unemployed
   [NB: if former unemployed is now unemployed again - we are interested in the period of unemployment before they were
   working] - Brief background on how long unemployed and cause, activities before, attitudes.

3. Activities whilst unemployed / lone parent / partner of unemployed
   [any experience of following now or at some time during this claim or last claim if now employed] - Explore how they keep
   occupied, hobbies and interests, contact with other people, any activities and work.

4. Activities whilst unemployed / lone parent on benefits / partner of unemployed
   [explore those mentioned from above - emphasis on any activity which is or could be part-time, casual or voluntary work
   - explore job search later] - How got involved, changes in activities whilst unemployed, usefulness of activities

5. Other activities considered, offered, come across whilst unemployed / lone parent / partner, but not pursued in this claim [probe for part-time, odd jobs, voluntary work if not mentioned] - Explore whether come across other activities, how found out about them, why not taken up

[OPTION FOR SEPARATE INTERVIEWS FROM HERE]

6. Views on different types of "work" activities for unemployed people / lone parents / partners whilst claiming [emphasis on activities related to voluntary, casual, part-time work, but not voluntary work for lone parents] - Explore perceptions of availability and availability of activities and relationship to job search and moving off benefits and if [if currently or former employed] to getting current job.

7. Perceptions and experiences of voluntary work whilst unemployed / partner of unemployed [not lone parent on benefits or former unemployed who worked p-t]
   Experiences and perceptions

8. Perceptions and experiences of part-time work and odd jobs whilst unemployed / lone parent on benefits / partner of unemployed [not former unemployed who did voluntary work]
   Experiences and perceptions

9. Thinking about activities whilst unemployed / lone parents / partners
   Decision making and influences - individually and in the household.

10. Experiences of looking for work and moving off benefits [and impact of part-time and voluntary work on jobsearch]
    Type of work looking for [brief] and job search activities [in relation to how part-time and voluntary work can or have
    helped or hindered]

11. Knowledge, awareness and attitudes towards benefit rules
    Explore in relation to the sorts of things they can do whilst claiming and who they should tell

12. Incentives for unemployed, lone parents and partners
    What would encourage take up of part-time and voluntary work whilst claiming / how should it be encouraged

13. Awareness of JSA / JSA leaflet and BTWB (unemployed only since July 1996 - lone parents only BTWB)

14. Follow-up interview - check if respondent and partner are willing to be re-interviewed. Record response on background questionnaire.

15. If agree to follow-up, obtain a another contact and leave keeping in touch forms.

PS602 ACTIVITIES WHILST CLAIMING TOPIC GUIDE

START FOR FORMER UNEMPLOYED ONLY - WORK BACK TO WHEN UNEMPLOYED

1. Current occupation (if since become unemployed, ask about activities now and work back)
   • What they do / skills and responsibilities / type of employer
   • How long been employed
   • How found this job / how long looking for work
   • Other activities [whether still engaged in voluntary or part-time work]

2. Experiences of being unemployed / lone parent / partner of unemployed
   [note if former unemployed who is now unemployed again - we are interested in the period of
   unemployment before they were working]
   • How long been (or were) unemployed / lone parent on benefits
   • How became unemployed / cause of own unemployment
   • Activities / occupation before unemployed / lone parent on benefits
   • Ever unemployed / on benefits before [briefly]
   • Attitudes towards being unemployed / lone parent on benefits / not employed (in relation to looking for work - keep brief)

3. Activities whilst unemployed / lone parent / partner of unemployed
   [any experience of following now or at some time during this claim or last claim if now employed]
   - hobbies / keeping busy, occupied [brief / springboard into other activities]
   - voluntary or unpaid work or help for charity or other organisation or person
   - looking after home / family / children
   - contact with other unemployed / employed people
   - training / education / schemes
   - part-time work (regular and occasional)
   - casual work and odd jobs
   - looking for work

4. Activities whilst unemployed / lone parent on benefits / partner of unemployed
   [explore those mentioned from above - emphasis on any activity which is or could be
   part-time, casual or voluntary work - explore job search later]
   Getting involved
   • When started / how often done / continued or given up (when)
   • What is involved / what they do / hours and patterns of work
   • How got involved / found out about it / problems experienced in taking-up / or in searching for activity
   • Why activity taken up / what attracted them
   Changes in activities whilst unemployed / lone parent
   • Why not done more often or regularly / why discontinued / given up
   • If done during previous claims or before claim / why not during this
   • Any problems experienced in taking up or continuing activity during claim
   • Changes in activities during claim e.g. hours done, type of activity

Usefulness
• Expectations of usefulness / what would they get out of it
• How useful was it / what did they get out of it
• Purpose of activity / how it has changed its role
5. Other activities considered, offered, came across whilst unemployed / lone parent / partner, but not pursued in this claim [probe for part-time, odd jobs, voluntary work if not mentioned]

- Extent to which considered activity / discussed it / done anything about it
- How found out about activity / extent to which searching for activity
- Perceptions of availability / what informs these perceptions
- How regarded
- Why not taken up / what would attract / encourage take up
- If done in previous claim, why not this time
- Plans to take up in future

[OPTION FOR SEPARATE INTERVIEWS FROM HERE]

6. Views on different types of 'work' activities for unemployed people / lone parents / partners whilst claiming [emphasis on activities related to voluntary, casual, part-time work, but not voluntary work for lone parents]

- Types of activities available to unemployed / lone parents / partners
- How regarded - personally / for unemployed people / lone parents / partners
- Whether activities mentioned are regarded as work / what is regarded as 'work'
- Are such 'activities' right for them / unemployed people / lone parents / partners
- Have views changed / done views change as an employed or unemployed person? why
- Availability, accessibility of 'activities' / looking for 'activities' / barriers to take-up
- Relationship of 'activities' to job search and moving off benefits
- Future employment / prospects
- 'Making ends meet'

[if currently or formerly employed...]- getting current job

- Do (did) they see themselves as unemployed or as a jobseeker / or as a part-time or voluntary worker etc.

7. Perceptions and experiences of voluntary work whilst unemployed / partner of unemployed [not lone parent on benefits or former unemployed who worked p-t] [emphasis on activities related to voluntary, casual, part-time work, but not voluntary work for lone parents]

Experiences

- Reasons for take-up - why doing it now
- (depending on involvement) - why did it in the past / why stopped now
- Ever considered / why not done it
- Any experiences before unemployed
- What sort of voluntary work is available in the area
- Expectations and outcomes of voluntary work: what do they (or could they) get out of it
- Extent to which regarded (or experienced) as a stepping stone; direct and indirect benefits to job search and future employment
- Currently employed - how helped get current job

Perceptions

- What types of activities are 'voluntary work'
- Sorts of people who do voluntary work
- Is voluntary work suitable for unemployed / partners in general / or for them personally
- Perceptions of costs and barriers to take up / continuation whilst unemployed / partner of unemployed e.g. travel costs, childcare

8. Perceptions and experiences of part-time work and odd jobs whilst unemployed / lone parent / partner of unemployed [not former unemployed who did voluntary work]

Experiences

- Reasons for take-up - why doing it now
- (depending on involvement) - why did it in the past / why stopped now
- Ever considered / why not done it
- Views on hours and pattern of work / considered or planned to increase hours or regularity (especially those doing odd jobs)
- What sort of part-time work / odd jobs are available in the area
- Expectations and outcomes of part-time work / odd jobs: what do they (or could they) get out of it
- Extent to which it is regarded as a stepping stone, direct and indirect benefits to job search (do benefits differ for casual or regular work) and future employment
- Currently employed - how helped get current job

Perceptions

- Perceptions and experiences of costs and barriers to take up / continuation e.g. travel costs, childcare
- Availability and experiences of regular part-time / casual / or irregular work
- Views about regular part-time / casual work / odd jobs for unemployed people / lone parents / partners in general / and for self personally
- Attitudes towards 'working on the side' - own attitudes
- Perceptions of others - locality / community

9. Thinking about activities whilst unemployed / lone parents / partners

- What is taken into account when considering activities whilst unemployed
- Partner's motivations to decrease / continue / stop activities whilst claimant unemployed / if given up, how feel about it now
- How are decisions made / Who makes decisions in the household about activities / Influences on decisions / past experiences
- Sharing of part-time work between claimant / partner

10. Experiences of looking for work and moving off benefits [and impact of part-time and voluntary work on jobsearch]

Type of work [brief]

- Type of work they are looking for e.g. hours of work / wage / locations [brief]
- Lone parents - attitudes to work / intention to work

Job search and moving off benefits [relationship to part-time and voluntary work]

- What do claimants do / where do they look / how do they hear about work / best ways of finding work
- How job search activities have changed
- How much time is spent on jobsearch / how often
- Contact with Jobcentre / DSS - advice received about part-time or voluntary work (brief)
- Help / advice / schemes to help job search
- Advice about voluntary, part-time work / local initiatives [check]
11. Knowledge, awareness and attitudes towards benefit rules

- What do claimants know about the sorts of things they [partner] can do whilst claiming benefits?
- Awareness of and perceptions of what sort of restrictions might there be on: type of activity, hours, earnings or expenses?
- Awareness of earning disregards?
- Perceptions of official definitions of part-time or voluntary work / own definitions?
- Perceptions of why these restrictions exist (availability for work, actively seeking) / Difference rules for UB / IS / housing costs?
- Who should / did they tell about activities whilst unemployed? / are they prompted by the Jobcentre / DSS / when signing or at other times during claim? / why did they tell or not?
- Which types of activities do they need to tell about? / risks and ethics / differences for part-time or odd jobs or voluntary work?
- What (do they think) happens if / when they tell?
  - perceptions of disincentives to report?
  - worries / experiences of about deductions / hassle / changes?
  - experience of contacts with local office / job centre?
- Impact of understanding of rules for part-time and voluntary on: decisions to continue or take up part-time or odd jobs or voluntary work?
  - jobsearch / intention to move from benefit?
  - on other factors in decision making?

12. Incentives (for unemployed, lone parents and partners)

- What would encourage / help take-up of part-time / voluntary / more work?
- What sort of encouragement should there be from the DSS / Job Centre for part-time or voluntary work whilst claiming?
- What sort of problems / hassles are there for people wanting to get part-time or voluntary work / what would encourage people to declare part-time, casual or voluntary work?
- Should the DSS / Jobcentre encourage part-time voluntarily work? / Why should they?
- How people feel about being encouraged by these bodies?
- How should people be encouraged? / who should encourage?

13. Awareness of JSA / JSA leaflet and BTWB (unemployed only since July 1996 - lone parents only BTWB)

- Whether seen / heard any information about JSA / BTWB?
- What do they understand about it?
- How do they think it will affect them?

14. Follow-up interview - check if respondent and partner are willing to be re-interviewed. Record response on background questionnaire.

In the future it is possible that there may be other research on some of the subjects that have been covered in this study. If so, would it be alright if you were contacted again by us or another research organisation?

15. If agree to follow-up - explain that it may not be for a year and we will involve people who are employed and unemployed - they don’t have to still be unemployed to take part - and we need to have some way of keeping in touch if they move:

- Ask for another contact who is unlikely to move e.g. parents, sibling, children, or other and note on the ‘keeping in touch’ form.
- Leave change of address card - explain that they can use this to write with a change of address and postage is paid, or they can phone Gillian Elam at SCPR.
### TOPIC GUIDE - BACKGROUND (P5602)

Background information. Ask main respondent (and partner) before depth interview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Interviewer</th>
<th>Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check sample group

- (ring one)
  - Job Centre
  - Lone parent
  - Former unemployed

and activity

- (ring one)
  - None
  - Part-time
  - Voluntary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Age [years]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sex [ring one]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Current economic status - check if employed and not receiving IS / UB or unemployed and receiving IS / UB, do not prompt for any other activities [enter duration / length of claim] [can have more than one activity, but respondent must either be unemployed / lone parent and receiving benefit or employed and no longer receiving IS / UB]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Income Support |         |
| Unemployment Benefit |         |
| Family Credit |         |
| Housing Benefit / Rebate |         |
| IS for Mortgage Interest |         |
| Council Tax Benefit / Rebate |         |
| (or don't have to pay) |         |
| One Parent Benefit |         |
| Child Benefit |         |
| Milk tokens |         |
| Direct payments from IS |         |
| Social Fund in last month |         |
| Maintenance for self |         |
| Other benefits |         |
| Other benefits |         |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. Last job [unless currently employed]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When finished [wks, mths, years ago]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last occupation / employer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time or part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of last job [wks, mths, yrs]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usual occupation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Benefit income and maintenance [show card - tick all which apply - should mostly be in name of respondent]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Income Support |         |
| Unemployment Benefit |         |
| Family Credit |         |
| Housing Benefit / Rebate |         |
| IS for Mortgage Interest |         |
| Council Tax Benefit / Rebate |         |
| (or don't have to pay) |         |
| One Parent Benefit |         |
| Child Benefit |         |
| Milk tokens |         |
| Direct payments from IS |         |
| Social Fund in last month |         |
| Maintenance for self |         |
| Other benefits |         |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Qualifications [write in highest]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Children in the household [number and ages]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Follow-up (ask at end of interview)

Willing to be interviewed again in future (either by SCPR or another organisation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maybe /depends</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Income SHOW CARD

Benefits

Income Support
Unemployment Benefit
Family Credit
Housing Benefit / Rebate
Income Support for Mortgage Interest
Council Tax Benefit / Rebate
One Parent Benefit
Child Benefit
Milk tokens
Social Fund in last month
Other benefits not listed above

Other

any Direct payments from Income Support
(e.g. for gas, electricity, water etc.)
or any Maintenance for self
or children
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
<th>Price</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thirty Families: Their living standards in unemployment</td>
<td>0 11 761683 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Disability, Household Income and Expenditure</td>
<td>0 11 761755 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Housing Benefit Reviews</td>
<td>0 11 761821 7</td>
<td>£16.50</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Social Security and Community Care: The case of the Invalid Care Allowance</td>
<td>0 11 761820 9</td>
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<td>The Attendance Allowance Medical Examination: Monitoring consumer views</td>
<td>0 11 761819 5</td>
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<td>Lone Parent Families in the UK</td>
<td>0 11 761868 3</td>
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<td>Incomes In and Out of Work</td>
<td>0 11 761910 8</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Working the Social Fund</td>
<td>0 11 761952 3</td>
<td>£9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Evaluating the Social Fund</td>
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Department of Social Security
Attn. Keith Watson
Social Research Branch
Analytical Services Division 5
10th Floor, Adelphi
1–11 John Adam Street
London WC2N 6HT
Telephone: 0171 962 8557