

Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 624

Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal, the Six Month Offer and Support for the Newly Unemployed evaluations: An early process study

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Part I: Early implementation

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Part II: JRFND Stage 1 Customer Survey

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First Published 2010.

ISBN 978 1 84712 693 1

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Acknowledgements

This research was commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

The authors would like to thank all those who participated in the research despite significant constraints on their time: the Jobcentre Plus staff and customers who took part in our fieldwork at jobcentres, and the customers who took part in our surveys. Liz Cole, Matthew Garlick, Richard Zaluski-Zaluczkowski and Philippa Knott of the DWP are the DWP project management teams for the evaluations and have been integral to the research design and conduct and we thank them for their guidance. We would also like to thank the members of the Evaluation Steering Committees who have given formative comments and feedback on presentations and earlier internal reporting. At the Policy Studies Institute (PSI), we would like to thank Lesley Hoggart for her early role in the project and Wendy Duldig for help with the fieldwork. Jenny Lau helped to combine and format the reports.

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Abbreviations

6MO	Six Month Offer
AAT	Adviser Achievement Tool
ADF	Adviser Discretion Fund
AF	Adviser Flexibilities
ASM	Adviser Service Manager
BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
BOC	Better Off Calculation
BtWS	Back to Work Session(s)
CAT	Customer Assessment Tool
CATI	Computer-assisted telephone interviewing
CETL	Customer Engagement Team Leader
CPCS	Construction Plant Competence Scheme
CRB	Criminal Record Bureau
CSCS	Construction Skills Certification Skills
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DASO	Diary Administrative Support Officer
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills
DM	District Manager
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions

ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
EZ	Employment Zone
ESF	European Social Fund
FJR _s	Fortnightly Jobsearch Reviews
FND	Flexible New Deal
FTA	Fail to Attend
IB	Incapacity Benefit
IDT	Intervention Delivery Target
IES	Integrated Employment and Skills
IS	Income Support
JRFND	Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal
JSA	Jobseeker's Allowance
JSAg	Jobseekers Agreement
LAMRA	Labour Market Recruitment Adviser
LEP	Local Employment Partnership
LMS	Labour Market System
LSC	Learning and Skills Council
LVP	Low Value Procurement
ND	New Deal
NDLP	New Deal for Lone Parents
NDYP	New Deal for Young People
NJI	New Jobseeker Interview
NMW	National Minimum Wage
ONS	Office for National Statistics
PA	Personal Adviser
PSI	Policy Studies Institute

RRS	Rapid Response Service
SIA	Security Industry Authority
SNU	Support for the Newly Unemployed
SPA	State Pension Age
TPPM	Third Party Provision Manager
TR	Targeted Reviews
WTC	Working Tax Credit

Glossary of terms

Caseloading	A jobcentre process for establishing greater continuity of advisory support where customers are assigned to a dedicated adviser whom they will meet on a regular basis.
PSA 16	The Public Service Agreement for socially excluded adults (PSA 16) is formed of eight of the 198 national indicators for English local authorities. Implemented in April 2008, it focuses on four groups of people identified at risk of social exclusion; care leavers at age 19, offenders under probation supervision, adults receiving secondary mental health services, and adults with learning disabilities.
Parking	The practice of providing minimum services to individuals who are judged as offering less potential of a return on service investment. Often contrasted with 'creaming', where services are directed to those with greater promise of a positive outcome.
Taxi Ranking	A system used in jobcentres to coordinate and maximise the flow of customer-staff meetings where the customer sees the first available adviser or Fortnightly Review Officer.

Summary

This report presents early findings from the evaluation of the revised Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND), the Six Month Offer (6MO) and Support for the Newly Unemployed (SNU), all of which went live in April 2009. The JRFND is being rolled out in two phases; the first from April 2009; the second from April 2010. The JRFND programme comprises four stages based on length of claim:

- Stage 1: 0 to 13 weeks.
- Stage 2: 13 to 26 weeks.
- Stage 3: 26 to 52 weeks.
- Stage 4: after 52 weeks.

The first three stages are delivered by Jobcentre Plus, and last up to 12 months. If a person is still claiming benefit after 12 months, they are referred to a Flexible New Deal provider for further work preparation and support.

SNU and the 6MO were implemented in response to the recession and are planned to last for two years. SNU offers supplementary job preparation and job search services from day one of a JSA claim. The support is designed for people who have recently become unemployed who may have little experience of modern job search techniques. Specialist help is also available for professionals/executives.

The 6MO comprises additional support for jobseekers who reach six months out of work. Everyone reaching six months unemployment is caseloaded by a Jobcentre Plus adviser who provides support, encouragement and advice until they get a job or reach 12 months unemployment. In JRFND Phase 1 districts, this advisory support is provided via JRFND Stage 3. This provides the vehicle for access to four additional voluntary services to help improve employability. These are volunteering opportunities; a recruitment subsidy for employers; help to become self-employed; and access to Work Focused Training.

Evaluation of these measures will incorporate jobcentre visits, administration data analysis, customer surveys and interviews with all stakeholders to assess implementation, service delivery and the customer experience, and measure employment impacts and cost-benefits. The findings presented in this report incorporate two strands of research:

- Qualitative interviews and observations at Jobcentre Plus sites, conducted in two waves two and five months after implementation.
- A customer survey covering the first 13 weeks of the Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claim, comparing the results of those experiencing the JRFND (in Phase 1 areas) with those experiencing the former JSA regime (in Phase 2 areas), conducted in September 2009.

Qualitative research findings

The new policy initiatives were introduced under recession conditions. Along with the changes brought on by the implementation process, the weak economy has imposed additional challenges to Jobcentre Plus – a higher demand for services and a wider diversity of support needs. This has placed a strain on resources (time, staffing and space) and it has been necessary for processes to deviate slightly from the implementation design.

For the most part, staff found the amount and pace of change challenging. SNU and 6MO were introduced at short notice and consequently, customers experienced delays to service availability. During the initial site visits, about two months after the April 2009 start, guidance on the SNU and 6MO was considered incomplete and staff felt instructions on how to blend the new services with the JRFND were inadequate. However, most of these issues were resolved by the second wave of fieldwork five months after the initiatives went live.

JRFND Stages 1 to 3

Back to Work Sessions (BtWS) were established in all study areas at five months after the April introduction. Initial teething problems had largely revolved around a lack of space to hold the sessions in-house, particularly given the high customer volumes. Staff views on the sessions were mixed. Most felt that they were helpful for motivating customers and were held at an appropriate time for reiterating the information regarding conditionality and support that was initially conveyed at the New Jobseeker Interview (NJI). Some staff were concerned about what they felt was an over-emphasis on conditionality in the BtWS, and felt that it got the session off on 'the wrong footing'. Staff also felt the sessions worked best when there was interaction among participants, but the extent to which this was facilitated by the presenters varied widely.

Advisers responded to the requirement to work flexibly in Stage 3 in different ways; while some appreciated the greater flexibility, others felt that more guidance on possible activities to prescribe would be helpful. It was sometimes felt there was little available to offer customers, particularly in rural areas. The type of activities being mandated varied across offices and districts, ranging from one-off job search activities to attending a course of vocational training. There were also variations in the way in which advisers issued mandation.

Caseloading at Stage 3 was generally seen by staff as beneficial but there were difficulties implementing this in practice due to customer volumes. This meant that advisers were not always able to see customers as often as they would like and that continuity of contact with a single adviser was sometimes compromised.

Despite the intention of JRFND to introduce greater and escalating conditionality, staff often felt that the requirements placed on customers were no greater than before, and less stringent when compared to the former New Deal programmes. While most staff felt conditionality backed up by sanctions was justified, some expressed unease about over-emphasising this element, particularly in BtWS. Staff were also reluctant to reveal to their customers the 'bigger picture' of the regime stages, and the process of escalating conditionality over time. Instead they tended to explain only the requirements of the particular stage that the customer was in. Sanctioning requires administrative resource, and in a context of staff shortages and high customer volumes, some staff were reluctant to sanction. Much sanctioning activity had become focused on the mandatory BtWS which often had high fail to attend rates.

Support for the Newly Unemployed

SNU was well received by Jobcentre Plus staff, who welcomed having the additional services to offer new customers. Despite this, customer receptivity to taking up the SNU services remained lower than expected. Some Jobcentre Plus staff believed that it was unrealistic to expect newly unemployed customers to respond to an immediate offer of support, either because they had more pressing financial concerns or because they were confident that they would find a job quickly. Staff also pointed to constraints such as lack of resources (particularly desk space and staff) and a lack of time during the NJI to sell the SNU services properly.

The different component provisions of the SNU offer had been implemented at different speeds and to varying degrees. The one-hour group sessions delivered by Jobcentre Plus had improved by September 2009 and more were taking place. The one-to-one support had lower take up than the group sessions in the offices visited, and in some cases it was only offered after a group session. Customer reactions to the group sessions were mixed. Some welcomed the extra support to help them back to work; others felt that the information provided was too basic.

After a slow start, the support for professionals and executives had become better established and was popular amongst staff and customers.

The one-day general job search support tended to be arranged with existing providers who offered the generic 'programme centre' support. This helped with the implementation as systems were already in place. Feedback from staff was mixed though, and some advisers felt that the generic service was less effective than that for professionals and executives.

The Six Month Offer

On the whole, the 6MO was welcomed by Jobcentre Plus staff. Many advisers liked the fact that the options were voluntary and felt that this helped to create a positive relationship with customers. Advisers generally felt confident about presenting the 6MO and discussing with customers about what might help them. Some advisers presented all strands to all customers, others tailored the information according to perceived customer interest and need. In practice, the self-marketing voucher for the recruitment subsidy was presented systematically to all eligible customers and training (where available) was usually mentioned, but self-employment support and volunteering were sometimes not mentioned if the adviser felt that they were inappropriate for the customer concerned.

The principle of additional advisory support, which underpinned the 6MO services, was popular with Jobcentre Plus staff, although it was slow to be implemented, mainly due to large customer caseloads.

The most straightforward options, and the first to be implemented, were the Self-Marketing Voucher Recruitment Subsidy and self-employment support. The voucher was popular with advisers and received positively by most customers, although some advisers doubted whether customers were applying it to the job search. Self-employment support attracted some customer interest but at the time of the fieldwork, few advisers had experience of customers who had started on the service. Several felt that a greater monetary incentive was needed to persuade customers to take up this option.

Training was popular with customers, but was slow to be introduced, and in some Jobcentre Plus districts there were communication problems between Jobcentre Plus and the colleges providing the courses. The range of courses varied widely between study districts, reflecting the fact that it was designed to meet local employer needs. However, in some districts, advisers also identified gaps in meeting training needs.

The volunteering strand was widely supported by staff but had not proved as popular as many had hoped. In some districts there had been problems with delivery and the referral process was seen to be unnecessarily complex.

Customer survey findings: Stage 1 JRFND

The survey showed that during the first 13 weeks of their claim, more customers reported support services delivered within the JRFND Phase 1 areas than in the Phase 2 areas where JRFND had not rolled out. In the Phase 1 areas, support services appeared to be more targeted at lone parents and those with previous JSA claims. An exception was for PSA 16 customer groups for whom certain specialist support was more common in Phase 2 than in Phase 1 areas. A sizable minority of customers in Phase 1 areas said they felt under pressure to take part in activities they did not feel suited their needs and circumstances, yet the majority of customers across all areas agreed that the support they received from Jobcentre Plus was tailored to their personal needs and circumstances.

Amongst services offered, the BtWS and advice on where to look for job vacancies was seen by customers to be the most useful support offered to customers in Phase 1 areas. This evidence accords with the early implementation views from staff that BtWS were useful for helping provide motivation for job search. The customer survey showed that BtWS were considered more useful in particular by younger customers, prison leavers and those with lower or no qualifications. These are all groups that might be seen to be 'harder to help', so this evidence is promising.

In line with the staff welcoming the services in Phase 1, as found in the early implementation research, the customers in these areas were more positive about their Jobcentre Plus services experiences than Phase 2 customers, reporting that provision had improved and that this had led to increased awareness of job vacancies and confidence for these customers. In particular in Phase 1 areas relative to Phase 2, more parents and specifically lone parents reported increases in motivation to find work, confidence, job search skills and an awareness of the different ways to look for vacancies. More of those with long-term health conditions or disabilities also reported themselves to be confident as a result of the Jobcentre Plus support. Again, harder-to-help groups seemed to be benefiting from these services during these first 13 weeks, more than in Phase 2 areas.

The customer survey shows that for customers who had ended their claim, more had done so sooner in Phase 1 areas. However, the overall share of customers who had left their benefit claim was equivalent across all areas. The service which seemed to be most closely associated with ending benefit claims sooner was the BtWS.

There was a slightly higher entry to paid work recorded for customers in Phase 1 areas. For these first 13 weeks, harder-to-help groups, in the PSA 16 groups for example, had similar work entry rates across all areas. It was mostly those aged 25-49 and those with higher skills who were more often found to have moved into work, especially in Phase 1 areas.

There appeared to have been indications of some successes for JRFND Stage 1 in terms of moving job-ready customers into work. However, as these descriptive analyses cannot take account of the many factors that might affect these transitions to work, it is too early to say whether these promising indications can translate into a measurable impact on the work entry for JRFND Stage 1.

The great majority of customers in all areas felt that the job role they had entered in work was a good match for them. However, there was some evidence suggesting that work for customers in Phase 1 areas was lower skilled, lower paid or considered less suitable for their skills and interests. These analyses should not be over-interpreted, however, as they reflect the first 13 weeks of a JSA claim and cannot account for the important technical issues related to measuring impacts.

1 Introduction

This report presents early findings from the evaluation of a series of employment initiatives introduced in April 2009, consisting of reforms to the Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) regime, a re-engineering of the New Deal and extra support for recipients of JSA. These are the Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND), Support for the Newly Unemployed (SNU) and Six Month Offer (6MO).

The revised JRFND is being rolled out in two phases, the first from April 2009 and the second from April 2010¹. The Jobseekers Regime is delivered by Jobcentre Plus and the Flexible New Deal (FND) by external providers. Further details of the reforms are set out in the Command Paper *Ready for Work: Full-time employment in our generation* (December 2007).

In response to the economic downturn, some additional support services for jobseekers were also rolled out nationally in April 2009 with a planned limited duration. In JRFND Phase 1 districts, these new services were introduced concurrently with the JRFND. Most of the new services are delivered by external providers, but customers access these services via referral from a Jobcentre Plus adviser.

SNU began in April 2009 and offers supplementary job preparation and job search services from day one of a JSA claim. It is intended for people who have no recent experience of current job search channels and need a small amount of support to improve their chances of moving back into work. Specialist help is also available for professionals/executives who have started a JSA claim.

A package of support for jobseekers unemployed for six months, called 6MO also began in April 2009. Everyone reaching six months unemployment receives extra advisory help from Jobcentre Plus advisers to provide support, encouragement and advice until they get a job or reach 12 months unemployment. Services under the 6MO are voluntary and are available to customers at the adviser's discretion. These include volunteering opportunities to improve employability, a recruitment subsidy for employers, help to become self-employed and access to work-

¹ See Table B.2 for the list of Jobcentre Plus districts in Phase 1 and Phase 2 of JRFND.

focused training. The package is implemented via Stage 3 of JRFND and from the 26-week Restart Interview in Phase 2 areas. The offer is intended to last for two years with the expectation that 500,000 customers would access support via the offer in this time.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has commissioned a research consortium, led by the Policy Studies Institute (PSI), to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of these new services.² This report is the first product of the evaluation and presents evidence on the early implementation of the initiatives in Jobcentre Plus offices, as well as descriptive survey evidence from customers on the experiences of the Phase 1 JRFND Stage 1 and first 13 weeks of signing in both the new JRFND and in the Phase 2 areas.

In this chapter we set out the policies underpinning the reforms, provide an overview of the various initiatives under study and outline the research methods used.

1.1 Policy context and background

The implementation of JRFND should be seen as integral to developments in the Government's welfare reform and skills agenda, including announced reforms for lone parents, people with a life limiting health condition or disability and older workers. The key principles of the JSA reform agenda are:

- a stronger framework of rights and responsibilities increasing obligations progressively with duration of claim and giving customers the support they need to keep and progress in work and gain relevant skills;
- maximising innovation in all sectors, contracting on the basis of what works, leading to more and better outcomes; and
- helping jobseekers find jobs that offer opportunities for progression – to ensure all customers who need help to develop their skills have access to relevant pre-employment training.

In July 2007, DWP published the Green Paper, *In work, better off: Next steps to full employment*, which set out the Government's intention to reform its main employment programmes, followed by *Ready for Work: full employment in our generation*. This described how the next phase of welfare reform will support the Government's ambition of full employment – equivalent to an employment rate of 80 per cent. It also undertook to refresh the JSA regime and modernise the New Deal to end long-term unemployment and the cycle of repeated returns to unemployment and benefits that some people experience.

² The evaluation consortium consists of the Policy Studies Institute, IFF Research, PriceWaterhouseCoopers Social, MDRC New York, Professor David Greenberg of UMBC and Professor Jeff Smith of Michigan.

In *In work better off: next steps to full employment* the government announced that from November 2008 lone parents with a youngest child aged 12 or over would no longer be entitled to receive Income Support (IS) solely on the grounds of being a lone parent, and by 2010 the age of the youngest child would be reduced to seven, in the Lone Parent Obligations. Eligible lone parents with older children could then claim JSA. It also outlined plans for the new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) from October 2008, which replaced Incapacity Benefit and Income Support paid on incapacity grounds for most new and repeat customers. As part of the implementation, a new Work Capability Assessment is applied to new and, over time, existing customers. This will result in an increase in JSA customers with mild to moderate health conditions with related barriers to work. In addition, the paper described how, between April 2010 and 2020, the State Pension age (SPA) will gradually equalise for men and women. As this happens, people aged 60 to 64 who are out of work will increasingly remain on, or make a claim to, JSA, therefore being subject to the enhanced Jobseekers Regime and the Flexible New Deal. One million older people will need to be in work if the Government is to achieve its aim of an 80 per cent employment rate.

The Command Paper, *Opportunity, Employment and Progression: making skills work* published in November 2007, outlined how DWP and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) will work together (in England) to ensure that ever increasing numbers of people are able to gain the training and support they need to move from benefits to work, and then have access to the ongoing training they need to progress in work (DWP & DIUS 2007).

More recently, the Government set out further proposals in *Work Skills* (DWP & DIUS 2008), which builds on our existing employment and skills commitments by placing a greater focus on the role of individuals and employers. It also reinforces the need to develop a skills system, shaped by employers, which puts individuals in charge of their learning.

On 21 July 2008, the Government also published the Green Paper, *No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility* (DWP 2008a), which set out for consultation the next steps of the welfare reform programme, including changes to create a more streamlined system based on just two working age benefits – ESA, for those who have a medical condition which prevents them from working, and JSA, for everyone who is able to work. It also described proposals to test a ‘work for your benefit’ programme from 2010 and an increase in obligations for partners of benefit recipients.

The DWP White Paper *Raising expectations and increasing support: Reforming welfare for the future* (DWP, 2008c) outlined the Government’s vision for a personalised welfare state. It proposed increasing adviser flexibility and escalating sanctions for non-compliance with the regime. This included making the sanctions regime clearer, testing escalating sanctions, and piloting Work for Your Benefit for everyone who has been on JSA for two years. It also indicated the intention to implement recommendations from the Gregg Review (DWP, 2008b). Subsequently,

in January 2009, a discussion paper with proposals for implementing the work-related activity regime for the 'progression to work' group were published in *Realising potential: developing personalised conditionality and support* (DWP, 2009). The new approach, applying the concepts of personalised conditionality, increased adviser flexibility and mandatory work-related activities, involves a substantial shift in expectations for both the service providers and customers of labour market programmes.

1.2 The policy initiatives

1.2.1 The Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal

The JRFND has the dual aims of increasing the support offered to those out of work and increasing the obligations of jobseekers. The enhanced Jobseekers Regime replaces the existing JSA regime, while the Flexible New Deal combines the New Deal 25 plus, the New Deal for Young People, Employment Zones, New Deal 50 plus, the New Deal for Musicians and Self-Employment provision.

JRFND is being introduced nationally in two phases. In April 2009, Phase 1 commenced in a set of Jobcentre Plus districts in England, Scotland and Wales.³ Phase 2 is scheduled to begin in the remaining Jobcentre Plus districts in April 2010. Jobcentre Plus remains at the centre of the system, managing the enhanced regime and working in partnership with providers who deliver the Flexible New Deal.

The JRFND programme comprises four stages based on length of claim:

- Stage 1: 0 to 13 weeks.
- Stage 2: 13 to 26 weeks.
- Stage 3: 26 to 52 weeks.
- Stage 4: after 52 weeks.

The first three stages are delivered by Jobcentre Plus, and last up to 12 months. If a person is still claiming benefit after 12 months, they are then referred to a Flexible New Deal provider for further work preparation support. The four stages are described in more detail below.

Stage 1 – Day One to 13 weeks

At the start of a claim, customers are required to attend a New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) with a Jobcentre Plus adviser. As under the pre-existing JSA, during the meeting the customer is required to sign a Jobseekers Agreement containing agreed job goals and job search activities. They also receive an overview of what is expected of them at later stages in their claim. The adviser assesses basic skills needs and

³ See Table B.2 for the list of Jobcentre Plus districts in Phase 1 and Phase 2 of JRFND.

refers the customer to Basic Skills training, if appropriate. For the remainder of Stage 1, the customer is required to engage in self-directed job search, which is monitored through mandatory Fortnightly Jobsearch Reviews (FJR) at Jobcentre Plus. There is an additional new requirement for the customer to attend a group Back to Work Session, at about 6-13 weeks into their claim, with failure to attend resulting in a benefit sanction⁴.

Some customers are fast-tracked to join Stage 3 of the revised regime from day one of their claim. It is mandatory for advisers to fast-track young people (aged 18 years) who have been 'not in employment, education or training' (NEET) for at least six months, and longer-term unemployed people (who have previously claimed JSA for 22 out of the last 24 months). Advisers may also offer the option of fast-tracking to other jobseekers who they feel are more disadvantaged in the labour market and would benefit from additional support.

Stage 2 – 13 to 26 weeks

If a customer is still claiming JSA after three months they attend a second meeting with a Jobcentre Plus adviser (lasting approximately 20 minutes) in which the Jobseekers Agreement is reviewed and additional training needs assessed. From this point on, if they have not done so already, customers are expected to extend their job search in terms of travel to work distance, working hours and the occupations considered. There is more intensive monitoring of job search activity during this period through the requirement to attend weekly review meetings for a six week period⁵. Subsequently, FJR continue as normal for the remainder of Stage 2.

From October 2009, advisers began identifying disadvantaged customers who needed extra support during Stage 2 and began scheduling two additional Targeted Reviews (TRs). Customers selected for TRs are those who are not eligible for mandatory entry to Stage 3 but who still require extra support. This should be on the basis that they have been unemployed for 12 out of 24 months, or the adviser has decided that they require additional support. It is anticipated in the design that approximately 20 per cent should receive this additional support on the basis of the 12 out of 24 months criterion⁶.

⁴ If the customer fails to attend the session they will be offered the opportunity to attend it on two further occasions. Each failure to attend carries a further one week sanction.

⁵ Weekly signing from week 13 is not a new requirement, but may not have been applied very rigorously in the former JSA regime.

⁶ Guidance suggests that targeted reviews might remain within 20 per cent of customers for some time, and that it may be necessary to manage numbers by only selecting those customers from the initial group based on the 12 out of 12 months criterion who will benefit the most from the additional help by the use of the 'Customer Assessment Tool (CAT)'.

Stage 3 – 26 to 52 weeks

After six months of claiming JSA, customers are obliged to engage more regularly with a Jobcentre Plus adviser and take part in job-related activities. At the Initial Stage 3 Review the customer and adviser begin developing an Action Plan, which outlines the action they must take to move closer to work. They are required to undertake up to three mandatory activities, which may involve attending job preparation or pre-employment training, Work Trials or volunteering. Failure to comply may result in a sanctioning of benefit. As in Stage 2, customers are required to attend weekly review meetings for six weeks, after which fortnightly signing continues as normal. They will also see a personal adviser at regular intervals during Stage 3. An average of three and a half hours of advisory support (including the Initial Stage 3 Review) are available throughout Stage 3, which advisers may schedule flexibly according to customer needs and circumstances.

Stage 4 – Flexible New Deal (52 to 104 weeks)

Starting in October 2009, customers who do not find work by the end of stage 3 are referred to the Flexible New Deal (FND), which is delivered by external providers. The FND consists of a flexible package of work preparation and job search support. Customers agree an action plan of mandatory activities, which should include a minimum of four continuous weeks of full-time paid employment or work-related activity. All activity in the action plan is enforceable and can result in benefit sanctions by Jobcentre Plus for non-compliance. Throughout stage 4, customers are also required to attend Jobcentre Plus on a fortnightly basis to sign a declaration detailing that they are available for employment and are actively seeking work. FND providers will typically support a customer for up to 12 months. However, if a customer remains unemployed after 12 months, by agreement between the provider and customer, provision may be extended by another six months.

Customers who do not find employment while on the FND will follow the national JRFND model.

1.2.2 Additional services during the recession

In response to the economic downturn, some additional support services for jobseekers were also rolled out nationally in April 2009 with a planned limited duration. In Phase 1 districts, these new services were introduced concurrently with the JRFND. Most of the new services are delivered by external providers, but customers access these services via referral from a Jobcentre Plus adviser. The customer journey through the JRFND stages, also showing the additional support for customers during the recession via the 6MO and SNU, is mapped out in Figure 1.1.

The Six Month Offer

Extra advice and guidance

Extra advisory support from a Jobcentre Plus personal adviser is made available to customers after a claim of 26 weeks. This extra advisory support is mandatory nationally for all customers reaching their six month point of claim. This extra advisory support acts as a gateway to the 6MO.⁷

There are then four voluntary strands to the 6MO: (1) recruitment subsidy, (2) self-employment, (3) volunteering and (4) work-focused training.

Recruitment subsidy

The recruitment subsidy is a payment to employers for recruiting customers who have been claiming (JSA) for at least six months.⁸ It is delivered in two ways:

- **Self-Marketing Voucher:** Individual customers are given a voucher when they reach six months of unemployment to present to employers at job interviews. If the employer recruits the customer, the employer submits the voucher to DWP and receives a £500 payment. If the customer does not return to claim benefit within 26 weeks the employer then receives a further £500 payment.
- **Bulk Billing:** This involves working directly with employers who recruit Jobcentre Plus customers in large numbers. Under this arrangement, the employer receives a £1,000 subsidy for every customer they recruit who has been unemployed for at least six months.

Self-employment

Customers who are interested in self-employment can receive information, advice and practical support on becoming self-employed from specialist providers. These comprise Business Link (in England), Business Gateway/Training for Work (in Scotland) and Flexible Support for Business (in Wales). Customers moving into self employment can also receive a Self-Employment Credit worth £50 per week for the first 16 weeks of trading.

⁷ In JRFND, extra adviser support is a design feature of Stage 3 (supported job search) which was rolled out in Phase 1 areas in April 2009. As JRFND does not roll out in Phase 2 areas until 2010, interim arrangements are in place to deliver similar advisory support (NDYP still provides similar support). These will largely mirror the supported job search requirement of JRFND, with the exception that customers will not have to undertake mandatory work related activity and complete an action plan. This means that this aspect of JRFND is effectively starting earlier than was planned in the original JRFND design.

⁸ The job must be for at least 16 hours per week and be expected to last at least 26 weeks.

Volunteering

Customers with an interest in volunteering to develop their work skills are directed to a third sector broker who will find them a suitable volunteering placement, matched to the individual's job-related interests and skills.

Work Focused Training

The Work Focused Training strand offers training to JSA customers who would benefit from significant up-skilling or re-skilling in order to re-enter the local job market. The training is short-term, full or part time, and is focused to meet the individual's work aspirations and employer demand. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) would contract the strand to training providers and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) would commission them to do so (or equivalently the Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly Government). There are some differences in the support offered in England, Scotland and Wales.

Support for the Newly Unemployed

SNU offers supplementary job preparation and job search services from day one of a claim. The package of support is designed for people who have recently become unemployed and have little experience of modern job search tools such as Jobcentre Plus job points, recruitment agencies and internet recruitment. Specialist help is also available for professionals/executives who have recently left employment. At the NJI, an adviser assesses customer needs and, where appropriate, can offer up to four additional services:

- A one-hour group session delivered at Jobcentre Plus that is designed to introduce and enhance knowledge of modern job search techniques and information about the local labour market.
- A one-to-one coaching session with a Jobcentre Plus adviser to provide personal help with modern job search techniques and information about the local labour market.
- Referral to an external agency for a one day session offering advice and coaching on work preparation and job search techniques.
- Referral to an external agency for specialist work preparation and job search support designed to suit the needs of customers from a professional/executive occupational background.

1.2.3 Adviser Flexibilities

Adviser Flexibilities (AF) was designed to allow Jobcentre Plus districts greater flexibility in the organisation and delivery of services within the revised Jobseekers Regime. It encompasses flexibilities in the JRFND process, organisation, provision, eligibility and channels of communication. There is a particular focus on enabling personal advisers to better tailor services to the needs of customers through:

- flexibility to assess customers' needs and provide targeted help;
- autonomy to decide who and how to caseload;
- flexibility to vary the timing, length and content of interviews with customers (irrespective of which stage of JRFND they are in);
- ability to use bought-in, low cost provision.

The AF districts act as demonstration sites, with the following aims:

- Testing – the sites act as test sites for future changes to the regime.
- Learning Lessons – the districts act as a source of information and advice for other districts on how to operate in a flexible environment;
- Pushing the boundaries within legislative requirements – the districts are encouraged to explore options for further flexibility, including for other customer groups such as ESA claimants and lone parents;
- Evaluation – the aim is to examine the impact of flexibility in the districts by examining how they perform compared to other districts over the longer term.

1.3 The evaluation design

The overall aim of this evaluation is to test the extent to which JRFND/6MO/SNU leads to additional employment outcomes for individuals and the cost effectiveness with which this is done.

There is a comprehensive process study for the development of the JRFND implementation and the evaluation research, as well as robustly designed evaluation evidence on impacts. The main research objectives to be addressed by the process study in the evaluation are:

- To assess the customer experience of JRFND and to determine what elements of JRFND seem to help customers;
- To assess the delivery of JRFND;
- To learn lessons for future policy development.

The research will have:

- (i) A process study, which combines qualitative and quantitative evidence on JRFND to inform the impact analyses. There are:
 - a) early implementation site visits: gathering qualitative data from multiple stakeholders, primarily through longitudinal site visits to Jobcentre Plus offices, but also through ongoing phone calls and interviews to monitor progress;
 - b) depth customer studies: gathering qualitative data on groups of customers following different trajectories through the programme;

- c) a provider study with operational research with specialist providers delivering FND;
- d) customer surveys: gathering quantitative process study data alongside impact data on outcomes;
- (ii) Quantitative impact analyses.
- (iii) Cost-benefit analyses.
- (iv) Syntheses of evidence.
- (v) Some limited general equilibrium research.

To account for the recession measures of 6MO and SNU within the JRFND evaluation, there are dedicated expansions of the qualitative research as part of the process study, additional survey work of all the 6MO strands and additional impact study work of the 6MO strands.

The evaluation research for JRFND is being delivered by a consortium of research organisations led by the PSI, with PSI conducting the majority of the qualitative work, impacts, Cost-benefit analyses and the limited General Equilibrium analyses, with IFF Research conducting customer survey research, and PricewaterhouseCoopers Social doing provider qualitative fieldwork.

The evaluation research will be reporting with publications until 2012.

Research scope

The research reported here reflects early process study data from the evaluation, from the early implementation site visits and first customer surveys which focus on the experiences of Stage 1 of JRFND (the first 13 weeks) for Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas⁹. These are early findings from the evaluation: JRFND was introduced in April 2009 (as were the temporary recession measures of 6MO and SNU) and the research took place within the first five months of operation. This report reflects information gathered up to September 2009. The relevant detailed research designs are outlined at the start of each part of the report.

1.4 Part I: Early implementation research

The early implementation site visits were designed to capture the JRFND implementation and delivery, through interviews (telephone, one-to-one and group formats) and observations of staff and customer interactions.

Qualitative fieldwork in 18 Jobcentre Plus offices (across nine districts) studied the implementation and delivery of JRFND, the extra support that were introduced to help customers during the recession: the 6MO, SNU; and the AF test sites. The

⁹ See Table B.2 for the list of Jobcentre Plus districts in Phase 1 and Phase 2 of JRFND.

research took place in two waves, approximately two months and five months following the introduction of the initiatives, and covers Stages 1, 2 and 3 of JRFND. Fieldwork was Jobcentre Plus-based and consisted of interviews (telephone, one-to-one and group formats) and observations of staff and customer interactions. Data collection focused on the staff perspective of the implementation. Therefore, aside from staff reflections, the findings from the site visits cannot comment on differences between JRFND and the former JSA regime, as research on JRFND delivery took place in Phase 1 offices only.

1.5 Part II: JRFND Stage 1 Customer surveys

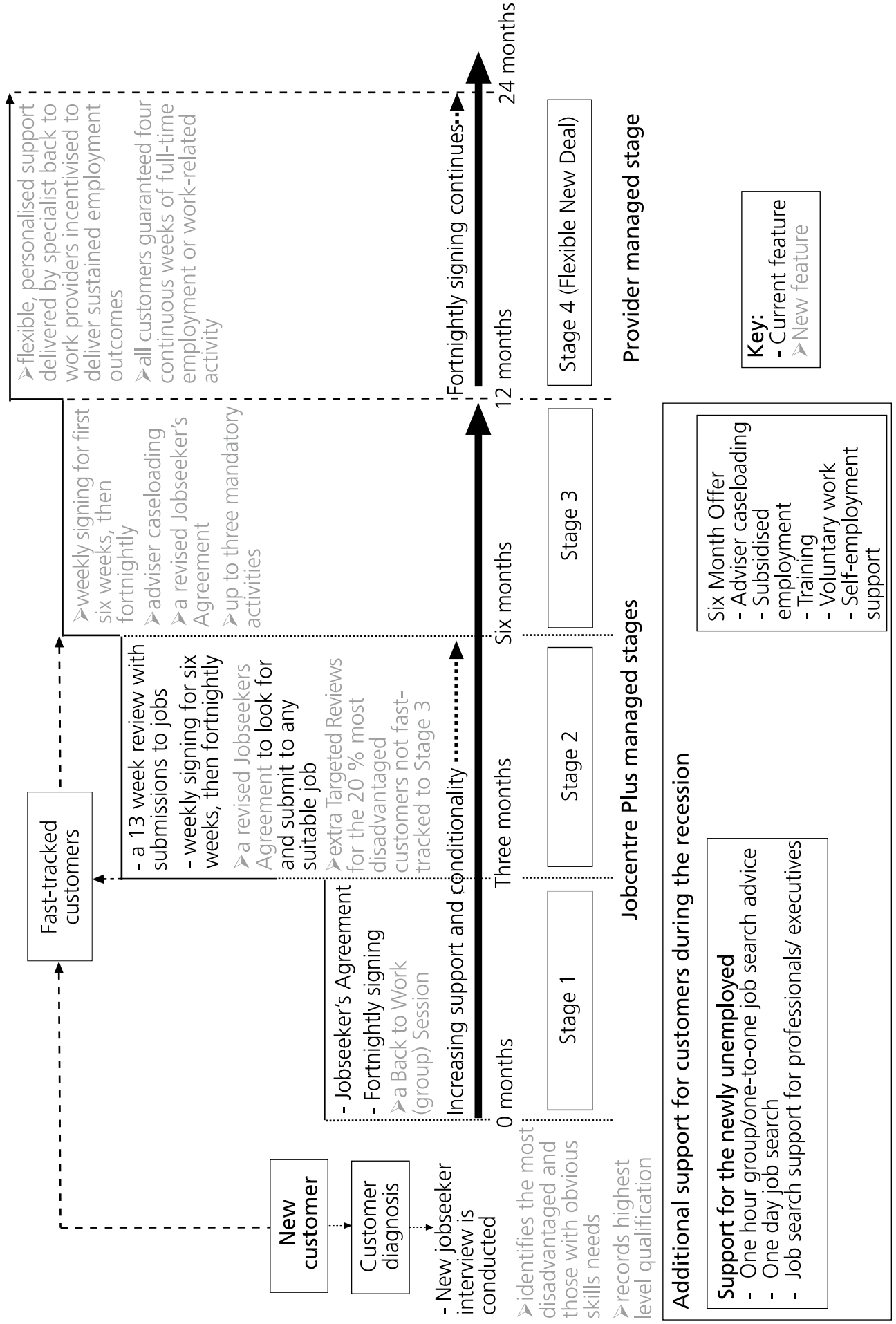
The specific research objective of the Stage 1 customer surveys is to compare the experiences, views and outcomes of customers who had begun a JSA claim in Phase 1 JRFND areas with those of customers in Phase 2 comparison areas who started a JSA claim at the same time. The design of the surveys allow for comparisons of the JRFND Stage 1 with customers who started JSA at the same time and completed the equivalent period of 0-13 weeks of the existing JSA regime.

Customers were eligible for the Stage 1 comparison survey if they had started a JSA claim in mid to late June 2009. The survey sample was drawn from the population of all eligible JSA customers using a stratified sampling approach (stratified by Phase and age), with customers randomly selected within each stratum. An opt-out exercise was undertaken prior to the survey fieldwork commencing. There were 6,001 interviews completed, split roughly evenly between customers in JRFND Phase 1 and Phase 2 districts.

1.6 Report structure

The report is divided into two parts, which are components of the process study research of the evaluation. Part One reports on the early implementation site visits. Part Two contains the findings of the 0-13 weeks Stage 1 JRFND and comparison Phase 2 customer surveys. Each chapter includes a chapter summary at the end. Finally, a conclusion summarises key findings overall and identifies overarching themes from within the research, and then within each part. The detailed research design is described at the start of each part, with further design details contained in the Technical Appendices, together with comprehensive appendices of the research materials appended at the end of the report.

Figure 1.1 JRFND customer survey



Part I

Early Implementation: JRFND,
Adviser Flexibilities, 6MO and
SNU qualitative process study

2 Early implementation site visits

The findings in this report are based on site visits which gathered qualitative data from multiple stakeholders in a sample of offices in Jobcentre Plus districts. The aim was to assess the implementation and delivery of Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND) over time, to determine what works, and to learn lessons for future policy development and the implementation of JRFND Phase 2. The objectives of the site visits were:

- To examine the initial stages of implementation of the JRFND and the other new support services, including staff roles, preparation and support for service delivery.
- To describe the delivery of the different elements of the new regime and services, the reasons for any deviations from the policy design, and staff and customer perspectives on the new services.
- To investigate how the increasing conditionality of the new regime is operationalised and managed on the ground.
- To investigate flexibilities in provision and the application of adviser discretion in delivering a 'personalised and responsive approach' towards customers.

2.1 Research methods

This report details findings from the first two waves of site visits which took place approximately two months (Wave 1) and five months (Wave 2) after services were implemented in April 2009. For each wave, the majority of fieldwork was completed during a three-week time period. Study areas comprised six of the Phase 1 and three of the Phase 2 JRFND districts, which enabled a focus on different combinations of the services under study, as shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Implementation study evaluation districts

Evaluation focus in each district					
Jobcentre Plus District	JRFND	Support for Newly Unemployed	Six Month Offer	Adviser Flexibilities	
1*	✓			✓	Phase 1
2*	✓			✓	
3	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4*	✓	✓	✓		
5	✓	✓	✓		
6	✓	✓	✓		
7		✓	✓		Phase 2
8		✓	✓		
9		✓	✓		

* Indicates a district that was also testing Integrated Employment and Skills at the time of the fieldwork.

A total of 18 offices (two in each district) were visited during each of the two waves of fieldwork. The selection of offices ensured some variation in:

- geographical location (England, Scotland and Wales);
- levels of unemployment and deprivation;
- urban and rural areas;
- ethnic mix;
- office size (based on customer volumes), and;
- districts with single and multiple Flexible New Deal (FND) providers.

Wave 1 fieldwork focused on Stages 1 and 3 of the enhanced Jobseekers Regime while Wave 2 fieldwork focused on Stage 2 (but included updates on the other Stages).¹⁰ Data on the implementation and delivery of Adviser Flexibilities (AF), Support for the Newly Unemployed (SNU) and the Six Month Offer (6MO) was gathered during Wave 1 and updated during the Wave 2 fieldwork. Qualitative data was collected through interviews (telephone, one-to-one and group formats) and observations of staff and customer interactions. Interviews took place with the following staff:

- District Manager.
- Third Party Provision Manager.
- Advisory Services Manager/Business Manager.

¹⁰ Fieldwork was designed to follow the development of the JRFND stages as they rolled out.

- Customer Engagement Team Leader.
- Diary Administrative Support Officer.
- New Jobseeker Interview/stage 1 adviser.
- Stage 2 adviser.
- 26 week Restart Interview/Stage 3 adviser.
- Back to Work group facilitator.
- Support for Newly Unemployed group session facilitator.

The following sessions were observed:

- New Jobseeker Interviews.
- Initial Stage 2 Reviews.
- 26 week Restart Interview/Initial Stage 3 Review.
- Back to Work (group) sessions.
- Support for Newly Unemployed group sessions.

Following each session, customers were asked to voluntarily provide informal feedback on their impressions and experiences of the services. These discussions took place on Jobcentre Plus premises.

Interviews with staff were digitally recorded (with permission), transcribed and anonymised. Data were collated and analysed thematically using the Nvivo8 software package.

Over the two waves of fieldwork, 260 interviews were conducted with Jobcentre Plus staff. A total of 183 meetings (interviews or group sessions) were observed, followed by short discussions with approximately 190 customers who were willing to participate in the research.

More detail on the research methods are in the Technical Appendix 3, and the fieldwork topic guides are contained in the Appendix Supplement.

2.2 Outline of Part 1

The next chapter sets the context for the evaluation, describing general implementation issues, such as staff training and support, and the mitigations that were introduced in light of the economic recession. Chapter 4 describes the delivery of JRFND Stages 1, 2 and 3, variations in practice, the application of increased conditionality and adviser flexibility. Chapter 5 focuses on the AFs, looking at what flexibilities have been adopted and what enables or constrains the application of flexibility. Chapter 6 reports on the implementation and delivery of the SNU services. Chapter 7 explores implementation and delivery of the 6MO services.

3 Implementation issues

This chapter summarises findings on general implementation issues that emerged during early observations of the Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND) in practice along with the other new services introduced in the case study districts. It begins with a discussion of the implications of the economic climate and how this interacted with the new service culture. The chapter then considers how staff training and support and staff awareness of new external provision affected delivery.

3.1 Economic downturn

The JRFND was designed during favourable economic conditions, but by the time of implementation, the country was experiencing a recession.

Labour market figures provide a stark testimony to the demand for Jobcentre Plus services. Towards the end of 2008 the UK officially entered recession, the first time the country has experienced an economic downturn of this magnitude for over 15 years.¹¹ Unemployment rates, a prime indicator of a nation's economy (Berthoud, 2009), began to decline in 2005. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), during the economic quarter leading up to the introduction of the policy initiatives in April 2009, the unemployment rate had increased by 12.4 per cent and the Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimant rate grew by 23.8 per cent over the previous quarter (ONS, 2009). Unemployment has continued to rise during the study period. In August 2009, the number of people claiming JSA was 1.6 million, up 75 per cent compared to August 2005 when the claimant count was 0.9 million (Tunstall, 2009).

The economic decline posed major challenges for Jobcentre Plus. Firstly, there was a huge increase in the sheer volume of customers, for example:

'We've gone from 1,100 customers to just about 3,000 in 12 months...in February we took 917 claims here, which when you think we only usually took 250 in a month.'

(Manager, District 1, Wave 1)

¹¹ Previous recessions were in 1990-91 and 1980-81.

Associated with this was a change in the type of JSA claimant and a broader range of customer needs to attend to: advisers reported they were seeing more highly-qualified customers, many of whom had little previous experience of unemployment or accessing services at Jobcentre Plus.

3.2 New services and an enhanced regime

The Support for the Newly Unemployed (SNU) and the Six Month Offer (6MO) were expressly designed to provide extra support to Jobcentre Plus customers during a weak labour market economy. The various service options were widely welcomed by staff and viewed to be addressing the wider needs of customers, albeit during these uncertain times. In Phase 1 districts, although the new regime was generally viewed positively by staff, the picture of change was complicated by the operational expectations of the JRFND.

As outlined in Section 1.2.1, JRFND provides more support and requires customers to undertake more work-focused activities the longer they continue to claim JSA. The role of advisory staff is to ensure that customers understand this and enact their responsibilities to look for work, with guidance and additional support from advisers when needed. For staff, this entailed new skills and competence. There was a more diagnostic approach to the interviews, with more reliance on the adviser's interpersonal skills, knowledge of third-party services, and of the local labour market. The majority of staff viewed the enhanced regime as a significant culture change. One manager described the service delivery as 'helping customers to help themselves'. Some staff stressed that imparting the skills needed for self-managed job search were even more important in the current economic climate because, due to customer volumes, immediate help was not always available at the Jobcentre Plus office.

Undoubtedly, the new regime, alongside the other new services, JRFND commanded extra resource at a time when this resource was scarce due to high volumes of customers. A recurring theme among staff was a lack of time for familiarising themselves with the new processes and service content. Jobcentre Plus offices were largely unprepared for the extra demand for services they were experiencing. All the observed offices were perceived to be understaffed, strained further by high staff turnover, and recruitment was ongoing. Although the situation improved, offices continued to report staff shortages at the later stage of the fieldwork. Existing staff and new trainee staff required sufficient time and experience to become fully operational. The new staff that had come on stream helped to ease resource problems, but this had the inevitable effect that a greater proportion of advisers lacked experience. This situation improved over time. For example, five months into the new regime, when asked how confident she felt about delivering the services, one experienced adviser replied:

'If you'd asked me that in June I would have said "horrified". Now I'm fine with it. I think it was bringing all these initiatives in ... before you knew the products you had there, all of a sudden you've got all these new ones all coming in at one time ... I think it's just confidence and knowing what it is that you've got there for the customer and identifying which customer it's appropriate for.'

(Adviser, District 6, Wave 2)

An extra strain placed on jobcentres was the office space requirement for customer group meetings. Space for the mandatory Back to Work Sessions (BtWS) and the voluntary SNU group sessions was competing directly with space for one-to-one adviser and Fortnightly/Weekly Review meetings. Some offices were filled to capacity and needed any extra desk space for new advisers while other offices had resorted to 'hot desking'.

Other problems exacerbated these difficulties. Building works to address space requirements caused service delays, as did crashes and glitches in the Labour Market System (LMS) computer system. Problems with LMS Release 29 were reported in all districts. Staff were concerned that the LMS was not working as intended for the new programmes. They reported that the expected markers did not work, or did not appear. This would often cause staff to backtrack for information; or to enter data that should have been pre-populated. LMS was 'down' on a number of occasions observed during site visits, and advisers were sometimes forced to cancel interviews with customers because of this.

3.2.1 Adaptations and easements

Jobcentre Plus offices adapted pragmatically to the pressures of the economic downturn and the expectations of the new policy initiatives. Moreover, the corporate office issued a set of easements which jobcentres could deploy to help offset the pressures. Notable examples of adaptations and adopted easements observed include:

- extended weekday hours and Saturday openings;
- 'taxi ranking' of New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) and Stage 2 initial interviews to optimise customer flows;
- holding the 26-week Restart Interview as a group session (followed by a one-to-one meeting);
- delaying the Back-to-Work Session within Stage 1 or combining it with the Initial Stage 2 Review;
- delaying the introduction of Stage 2 and Stage 3 weekly signing; and
- reducing interview time for those who need less support.

3.3 Training and support

In addition to communications and guidance issued via email and the Jobcentre Plus Intranet, JRFND implementation was supported by a number of learning and development 'products' aimed at line managers, advisers, Fortnightly Review Officers, Diary Administrative Support Officers, and facilitators of BtWS. Other than e-learning to support JRFND-related LMS use, these products took the form of events facilitated by Learning and Development Officers and attended by target Jobcentre Plus staff. Most of these events took place prior to April 2009.

Due to the speed of implementation, no equivalent products were designed specifically to support the implementation of the 6MO or SNU, though in Phase 1 districts, information about the 6MO and SNU was incorporated into relevant JRFND products. Information and guidance on the 6MO and SNU were therefore communicated primarily through a series of aide mémoires and electronic updates which Jobcentre Plus managers were responsible for disseminating to their staff.

Staff views on JRFND training were mixed and largely diverged according to the length of time staff had been in post. Most of those who were in post prior to April 2009, particularly staff in the JRFND test districts, reported they had attended facilitated training events. But it was noted that this training was concentrated during the period leading up to the launch of JRFND and staff would have appreciated refresher events to help embed the procedures and share best practices. This reflected in the nature of training for staff recruited after the introduction of JRFND who were more likely to report limited training opportunities. Training was also viewed to be inadequate by advisers who were multi-tasking, delivering Stage 1 and Stage 3 initial interviews, for instance, or for advisory and Labour Market Recruitment staff who were also facilitating BtWS.

Generally, the speed of change and the volume of new material posed a challenge to staff who were implementing the new recessionary measures (SNU and 6MO). The introduction of these services was considered to be 'rushed' in Phase 2 districts and 'too much, too quickly' when combined with JRFND. At the start, guidance on the SNU and 6MO was considered incomplete and staff felt instructions on how to blend the new services with the JRFND were inadequate. However, this situation improved in time. Most advisers said that delivery practices were consolidated by learning 'on the job':

'The more you're doing the job, you just get the knowledge and the more referrals you do, you find out.'

(Adviser, District 5, Wave 2)

A recurring theme was that the time pressures imposed by the recession had curtailed the amount of training staff were able to undertake. After April 2009, much of the training was e-learning which advisers completed at their own pace and when time permitted. Staff views on the quality and appropriateness of e-learning varied considerably. While some were satisfied with independent

learning, others felt they had been 'thrown in the deep end' and criticised the computerised delivery for not providing explanations or answers to queries. This was compounded in some offices by the temporary cancellation of weekly staff meetings which had served as a platform for problem-solving, sharing knowledge about services, and good practice. Some advisers relied heavily on ad-hoc information from colleagues or one-to-one consultations with their line manager. In some cases, the new adviser recruits from the spring were instructing the new recruits from the summer months. Staff expressed the need for ongoing training events, including peer learning and support.

The perceived quality of training and communications had a strong influence on advisers' confidence to provide a quality service. When advisers did not have the information or materials they needed, they felt that they did not appear professional in front of customers. Advisers' interviewing skills and previous experience seemed to have a bearing on this. Experienced advisers were able to tailor the available services to customer needs, whereas newer advisers tended to simply recite the list of measures available. Managers were conscious of this issue and adopted strategies such as retraining of advisers, joint training with work psychologists, or by deploying New Deal for Lone Parents Advisers and Specialist Incapacity Benefit Personal Advisers to the JRFND because they were perceived to be 'far more experienced in diagnostic interviewing'.

3.4 Service awareness and communication of feedback

The extra services that were introduced to help JSA customers during the recession (SNU and 6MO) and, to a lesser extent the JRFND, introduced both a wider array of support and new service suppliers to the regime.

In all districts, some of the contracted new services were not arranged and did not become available until several months into the revised regime. Most affected were the contracted services that were introduced at short notice, as part of the SNU and the 6MO (refer to Chapters 5 and 6 for more details). These delays, ultimately caused disruption to delivery, requiring staff to operate with limited information and resulting in customer waiting lists. Most of the services, however, had been resolved by the time of the second wave of fieldwork when advisers reported greater awareness of a broader base of services.

The Third Party Provision Manager (TPPM) is responsible for establishing a directory of all provision available in the District and for communicating this to office managers who, in turn, cascade the information to their staff. Information on provision is stored on an intranet database where staff may perform searches. The sophistication of electronic search facilities varied by district. At the time of the fieldwork, Jobcentre Plus was implementing a District Provision Tool (equivalents observed were known as the 'Tree of Knowledge' or the 'Third Party Provision' website) which would enable districts to map and record information on local services. The District Provision Tool was to be implemented if districts didn't already have an equivalent in place that could serve broadly the same purpose.

Although useful, some staff viewed the existing electronic materials as cumbersome and 'not at all user friendly'. This issue was compounded by frequent additions and amendments to the materials, often relayed through email messages. Advisers in all districts reported that an increase in the number of new providers to whom they could refer customers added to the challenge of learning about the new processes.

With experience, advisers helped to build up an office level base of knowledge on local service provision, including non-contracted provision. Information on provision was shared through staff meetings and conferring with colleagues. In some offices, management guided advisers towards a set list of providers to help limit the choice. Most often, advisers defaulted to selecting service agencies with whom they or colleagues were familiar, as noted by one office manager:

'Obviously we can't remember it all and the result is a tendency to pick out the favourables, if you like, the ones that you know that we get good results from or that you've heard other advisers have got good results.'

(Manager, District 4, Wave 2)

Staff also became aware of new services through direct contact with providers. It was the practice in some offices to hold regular Provider Engagement Meetings where outside suppliers were invited to present on their services. This was viewed by staff to be beneficial for informing their decisions about referrals. Increasingly, providers proactively contacted Jobcentre Plus offices, presented at staff meetings and occasionally to the customer group sessions. This was most common among the SNU providers for professionals/executives and led more than one office manager to comment about being inundated by sales pitches for specialist support. In one of the Adviser Flexibilities (AF) districts, staff were able to visit providers to improve their familiarity with the services they are promoting. One manager explained the rationale for this:

'We'll tell them about it in paper form and in electronic form, and they'll sit in with other advisers to see how they sell it. But what we do with all our new [staff] is actually send them off to the provider to have an observation day...so they can see what it is that they deliver, and you find that [advisers] do sell it better.'

(Manager, District 1, Wave 2)

Staff in other offices indicated they would appreciate more in-depth knowledge about local providers and visits to the provider office so that they were better able to sell their services. This was often not possible due to time constraints and back-to-back booking of customer interviews.

3.4.1 Service duplication and gaps

Staff reported some unnecessary duplication of customer services, most commonly noted for the SNU professional/executive provision and for general job preparation services like CV design and job interview coaching. Duplication was more evident in urban areas where there is a wider range of colleges and training providers. This was compounded by the various funding streams that procured services and training (e.g. Jobcentre Plus/DWP procurement, country specific support, local council employment programmes).

Few service gaps were mentioned. Among the service needs identified that were not adequately supported were English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and access to specialist vocational and advanced training courses. But it was anticipated that the new Jobcentre Plus Support Contract that commenced in December 2009 would address some of the service gaps. In rural areas, even if a service was available in the district, distances could be a barrier for customers who were reluctant to travel.

3.4.2 Feedback mechanisms

The research found that stakeholder feedback on service provision was largely gathered through informal means. Understandably, staff were more familiar with perceptions of office-based delivery compared to the performance of contracted providers, although this improved over time.¹² At the office level, most of this feedback was gathered through direct contact with customers and shared at staff meetings. A formal complaints procedure required advisers to report negative customer experiences to office management who then fed this up to district level. Management generally reported they had limited knowledge of customer views on the new services, as this was not systematically collected or reported to them. Advisory staff were requested to provide 'good news stories' about customers who had entered work.

Advisory staff who did not have a customer caseload were less likely to be aware of customer experiences because of their limited contact. Many advisers expressed frustration about not being aware of customer experience following a referral and felt this feedback would help build a better picture of the quality of area provision as well as improve their awareness of specific provider services.

Development of more formal feedback mechanisms was uneven, but appeared to be more advanced in the AF districts. Examples included: telephone follow up to customers who had been referred to a service and quality assurance checks which entailed staff attending provider service sessions and collecting direct feedback from customers. Some office management reported they received customer feedback forms administered by providers of the SNU professional/executive support.

¹² More detailed feedback on the separate services is provided in the proceeding chapters.

3.5 Summary

The new policy initiatives were introduced and are still operating under recessionary conditions. Along with the changes brought on by the implementation process, the weak economy has imposed additional challenges to Jobcentre Plus – a higher demand for services and a wider diversity of support needs. This has placed a strain on resources (time, staffing and space) and it has been necessary for processes to deviate slightly from the implementation design.

For the most part, staff found the amount and pace of the change challenging. The SNU and the 6MO were introduced at short notice and consequently, customers experienced delays to service availability. During the initial site visits, about two months after the April 2009 start, guidance on the SNU and 6MO was considered incomplete and staff felt instructions on how to blend the new services with the JRFND were inadequate. However, most of these issues were resolved by the second wave of fieldwork five months after the initiatives went live.

The extra services introduced both a wider array of support and new service suppliers for advisers to use. Staff views on the quality of training and provider information (primarily electronically based) varied considerably. Time pressures had curtailed the amount of training staff were able to undertake. Perceived quality of training and communications had a strong influence on advisers' confidence to provide a good service. When advisers did not have the information or materials they needed, they felt that they did not appear professional in front of customers. With experience, advisers helped to build office level knowledge on local service provision, including non-contracted provision. Recruiting new staff helped to ease resource problems, but this had the inevitable effect that a greater proportion of advisers lacked experience.

4 JRFND Stages 1 to 3

This chapter covers early implementation findings from the first three stages of the enhanced Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFNU), i.e. the services delivered by Jobcentre Plus. It provides an overview of the delivery, changes that occurred over time and variations across offices. The chapter concludes with findings on staff and customer understandings of their responsibilities within JRFND.

Running parallel to the JRFND are the Integrated Employment and Skills (IES) which seek to bring employment and training support closer together with enhanced diagnosis of skills needs and training referrals. These services were being trialed in three of the six JRFND districts under study. The processes associated with the IES are the focus of a separate evaluation and are therefore beyond the scope of this report.

4.1 Stage 1

At Stage 1, new and repeat Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claimants attend a mandatory New Jobseeker Interview (NJI). Following this, Stage 1 lasts for 13 weeks and is designed as a stage of self-directed job search which is largely customer led. Stage 1 retains the pre-existing structure of JSA, but introduces an additional mandatory element. At approximately six to nine weeks into a claim the customer is required to attend a Back to Work group session and failure to comply may result in sanctioning of benefit.

4.1.1 Process and services

Similar to the pre-existing JSA regime, the NJI is a meeting lasting approximately 35 minutes during which a Jobseekers Agreement (JSAg) is constructed, basic skills needs are screened and the customer is referred to training if appropriate, and a job search takes place. With the introduction of the new regime, advisers are, additionally, expected to assess the need for any of the Support for the Newly Unemployed (SNU) services (refer to Chapter 5 for more details) and provide an overview of the JRFND process, emphasising the extra responsibilities of the customer. During the course of the implementation study, eligibility for the

Adviser Discretionary Fund (ADF)¹³ and Work Trials¹⁴ were also made available to customers during Stage 1, hence advisers also assess customer need for these services and provide information where appropriate.

An extended eligibility for services and financial support, along with the services provided by the SNU, led many advisers (and customers) to conclude that there was more help and support available under the new regime. Compared to the previous system, advisers felt they had more to offer customers. Access to the ADF was especially well received. Many customers also expressed surprise at the amount of help and support available at this early point.

While new developments were generally praised by staff, there were also a number of limitations on delivery which constrained adviser flexibility. As outlined in Chapter 3, processes associated with all the new initiatives took time to bed in. However, time pressures remained an issue for NJI advisers throughout the study. Advisers in all districts reported that the allotted time for the NJI was insufficient for them to adequately respond to customer concerns, in addition to covering the information and assessments required by the new initiatives. It was generally observed that at the NJI, customers' main concern was coping with the initial shock of unemployment and sorting out their finances, and these issues were often raised during the interview. Advisers reported that they were unable to deal with customers' immediate concerns. Consequently, some felt that they were unable to provide a service that was responsive to customer needs.

Concerns in some districts that NJI interview time may be reduced intensified staff anxieties over service quality. While Stage 1 advisers have the option of booking in customers for additional support interviews, a lack of diary space often prevented this or introduced long delays. Even where this was possible, the process was not straightforward as there was confusion as to how this was to be accounted for on the LMS.

Time pressures were also exacerbated by staff shortages. As described in Chapter 3, to cope with the volume of customers, districts held large-scale recruitment drives and advisers worked overtime and on weekends to clear the backlog of customer interviews. Particularly in the smaller offices, multi-tasking between two JRFND stages was not uncommon, for example Stage 3 advisers were also required to perform Stage 1 interviews. Although the situation had improved by the time of the second round of fieldwork, the general consensus was that it will

¹³ The ADF provides a grant of up to £300 to help offset costs that may act as a barrier to work entry, e.g. costs for tools, clothes, transport and childcare. A Work Trial is a short-term, unpaid work placement to fill a job vacancy. It is intended to allow both the employee and the employer to test the experience before committing to an employment contract.

¹⁴ Eligibility for Work Trials was extended to young people from the start of a claim, however the site visit research found that advisers were offering Work Trials to all JSA customers.

take more time before the new recruits can help to alleviate the workloads of the more experienced advisers.

4.1.2 Back to Work Sessions

Back to Work Sessions (BtWS) take place between 6 and 13 weeks of a JSA claim. They are designed to enhance customers' job search at an early point, improving the possibility of finding employment. Sessions provide an overview on job search techniques, with an emphasis on computer and internet accessed materials, and are intended to be tailored to local labour markets. During the session, a 3-Step Plan of job search activities is introduced and this is intended to be reviewed at the Stage 2 interview (see below, Section 4.2). The conditions of claiming JSA are also reinforced. The group sessions, running for approximately one hour, were delivered in a classroom or boardroom style format, with the facilitator(s) following a standardised PowerPoint presentation and script which had been designed by Jobcentre Plus centrally. BtWS are mandatory and customers who fail to attend will be referred again under a Jobseekers Direction.

The sessions were generally well established in offices by five months after introduction, following some initial teething problems, such as staffing limitations and lack of training (also see Section 3.3). In addition, some offices reported they had made revisions to the script to better suit local needs. However, some offices were still facing challenges. Some reported Fail to Attend (FTA) rates of up to 30 per cent, despite taking measures such as reminder phone calls and handing out invitation letters personally to customers. Because the sessions are mandatory, FTAs increased the administrative burden, by requiring staff resource to follow up and possibly initiate sanctioning procedures. Another ongoing challenge was the availability of suitable premises. Many Jobcentre Plus offices did not have the capacity in-house and had to schedule sessions out of hours, on weekends or away from Jobcentre Plus premises, which could prove difficult due to health and safety requirements. Some staff suggested that delivery off-premises added to the FTA rate, while others thought it allowed for a more positive delivery. The responsibility of presenting the BtWS often fell to more established advisers, who were felt to possess the confidence and experience to handle customers and deliver sessions effectively. However, a consequence of this was that these valued advisers were not available to conduct one-to-one meetings.

Feedback from facilitators, advisers and managers on the BtWS was mixed. They were viewed positively by some, as a good motivational tool for customers, a timely reminder of their JSAG, and as an opportunity for staff to reconnect with the customers. Advisers also spoke of customers leaving the sessions freshly motivated and 'generally upbeat'. Advisers thought the timing of the sessions was optimal, because customers had experienced enough time (by 6-13 weeks into the claim) to adjust to their changed circumstances and sort out their finances, an aspect which was considered to be particularly important for first time claimants.

However, on the negative side, the manner in which customer conditionality requirements were reiterated during the BtWS was unhelpful for staff, particularly when introduced at the start of a session, as suggested in the official guidance. While it was acknowledged by staff that this message needed to be reinforced, the facilitators and other staff felt that the placement of the material, communicating a strong emphasis on conditionality and sanctions, set an unnecessarily negative tone to the session. Customers also reacted to this, stating that the approach did not acknowledge that they were complying and looking for work.

Another issue that surfaced both in staff interviews, and in observations of the sessions, was a 'lecturing' style of delivery which did not encourage customer interaction. Coupled with an emphasis on conditionality at the outset, the sessions were sometimes perceived as patronising, especially to customers from a professional background. This was exacerbated by some presenters not modifying the given script to include information on the local labour market, as intended.

Generally, advisers considered the sessions to be most effective when there was interaction between advisers and customers and among the customers themselves. However the extent of this seemed to vary from group to group and according to the skill of the facilitator. Customer interaction was usually encouraged during the second half of the presentation, when covering topics on job search techniques and information on the local labour market. For the latter, some offices involved a Labour Market Recruitment Adviser (LAMRA) in the delivery. This localised information was usually appreciated by the customers, although advisers felt that the content was more beneficial for non-professionals. The mix of customers also seemed to have an influence on the interactions. In some offices, staff tried to book sessions for people from similar backgrounds, to encourage the sharing of relevant information and experiences. However, in other offices, the diverse mix of people attending was viewed by advisers as motivational for customers:

'The ones that are a bit lower down can see who they're up against in going for jobs and how it's important to have an up-to-date CV...and that sort of thing.'

(Adviser, District 4, Wave 2)

4.1.3 Fast-tracking

The JRFND design allows some customers early access to extra advisory support and services. During an NJI, customers who may benefit from earlier intensive support can be fast-tracked to Stage 3, usually only available after six months on JSA. The Labour Market System (LMS) automatically identifies customers who have been unemployed for 22 out of 24 months for fast-tracking, while advisers are expected to fast-track 18 year olds who have been out of employment, education or training (NEET) for at least six months. These customers should be fast-tracked on a mandatory basis. In addition, advisers can, at their discretion, offer fast-tracking to customers in vulnerable groups (e.g. those with low qualifications, drug issues or sporadic employment histories) who they feel would benefit from earlier intensive support. These customers are offered fast-tracking on a voluntary basis.

Data collected during both waves of site visits showed that mandatory fast-tracking was taking place, although inconsistencies were occurring due to ongoing problems with the LMS markers. Also, some managers reported that advisers may not be fast-tracking eligible 18 years olds due to time pressures during the NJI. In contrast, voluntary fast-tracking was found to be limited. Reasons for this reflect both office practices and advisers exercising their discretion. Some advisers reported that office level guidance discouraged them from offering voluntary early access to Stage 3, mainly as a strategy to regulate customer flows. In mainly rural offices, advisers were reluctant to offer voluntary fast-tracking because it was felt that local area services were not adequate and more time was needed for provision to become established. In these cases voluntary fast-tracking was not seen as beneficial to eligible customers. Finally, in one of the Adviser Flexibilities (AF) test sites staff reported that voluntary fast-tracking was not considered necessary because advisers were already able to offer earlier access to some support and services.

4.2 Stage 2

From 13 weeks into a claim, customers proceed to Stage 2 for a period of directed job search. After pursuing a largely independent job search during Stage 1, the Initial Stage 2 Review heralds a period of more intensive contact for customers, beginning with a series of six signings at weekly intervals.

4.2.1 Process and variations

The Initial Stage 2 Review, scheduled for approximately 20 minutes, includes an up-date of the JSAg (removing some restrictions on job goals), an explanation of the six weekly signings as well as a quick job search. Advisers may also refer a customer to provision (e.g. programme centre¹⁵) if it was felt they would benefit from it. The customer's 3-Step Plan from the BtWS was intended to be used as a starting point for further planning, however, staff reported that it was rare for customers to bring these in to the meeting.

In line with good practice, most offices endeavour to schedule the Initial Stage 2 Review on the customer's regular signing day. To address customer volumes, alternative formats for the meeting, such as group sessions or telephone interviews, had been trialled in some offices. Three months later, by Wave 2 of the research, group sessions, followed by a one-to-one meeting, had continued in some offices.

Some advisers expressed the view that they did not see Stage 2 as separate from Stage 1, as they didn't have anything 'extra' to offer at this point. Generally, they revisited any issues that had not previously been addressed at Stage 1 and were able to offer all provision that was previously available during Stage 1, including

¹⁵ Programme Centres are run by external providers to supply job search support such as CV preparation, job interview coaching and access to the internet.

the SNU. Advisers used different methods to determine what to offer the customer at Stage 2. Most commonly, they were guided by the information contained on the LMS about the customer's work history, in addition to talking to the customer about their needs and employing assessment tools (if relevant).

Again, lack of time to conduct the interview comprehensively was a dominant and recurring theme among Stage 2 advisers. Twenty minutes was considered to be too short to re-engage with the customer, particularly as a considerable period of time had elapsed since the customer had last been in contact with an adviser:

'They've had that initial interview and they've made their claim. They haven't seen anybody for three months, and they have all of this stuff that they're burning to say and ask...they need to say it and it's their opportunity.'

(Adviser, District 1, Wave 2)

Some advisers suggested an extra ten minutes would help to address customer concerns and, for some cases, would prevent the need to book an additional interview. Due to a lack of resources, some Stage 2 services, such as Better Off Calculations, were postponed to Stage 3. Other offices had trouble fully implementing the weekly signings (see below).

4.2.2 Weekly signing (Stages 2 and 3)

During both Stage 2 and Stage 3, customers are required to attend weekly review meetings for six weeks, where job search activity is monitored by a member of the Fortnightly Jobsearch Review (FJR) team. After these weekly meetings fortnightly signing resumes.

Weekly signing at Stage 2 was taking place in most offices, but varied greatly in how it was organised, and a few offices had delayed introducing the procedure until premises and staffing issues were resolved. Other offices operated a shorter session to cope with customer volumes. 'Taxi ranking' was also common for managing customer flows. In one AF district, advisers were instructed to postpone the weekly signing to a later point in Stage 2 to avoid a backlog. However, advisers in one of these offices saw the weekly signings as a means to keep momentum going and therefore continued to apply them at the start of Stage 2. In the same office, plans were underway to couple the weekly signings with additional support or service referrals to make the meetings more meaningful.

The implementation of weekly signing at Stage 3 was more problematic, and had not been implemented in all offices by the end of the study period. Time constraints meant that it was difficult to carry out the weekly signing as intended and it was felt that customers were rushed through with little discussion of job search techniques or extra support. In some offices, advisers exercised discretion when scheduling weekly signings, sometimes postponing them because they felt they would not be beneficial to the customer at that time. Similarly, weekly signing might be delayed until after a customer completed a Stage 3 activity.

Weekly signing was compared by some advisers to the system under the former New Deals where customers would see the same adviser week-on-week, allowing them to build positive relationships. This was not possible under JRFND, and some advisers would have preferred to play a greater role:

'Unfortunately we're sending a customer off and relying on [another staff member] to follow that up.'

(Adviser, District 4, Wave 2)

A minority of staff viewed the regular signing as a positive development, as they perceived the intensive contact as giving direction and focus to customers who may otherwise feel unsupported, and for those who needed to be reminded of their job search obligations. Customer views, both from those interviewed directly and from feedback advisers had received, were largely negative. Customers described the signing process, for example, as 'pointless' and 'not very useful', particularly when FJR staff had little time to engage with them. Staff noted that the process was particularly frustrating for customers living in rural areas:

'These people [...] might be coming in four, five miles, they live in the countryside. They park their car up, they come in for what they feel is a meaningful intervention and [staff] say, "Sign here, thanks". I've had that feedback more than once.'

(Manager, District 1, Wave 2)

4.2.3 Intensifying customer contact

Customer contact during Stage 2 varied widely between districts.¹⁶ Advisers were often unsure whether the FJR staff had the time to follow up on action plans or to conduct job searches with customers, when this was deemed necessary. Caseloading is not officially incorporated into the design of Stage 2, yet many advisers indicated that regular contact would enable them to build up rapport with customers and provide more targeted support. Scheduling additional meetings for customers proved difficult, however, because adviser time was often booked weeks in advance and therefore scheduling a meeting was only possible if there was a cancellation.

One office, in an AF district, had already introduced the two additional Targeted Reviews at weeks 17 and 21 for more disadvantaged customers, e.g. those with low qualifications, drug issues or sporadic employment histories. Other phase 1 districts did not introduce Targeted Reviews until October 2009.

¹⁶ The Stage 2 Targeted Review meetings were not implemented until October 2009, after the fieldwork period.

4.3 Stage 3

Stage 3 runs from weeks 26 to 52 of a claim. It begins with a Restart interview of approximately 30 minutes, followed by another period of intensive weekly signing. Customers are caseloaded and receive, on average, three and a half hours of advisory support (including the initial meeting) during the six month period. They are required to engage in mandatory, work-focused activities, additional to what is required for receipt of JSA. The initial meeting is also the entry point for customers fast-tracked from earlier stages. The Six Month Offer (6MO) options (which are voluntary) are also presented at this meeting (refer to Chapter 6).

4.3.1 Process and variations

Stage 3 diverges more significantly from the pre-existing JSA regime, introducing a greater range of support but also greater obligations for the jobseeker. Customers are still eligible for the training and financial support available during the previous stages, and in addition, they are introduced to additional support through the 6MO (refer to Chapter 6 for more detail). A screening for additional training needs may also be performed. At the Initial Stage 3 Review, customers are reminded of the conditions of their JSAg, which will usually be adjusted at this stage to require broader job search goals and greater travel distances. Customers will also be advised of the requirement to attend six weekly signings, similar to the process experienced at Stage 2. An action plan will be created which will list up to three mandatory work-related activities the customer is required to complete during Stage 3.

Aside from the logistics of arranging additional interviews, most advisers and managers were extremely positive about additional advisory support and the principle of caseloading. Regular contact over time helped to build a relationship, which was rewarding for advisers and considered the best way to help customers. Taking this one step further, several advisers said that, ideally, they would like to follow individual customers for the entire journey into work, from the start of their claim through to when they signed off. In one office which ran the AF, it was possible for advisers to extend the amount of meeting time beyond the conventional guidelines. As one adviser noted:

'If anything we would like more [additional advisory support] on Stage 3 than we get. I know that there's supposed to be a clock that ticks down, I haven't noticed it so I'm seeing them as and when I can. One, because I believe the regular contact is good for them, and two, how am I supposed to be helping them if they're not sat in front of me?'

(Adviser, District 3, Wave 2)

According to staff, most customers welcomed the chance to have more frequent meetings with one adviser after six months of seeing a series of different staff, with the exception of a small minority of long-term customers who, it was perceived, wished to spend as little time as possible at Jobcentre Plus.

When asked how they decided on what provision to offer customers, advisers routinely talked of compiling a profile from the information contained in the JSAg and action plan and from listening to customers' concerns. It was common for Stage 3 advisers to have experience of the previous New Deals, so they already had the necessary advisory skills. On the other hand, some advisers preferred to list all the provision available to customers so they could establish interest and allow the customer to lead the decision making. This approach was more common among newer advisers. In time, and with exposure to different customer scenarios, advisers tended to adopt a more diagnostic approach.

As with the previous JRFND stages, Stage 3 advisers were challenged with limited resources during high customer demand. Customers were caseloaded at this stage, meaning extra time was allotted with one adviser to provide individually tailored support. The benefits inherent in caseloading were often lost, however, as advisers were struggling for time to follow up those on their books. High caseload numbers and full diary bookings with initial interviews made it difficult for advisers to schedule the extra appointments on a regular basis. In some offices it was reported that subsequent meetings had to be scheduled with different advisers, breaking down the continuity for customers. This left many advisers frustrated as it was often weeks before they would see a customer again and there was therefore less opportunity to build a rapport.

Although JRFND is designed to allow greater flexibility, advisers generally felt they were constrained by the processes and the sheer amount of information they were required to impart, particularly during the initial interview.

4.3.2 Mandatory activities

What constituted a mandatory activity at Stage 3 varied widely. These included one-off events such as attending a Jobs Fair or CV workshop or longer term vocational training or basic skills and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) training. Advisers also reported using the regular job seeking activities contained on the JSAg as Stage 3 mandatory activities, for example reading the jobs section of a local newspaper, approaching a local employer, looking up a particular job website or setting up an email account. One of the smaller offices had introduced a group job search session as a mandatory activity at Stage 3, conducted at the local programme centre. In a few instances, where provision was seen to be scarce, the 6MO voluntary options served as possible mandatory activities.¹⁷

The mix of activities that were assigned as mandatory is testimony to the degree of flexibility advisers had, yet there was also evidence of confusion among some advisers about 'what and how much' to dictate. A manager commented that although the guidance referred to examples such as training or developing a CV, overall the guidance was felt not to be sufficiently prescriptive on what to offer.

¹⁷ This practice deviated from the guidance which states that the 6MO options are entirely voluntary.

The practice of assigning up to three mandatory activities during Stage 3 varied greatly across districts, and sometimes among advisers within an office. For example, in one office, Jobseekers Directions were issued to customers to undertake mandatory activities if they were perceived to be lacking commitment to their JSAg by failing to provide evidence of seeking employment. However, in the same office, other customers were referred by advisers to do activities only on a voluntary basis. In other offices, advisers would send all their customers to do a minimum of one and a maximum of three mandatory activities as standard. One office had yet to issue any mandatory activities to customers due to a backlog of cases.

Advisers tended to view the mandatory activities as useful for motivating customers and encouraging the right kind of work-related behaviours. Usually in the course of the Stage 3 Initial Interview, advisers were able to identify help that could be offered in some form, and they saw the mandatory nature of the actions as helping customers to re-evaluate their expectations after six months of unemployment.

4.4 Conditionality and sanctioning

Sanctioning and conditionality are established aspects of benefits administration. However, JRFND seeks to impose additional requirements on the claimant and a clearer process of escalating conditionality over time. On condition of receiving benefit, customers are expected to fully engage in job search, attend adviser meetings at the start of each stage, sign on at regular and more frequent intervals, attend the BtWS, and engage in mandatory work-related activities. Despite these conditions, advisers still had a certain amount of discretion regarding how and when to implement conditionality and sanctioning. In the main, advisers did not regard JRFND as imposing significant new responsibilities on customers. Many of those who were familiar with the New Deal for Young People or New Deal 25 Plus felt that the conditionality requirements of JRFND Stage 3 were actually less stringent. However, this sentiment may reflect advisers not understanding how mandatory activities were to be applied, which led to inconsistencies in the way advisers interpreted the mandatory activity element of Stage 3.

Many advisers also felt that it was more constructive and supportive for the customer if they stressed the help available, as opposed to highlighting conditionality requirements. Likewise, some staff viewed the flexibilities of JRFND as incompatible with sanctioning, as they tended to equate flexibility with a less punitive approach.

'We introduce it softly... 'cause we don't want to put them off at that stage.'

(Adviser, District 5. Wave 2)

The intention is that advisers should explain escalating conditionality in the context of what is coming in the next stage, but not necessarily the whole regime. However, the general practice was for advisers to concentrate on the conditions attached to the customer's current stage in the regime.

Some advisers, however, were concerned that customers may be leaving interviews without a full understanding of the requirements. For example, advisers expressed concern over the volume of information delivered in the NJI, particularly to customers who were first time claimants. They thought that the conditionality message might not get through because of this:

'Those who are newly made redundant...they just don't have a clue what's happening and you're bombarding them with all this information. [Their head] must be spinning because they've had to assimilate so much information in such a short time.'

(Adviser, District 6, Wave 2)

Advisers were aware that if the conditionality message is not communicated clearly enough at the NJI, or indeed misunderstood by the claimant, the rules would be revisited during the BtWS. Findings from discussions with customers following an NJI suggested that they generally understood the conditional nature of their claim and most felt the rules were justified.

The experience of sanctioning varied considerably among offices in the study. By wave two of the site visits, some offices reported that sanctioning had yet to be properly implemented due to staff shortages and a lack of knowledge among new advisers about the required procedures. Sanctioning was perceived as highly time consuming, which meant it was difficult to implement under constrained resources. During the fieldwork period, the majority of sanctioning addressed those customers who failed to attend the mandatory BtWS.

There was little feedback from staff on the effects of sanctioning within the enhanced regime, in terms of its capacity to stimulate greater job search activity among customers. The prevailing view was that it was too early to tell.

4.5 Summary

JRFND Stage 1 runs for the first 13 weeks of a JSA claim. The main new requirement in the revised regime is for customers to attend a mandatory BtWS between weeks 6-13 of their claim, which provides information and signposting to sources of further support for job searching and reiterates the conditions of JSA receipt. The introduction of SNU services, which offer support on modern job search techniques and of access to ADF and Work Trials, has increased the amount of services available to customers from the start of their claim. These additional services were welcomed by staff and customers, but they also had the effect of increasing the amount of information that advisers have to convey in the NJI, and there were universal complaints that the duration of the meeting (approximately 35 minutes) was insufficient.

BtWS were established in all study areas five months after the programme was introduced. Initial teething problems had largely revolved around a lack of space to hold the sessions in house, particularly given the high customer volumes. Some

offices had resorted to holding the sessions on weekends and/or at premises outside Jobcentre Plus. Staff views on the sessions were mixed. Most felt that they were helpful for motivating customers and were held at an apposite time for reiterating the information regarding conditionality and support that was initially conveyed at the NJI. Some staff were concerned about what they felt was an over-emphasis on conditionality in the BtWS, and felt that it got the session off on 'the wrong footing'. Staff also felt the sessions worked best when there was interaction among participants, but the extent to which this was facilitated by the presenters varied widely.

At JRFND Stage 2, starting at 13 weeks, job search becomes more directed and customers are obliged to have greater contact with Jobcentre Plus. This begins with a Stage 2 initial review meeting where the JSAg is reviewed. Stage 1 support, including SNU, is still available to customers if necessary, but no new services are available at this stage. Most sites had implemented the six-week period of weekly signing by the second wave of fieldwork, although it was delayed in some sites due to problems with staffing. Staff had mixed views on weekly signing; some questioned whether FJR staff had the time to spend with customers to make this effective. Customers' views on weekly signing were largely negative.

JRFND Stage 3 heralds a greater change in requirements for both customers and staff. There is another period of weekly signing for six weeks; customers also join an adviser's caseload and receive three and a half hours, on average, of additional support over six months. They must also undertake mandatory, work-focused activities. For advisers, greater flexibility is required than under the previous JSA regime, since the mandatory activities themselves are not prescribed. Advisers responded to this in different ways; while some appreciated the greater flexibility, others felt that more guidance on possible activities to prescribe would be helpful. It was sometimes felt there was little available to offer customers, particularly in rural areas. The type of activities being mandated varied across offices and districts, ranging from one-off job search activities to attending a course of vocational training. There were also variations in the way in which advisers issued mandation.

Caseloading at Stage 3 was generally seen by staff as beneficial but there were difficulties implementing this in practice due to customer volumes. This meant that advisers were not always able to see customers as often as they would like and that the continuity of contact with one adviser was sometimes compromised.

Despite the intention of JRFND to introduce greater and escalating conditionality, staff often felt that the requirements placed on customers were no greater than previously, and less stringent if compared to the other New Deal programmes. While most staff felt conditionality backed up by sanctions was justified, some expressed unease about over-emphasising this element, particularly in BtWS. While the intention is that advisers should explain escalating conditionality in the context of what is coming in the next stage, the general practice was for advisers to explain only the requirements of the particular stage that the customer was in. Sanctioning requires administrative resource, and in a context of staff

shortages and high customer volumes, some staff were reluctant to sanction. Much sanctioning activity had become focused on the mandatory BtWS which often had high fail to attend rates.

5 Adviser Flexibilities

This chapter discusses the practice of Adviser Flexibilities (AF) as observed in three of the districts that were testing the approach. Note that the variation in services observed is set out in Table 1.1. The chapter begins with a brief outline of the AFs model and identifies how the operation of AF was affected by changes brought in to mitigate the effects of the recession. It then looks at how Jobcentre Plus staff in the study districts understood and implemented AF, before reporting on key issues which affected the practice of flexibilities.

5.1 Design and implementation of AF

As discussed in Chapter 1, the AF was designed to provide Jobcentre Plus districts with greater flexibility in the organisation and delivery of services during Stages 1 to 3 of Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND), with the aim of helping greater numbers of jobseekers into work.

The approach was initially tested in two districts, in a 'proof of concept' stage, which designed the framework within which flexibility would operate locally. This was then extended to a further two districts from December 2008. From this stage, a number of flexibilities, which affected JRFND process, organisation, provision, eligibility and channels of communication were identified, to take forward for testing. Subsequently, however, a number of these flexibilities also became available to other districts (both phase one and two) as a means of helping districts respond to higher customer demand as a result of the economic downturn. Thus the distinctiveness of the JRFND model in the districts was diminished. It was decided that the districts would continue as distinctive Adviser Flexibility districts, with the objectives of acting as a source of information and guidance for other districts on flexibilities, developing flexibilities further (including for other customer groups), and acting as test sites to try out future changes to JRFND.

5.2 Understandings of AF on the ground

Generally, staff in the districts understood AF as an overarching approach which was designed to provide a strong focus on the individual needs of the customer and to recognise the demands of local labour markets. This required advisers and managers to adapt and tailor practices to support individual needs:

'Adviser Flexibilities is more about an approach rather than what is offered; it's about not accepting the norm in terms of our guidance or rules when we offer certain things to people.'

(Manager, District 1, Wave1)

However, this understanding was not universal among staff in the districts under study. Some defined AF in a more limited way, as a specific set of practices. Most notable among these was the wider application of the Adviser Discretionary Fund (ADF). There was also some evidence of confusion among advisers and managers about exactly what AF was. For example:

'[We're] doing loads of things to help people get into work, whether you can label it flexibilities, I'm not sure.'

(Manager, District 1, Wave2)

Certain factors were thought to account for this lack of clarity. Firstly, some staff reported that the recession and the consequent increase in customer numbers had affected the practice of AF on the ground. One manager commented that AF had taken 'a bit of a back seat' due to the recession, but that three months later (at Wave 2) they had appointed new staff to take flexibility initiatives forward and were about to have a relaunch within the district to 'share good practice and encourage increased use of the flexibilities'. Another factor contributing to confusion was that guidance available on the AF, consisting primarily of information accessed through the intranet, was considered to be unclear. Finally, some initiatives that were initially considered to be AF were also being introduced in other districts. Because of this it was felt that what distinguished AF was being lost. For example, a number of staff commented that changes to provision at the New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) which occurred as part of Six Month Offer (6MO)/ Support for the Newly Unemployed (SNU), which included customer eligibility for ADF and Work Trials, had diluted the specificity of AF. Similarly, some staff also commented that the rollout of JRFND had, to an extent, superseded AF, as elements of flexibility were embedded within the new regime. As a consequence, one manager noted that the focus of AF in test districts had shifted away from JSA claimants towards other customer groups such as lone parents and people with health conditions:

'Because JRFND really picks up quite a lot of the things we were doing under flexibilities, we're not doing so much on the JSA side of it [now].'

(Manager, District 3, Wave2)

5.3 Flexibilities in practice

There were three main areas in which AF was applied in the districts: broadening the eligibility for provision, communication with customers and increased access to advisory support.

More flexible use of provision, according to customer need rather than the duration of a claim, was one key way in which AF were being used. Advisers spoke about being able to select appropriate measures for customers at any point in their claim, including financial support for training, self-employment support, funding to remove employment barriers through ADF, Work Trials and programme centre provision. Previously some of these services had only been available at a particular point in a customer's claim, usually at six months, thus prompting some managers to note that the availability of this provision earlier had resulted in a limited need for fast-tracking:

'We can offer them practically everything from day one, so there's no point to fast-track. You're actually losing six months of the advisory process by fast-tracking them, so it actually gives the customer more time with us if they need it.'

(Manager, District 2, Wave 2)

As noted above, some of these services have subsequently become available across all districts from claim start.

Financial support for training was one popular use of AF. The ADF was used to purchase short training which directly removed work barriers, such as obtaining Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) cards for construction work, Security Industry Authority (SIA) licences for security work, food hygiene courses or forklift truck licences, as well as for financing Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks if these were required for employment. Short courses could also be purchased through Low Value Procurement (LVP), and in one district AF gave access to funding from the Rapid Response Service (RRS)¹⁸ for people who had faced redundancy.

Another key means of applying flexibilities was through different means of communication with customers, such as by telephone, email or text message. This was felt to be particularly useful in rural offices where travel distances were burdensome. For example, some advisers reported making biweekly vacancy calls to customers, although this had subsequently been stopped due to staff shortages as a result of the economic downturn. In one district, a dedicated 'A Flex Adviser' was available, who was able to see customers flexibly without appointments, if they requested services. In another district, the Diary Administrative Support

¹⁸ Since 2002, the RRS has provided an early labour market intervention to industries considering large-scale redundancies. It helps workers facing redundancy by allowing early access to Jobcentre Plus and other job-related services such as referrals to specialist agencies, and on-site advice and information about job search, vacancies and training opportunities.

Officer (DASO) team took down details of customer requests for services and passed them to advisers who would subsequently ring the customer to arrange a follow-up appointment.

Another use of flexibilities was in the scheduling of appointments so that adviser time was channelled according to customer need. This could mean spending less time with customers who were felt not to need much support and conversely increasing the time spent with those who did. For example, in one district, the introduction of two caseloads for advisers at Stage 3 followed this principle: a group that needed further support and a job ready group that were considered able to go through the process without intensive support. In another instance, the duration of the Initial Stage 2 Review was cut for some people, while there was flexibility to see those who needed further support during multiple meetings, as one adviser explained:

'People...that need a career change, or I feel that they need more help or advice or something I will see...maybe the customer hasn't made up their mind what they want to do, and I feel I have to see them again, still talk to them again before I'm sure of what provider to refer them to, or what advice to give them.'

(Adviser, District 2, Wave2)

Flexibility was also applied to the structure of six weekly signing during Stages 2 and 3. For example, one Stage 3 adviser said that weekly signing could be delayed to accommodate customer activities, such as a training course. In another district, plans were underway to reform team working between advisers and FJR officers. The Fortnightly Jobsearch Review (FJR) team would be trained to become assistant advisers and co-located with the Personal Adviser (PA) team to encourage joint working. As one manager explained, the team would:

'Work as a seamless unit, to look at, to diagnose and then act on the customer needs, review the customers' activities that have been agreed towards addressing their needs and activities towards finding work.'

(Manager, District 1, Wave2)

5.3.1 Adviser views

AF was generally welcomed by advisers. They spoke about being better able to meet customer needs, primarily through flexibility in the use of provision, which therefore led to better outcomes. It was also felt that the relationship between adviser and customer was strengthened and that it encouraged customers to be more proactive in the back to work process:

'We can...get the customer involved, like we don't source training for them, we'll tell them...if they want something out of the ordinary or something specialised, "Well you go out and find it, come back to us with a case", like how much it is, how long it would take, things like that, and we would have a look into it. It gives the customer ownership.'

(Adviser, District 1, Wave 2)

Similarly, advisers commented that having greater flexibility enhanced their own job satisfaction and confidence in dealing with customers.

On the more negative side, while some of the flexibilities helped to ease time pressures on advisers, others could result in an increased administrative load, for example in compiling business cases to obtain funding. This was exacerbated by changes in the AF guidelines. For example, a shift to using LVP to fund training rather than ADF was noted by some advisers and the former was criticised for being administratively burdensome and time consuming. In some cases, courses had already started before funding had been agreed.

A similar issue was that some advisers felt they did not have sufficient time and space in their diaries to work more flexibly with customers. For example, although customer support needs might warrant a follow-up interview, an adviser wouldn't necessarily have diary space to accommodate it, at least in the short term.

The general view from staff was that they liked working flexibly and were dissatisfied when organisational issues conspired to prevent it from working effectively. However, a minority view, voiced by advisers in one office, was that too much flexibility was resulting in lack of consistency in the service received by customers. Related to this, some advisers in the same office felt that the increased access to provision such as ADF was being abused by customers who had heard about the money available and were inflating their claims for funding. It was felt that some advisers were not vigilant enough in guarding against this.

5.4 Factors influencing the practice of flexibility

Three factors were identified that enabled or constrained the use of flexibilities in practice: the confidence of advisory staff, management practice and resources.

5.4.1 Adviser confidence

All Jobcentre Plus staff concurred that building the confidence of advisers to use the new flexibilities was one of the key challenges in its implementation. Experience was important for successful use of the flexibilities and it was acknowledged that capabilities improved over time, as one manager noted:

'One of the problems, which I think we're getting over now, advisers have always wanted flexibility, but when you give it to them they're not always sure what to do with it. But I think they're really beginning to get their heads around it now.'

(Manager, District 1, Wave 2)

Some issues about adviser confidence remained, however, particularly in the districts where AF was newly implemented and among newer staff. It was said that former New Deal advisers who had just joined the JRFND regime were still 'finding their feet', as observed by two staff members:

'It is a huge culture change to them to now have to become extremely innovative and become sales people if you like...one or two of mine are struggling with that.'

(Manager, District 3, Wave 2)

'It was a bit of a change because everything was so regimented with New Deal, which is what I was doing before, so it was a bit of a change. But yeah, I'm quite happy with that.'

(Adviser, District 1, Wave 2)

5.4.2 Management practices

Another key issue in facilitating AF was leadership; management styles and practices were felt to have implications for adviser confidence. A number of managers talked about the necessity of empowering advisers to work flexibly, by giving them confidence and ownership over their own decisions:

'It's just giving them the license to go out and have those permission levels for themselves, and they are getting more confident in that way.'

(Manager, District 1, Wave 2)

Developing the advisers' confidence and motivation was achieved in a number of ways. Regular communication was important and one manager spoke of being located close to the advisers to 'be in the thick of it at all times'. Other practices included regular team meetings, case conferencing and peer support between advisers. In some districts, refresher meetings on AF had been held and some districts assigned adviser flexibility champions to spread good practice.

Questions were raised by some staff about the suitability of applying the current performance monitoring systems to AF. While some targets and benchmarks have been relaxed or removed, the Adviser Achievement Tool (AAT) is still used to log adviser activities and assess their performance. Some felt that this was contradictory to the flexibilities since it implied standardisation, for example in customer contact times.

Another related issue was managerial benchmarks which were perceived to set limits on the discretion that advisers could use. One manager commented about the constraints imposed by the Intervention Delivery Target (IDT) regime:

'We are hopeful that we will be outside of IDT next year, because as I say, we are currently starting to implement further flexibilities and if we had to batten down our approach to be within IDT it could be a problem for us.'

(Manager, District 1, Wave 2)

5.4.3 Resource constraints

A final issue that was commented on by nearly everyone interviewed was the degree to which resource constraints altered the practice of AF. This was a direct

consequence of the increase in customer numbers and associated time pressures brought on by the economic recession. Staff in the earlier test districts referred to a weakening of the flexibilities over time as the recession took hold. One manager commented that while the implementation had started out well, over time it had become very process-focused. At the Wave 2 interviews, three months later however, there was a sense that the worst of the pressures on staffing were over, given the availability of additional resources:

'When we're at a stage where our resourcing is where it should be and is more stable, and is better trained, then we will be able to develop even greater flexibility.'

(Manager, District 2, Wave 2)

Time constraints limited advisers' ability to schedule contact with customers more flexibly. As noted above, this was an important part of the application of AF, but there were severe constraints on it in practice. For example, advisers spoke of being unable to flexibly schedule interviews throughout Stages 2 and 3, as and when needed by customers, because of the constraints on their diary space:

'If you wanted to see somebody next week or very quickly, it's quite difficult to find a slot to see them, and it could be a month to six weeks.'

(Adviser, District 1, Wave 2)

Advisers also noted that it was difficult, due to time constraints, to follow up customer meetings with telephone conversations or to perform necessary administrative work, such as drawing up a business case for funding. Several staff, when asked how AF could be improved, said that a reduction in pre-set customer appointments would be most helpful:

'Because you have a full back-to-back diary...if they gave me a bit of breathing space, if you had a 10 minute telephone conference to make, then you could do it.'

(Adviser, District 2, Wave 2)

5.5 Summary

The AF was designed to provide Jobcentre Plus districts with greater flexibility in the organisation and delivery of services during Stages 1 to 3 of JRFND, with the aim of helping greater numbers of people into work. Districts developed a range of ways of using the flexibilities, some of which were subsequently introduced nationally to help Jobcentre Plus districts respond to the recession. However, this diminished the distinctiveness of the AF districts. This was reflected in understandings of flexibilities among jobcentre staff. There was some confusion evident among staff regarding exactly what AF was about. Staff also felt that the official guidance on AF lacked sufficient guidance for them and that resource pressures stemming from the recession had limited the effectiveness of its implementation. This seems to reflect the advisers struggle with the AF design concept of having less structured

guidance, which generally required more decision making by advisers, and hence reflects the difficulty they had with the cultural change needed with AF and also the wider flexible JRFND. Staff would have liked more practical guidance on how to make their decisions.

There were three main ways in which flexibilities were being implemented:

- More flexible use of service provision, according to customer need rather than duration of claim, including financial support for training, self-employment support, funding to remove employment barriers through ADF, Work Trials and programme centre provision.
- Different means of communication with customers such as telephone, email or text messaging in place of face-to-face interviews.
- Flexible scheduling of appointments so that adviser time was channelled according to customer need, for example, reducing the time spent with those who did not need additional support and increasing the amount of contact with those who did. One district was also developing more effective partnership working between PAs and FJR staff to provide more seamless support for customers.

Staff were mostly positive about the enhanced flexibility in AF districts. Advisers felt that it enabled them to better meet customer needs, it facilitated the customer taking ownership of their journey back to work, and enhanced their own job satisfaction. However, there were also complaints that AF could increase administrative workload, for example in follow-up communications with customers outside meetings or making a business case for additional funding.

Three factors were thought to enable or constrain the use of flexibilities in practice: the confidence of advisory staff; management practice; and resources. Management and support were important in empowering advisers to use the new flexibilities. This could be facilitated through practices such as regular team meetings, case conferencing and peer support. Limited resources were a key constraining factor and these were intensified by the recession. Having a full diary of appointments limited advisers' ability to schedule communications with customers more flexibly or complete the administrative tasks required to access provision for customers.

6 Support for the Newly Unemployed

Support for the Newly Unemployed (SNU) was rolled out nationally in April 2009 in response to the economic downturn. It offers supplementary job preparation and job search services from day one of a claim. The package of support is designed for people who have recently become unemployed and have little experience of modern job search tools. Specialist help is also available for professionals/executives. This chapter begins with an overview of how SNU was introduced to customers. Following this, the four SNU services are discussed in turn: the two services delivered by Jobcentre Plus – group job-search sessions and one-to-one support – and the two services delivered by external providers – general job-search support and support for professionals and executives.

6.1 Offer of support

From the outset, SNU was widely welcomed by Jobcentre Plus staff and the extra support was seen to fill gaps in the services previously available to new customers. Advisers felt they had more to offer to meet the needs of the wider range of customers they were encountering as a result of the recession – particularly those with little experience of unemployment and those with a professional background.

The decision to offer the extra support was primarily based on information collected during the New Jobseeker Interview (NJI). Advisers asked customers whether they had a CV that they were happy with (although they did not routinely review customer CVs as part of the NJI interview), and about their experiences with job search. If they were judged to be familiar with ‘modern job-search techniques’ – especially the internet and employment agencies – SNU services were not necessarily mentioned. One adviser described his assessment approach as follows:

'From talking to them, whether they're literate, whether they speak good English and whether they have had a recent history of work...the first thing I ask is do they have the internet because that's such an important tool and if they're familiar with it, I regard that as a big plus. If they've got a CV I would say they're reasonably articulate. They may not need this basic job search seminar.'

(Advisor, District 7, Wave 1)

Many offices also used a Jobsearch Questionnaire to help frame discussions about customer needs. Normally completed immediately prior to the interview, the questionnaire asks customers about their skills and qualifications, knowledge of local vacancies, their job search skills and any help or support they felt they needed. Staff feedback on the questionnaire was mixed, however. Some advisers felt the questionnaire was unreliable because customers tended to overestimate their skills. Many were comfortable with using their discretion over whether or not to raise the option of SNU services and did not feel the need for the questionnaire.

The decision to offer Support for Professionals and Executives was slightly different. By Wave 2, once advisers were more confident and the provision was in place (see Section 5.3.2), they tended to offer this support to all customers who they judged to fall within these occupational categories and let the customer decide whether to make use of the service. In the early days, advisers often said that they did not know how to assess who counted as a 'professional' or 'executive' and appeared to rely on arbitrary rules of thumb, such as 'people who are earning in excess of forty thousand who had managerial responsibility'. By Wave 2, they were more systematic in asking customers for their skills and qualifications, and decided whether they were professionals on that basis.

There were mixed views about whether the introduction of SNU had encouraged new claims advisers to change the way in which they dealt with customers. Some advisers reported they were already accustomed to assessing customers' needs for extra support, such as help with CVs, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) or basic skills. On the other hand, some managers thought that SNU did require advisers to take a more customer-focused, diagnostic approach. Some of those managers felt that newer advisers tended to be less confident than some of the more experienced advisers in this type of interaction with customers:

'...rather than being rather robotic about saying, "Just pick your form, fill this in here", it's actually engaging with the customer and saying, "Well, what have you been doing to look for work?"...it actually makes it a much more interesting job for the adviser, but there is some stuff that isn't their forte...'

(Manager, District 5, Wave 1)

Jobcentre Plus staff expressed concern about low take-up of SNU services. This was attributed to a number of factors. First, not all the provision was available at the start of implementation. This was especially the case for support for professionals

and executives (see Section 5.3.2). The entirely voluntary nature of the services was also thought to be significant. In particular, customers who agreed to attend group job-search sessions did not always do so, despite often receiving reminder letters and telephone calls. There was also a perception that new customers were not always receptive to suggestions for help, for instance because they were focused on the mechanics of their benefit claim, or because they were confident that they would find work quickly. Consequently, some staff felt that the offer of services needed to be reinforced later in the claim. To address this, one office had instructed Fortnightly Jobsearch Review (FJR) staff to remind customers about SNU services at the four-week and eight-week FJRs, while some offices were re-introducing SNU services to customers at the 13-Week Interview.

Time was also a major issue in the NJI. Advisers felt hard pressed to cover all of the required content, including SNU, within the allotted 40 minutes. It was also felt that information about the SNU services might be lost among all the other material relayed to customers.

Because customers do not generally attend a second meeting with an adviser between the NJI and the 13 week interview, new claims advisers received little feedback on the services to which they had referred customers.

6.2 Jobcentre Plus provision

6.2.1 Group session on job search techniques

The organisation of the group session on modern job-search techniques had improved between the first and second waves of fieldwork. More sessions were taking place in all districts. The main obstacle to delivering the service had been the lack of office space and staff capacity, although one small office was not running sessions because, according to staff, not enough customers were interested. By three months later, at Wave 2 research, the majority of districts were running the group sessions in at least one of their offices. One district was not running the sessions because of perceived overlap with Back to Work Sessions (BtWS), combined with space limitations, and in two other districts, group sessions were taking place in only one of the offices visited. In one district, the session was being delivered externally due to a lack of space, although this problem had been recently addressed.

The frequency of the sessions varied across offices. While some offices ran the sessions twice a week, others ran them only twice a month. This was partly connected with attendance levels across districts. While some observed group sessions had around five to eight participants, others had as few as one. Some offices were more isolated than others, making access to these sessions more difficult. Overall, most group sessions were said to attract approximately 50 per cent of referrals. Attendance improved over time and the number of sessions held had increased. Some offices switched from fortnightly or monthly to weekly sessions and other offices moved from sporadic to fortnightly sessions.

Some districts had struggled to find suitable staff to facilitate the sessions. In some cases, the sessions were delivered by the same staff as those delivering the BtWS. However, not all facilitators had previous experience or had received training to run the sessions. In some offices, the training was delivered by the Advisory Services Manager (ASM). Those who had received training were generally satisfied with this. Overall, facilitators said their confidence had increased since they had first delivered the sessions. However, the quality of the sessions observed during the Wave 2 fieldwork varied greatly: while some facilitators were 'natural presenters', others made basic mistakes, such as talking to the slides rather than the customers, reading lifelessly from the script, and making no effort to involve the customers in a discussion.

In the group sessions, customers received guidance on modern job-search techniques. This included an overview of the current local job market, tools for job-searching, tips on completing job applications and writing cover letters, and a summary of the support available from Jobcentre Plus. Presenters would often warn customers at the beginning of the session that some of the content was very basic, as indeed it was: tips included not swearing or lying during interviews, for instance. The group sessions lasted one hour and were facilitated by one or two presenters. In some offices these sessions took place in seated rows and in others around a table.

There were varied methods of delivering the group sessions. In some offices, the session was delivered by a Labour Market Recruitment Adviser (LMRA) and in others by a personal adviser, Customer Engagement Team Leader (CETL) or ASM. Staff felt that it was helpful to involve the LMRAs because of their local labour market knowledge. It was also felt to be helpful to have a mix of different types of staff to answer different queries from customers. Joint facilitation of the session with an external provider took place in some districts. In these sessions, customers could immediately request a referral to the provider based on the information collected during the sessions. For example, in one district, sessions were run by Next Step together with an adviser from Jobcentre Plus. In this district, the LMRA and external facilitators were very experienced and thought to deliver a successful session with positive feedback from customers.

Staff reported that customer feedback on the group sessions was generally positive, especially regarding the final part about support services available from Jobcentre Plus. It was felt that customers valued the extra information, even if not all of it was useful for everyone:

'They're usually very positive about what they've been told and that sort of thing. And it's quite informal as well, I think some of them might be thinking that I'm going to be sitting in a roomful of people and it's going to be really bad, but we do it in smallish groups in any case and it's quite informal and we encourage people to ask questions and that sort of thing.'

(Group Facilitator, District 9, Wave 2)

From our own observations and conversations with customers, it can be said that feedback on group sessions was mixed. While some customers criticised it for being too basic, some found the information useful, and others simply welcomed the fact that Jobcentre Plus staff were making a visible effort to help them, which several customers contrasted with their experience of claiming benefits in the past.

6.2.2 One-to-one support

One-to-one support was not taking place in all the offices visited. While during Wave 2 research more offices were delivering one-to-one support than at Wave 1, this service still had a lower take-up than the job-search group sessions. Part of the reason for this is that even though the policy intention was for all strands of the SNU to be offered from Day One, in practice many offices were only offering customers one-to-one support sessions at the end of a group session. There was, however, at least one district where newly employed customers were being offered both types of support at the NJI.

Staff felt that it was helpful to offer this type of support but were concerned about the lack of capacity to cope with the volume of customers:

'We don't have the facility for it. We're already, it's a struggle, well, maybe that's not the right way to put it, it's very tight for us to actually even deliver our Back-to-Work sessions at the moment, because of accommodation. If you were trying to add in one-to-one sessions as well, it's just not feasible at the moment.'

(Manager, District 6, Wave 2)

It was also pointed out that staff did not receive specific training to deliver this support, and some were not sure of its purpose. Also, several members of staff felt that not much could be achieved in a 20-minute interview slot. In one office, the one-to-one sessions were shorter than 20 minutes and consisted mainly of setting up referrals with providers immediately after the group session. In this office, the one-to-one support only took place if there was a provider co-running the group session. When the provider was absent, the one-to-one support would not be offered.

Overall, take up of this one-to-one support service was low. Some members of staff thought that this was because the group-session facilitators were not 'selling' it. In one office, approximately half of the customers attending group sessions would request a one-to-one follow up.

'It seems to me that we're getting a fifty per cent attendance rate for the Group Job Search Seminars anyway and then fifty per cent of those people are then staying behind for the One to One.'

(Manager, District 7, Wave 2)

Where one-to-one sessions were held, advisers spoke of showing customers how to make online job applications or use internet search tools such as Google. They also showed customers how to use employment websites or offered them help with their CV.

Feedback on the one-to-one sessions was mixed. In the office where one-to-one sessions were used to refer customers to external provision immediately after a group session, customers saw this as an inconvenience – a hoop to jump in order to get the help they wanted from a provider. However, advisers in other offices who had given one-to-one support to customers felt that customers had welcomed the extra help.

6.3 Contracted provision

6.3.1 General job search support

General job search support comprised referral to an external agency for a one day session offering generic advice and coaching on work preparation and job search techniques. These services tended to be delivered by providers that advisers were already familiar with. In most cases, the providers were already offering Programme Centre provision. Advisers were therefore used to contacting these providers and knew what kinds of services they offered. As a result, they felt comfortable referring customers there.

Customers were offered the one-day job-search support if advisers saw them as lacking the most basic job-search skills. Some staff felt that this provision was particularly beneficial because it provided a gateway for customers to the rest of the Programme Centre provision. For example, if it was identified at the one-day session that a customer needed further support, the provider could invite them to enrol at the Programme Centre too:

'If they don't have a CV, if they're not familiar with using computer systems ...the more I'm inclined to refer them to the one-day provision, because on the back of that one-day provision the training provider can then convert them onto the programme centre provision without having to use us as a go-between.'

(Adviser, District 9, Wave 2)

Staff feedback on the general job-search support sessions was mixed. During both waves of fieldwork, clear discrepancies within districts were noted. Within the same district, contracted provision could be popular in one office but not in another. The accessibility of the external provider was a key factor in determining its popularity. In rural areas, it was often hard to access providers by public transport:

'We have to refer, obviously, to the likes of external providers who support us, who are not local, of course, so there's a bit of travelling involved, and that always raises a problem, as I say, of getting people to attend...'

(Manager, District 6, Wave 2)

In these cases, it was suggested that if providers ran the support from the Jobcentre Plus office this could help attendance. It was also felt that low attendance could be related to advisers being unsure as to how to sell the provision because they did not know enough about it. In some offices, newer advisers were starting to visit the providers to get a feel for what they were offering.

No customers were offered a one-day session at the NJIs observed by researchers. However, staff said that customers who were offered the sessions were generally receptive to the idea. The fact that the sessions were for one day only (unlike longer-term programme-centre provision) was said to be popular with some customers:

'When we see them at the new claim stage, I think people want a quick, rough and ready fix, rather than committing at least six hours to the programme centre.'

(Wave 2 District 8 NJI Advisor)

6.3.2 Support for professionals and executives

During the first wave of fieldwork, advisers were hesitant in offering this service to customers. A common view was that professional customers rarely needed help because they were highly motivated and already knew how to look for a job. Advisers lacked confidence in knowing who to offer services to. This was exacerbated by the fact that they were also unclear about the nature of the service (some thought it was simply a matter of putting customers in touch with a recruitment agency), knew little about the providers, found the catalogue difficult to use and when they did try to refer customers often found that the contracts had not yet been finalised.

By three months later in the second wave of fieldwork, advisers were far more confident in dealing with this group of customers and selling the service to them. They tended to offer the service to all customers within this occupational category and let the customer decide if it was appropriate. Most contracts with providers were also finally in place after significant early delays. Advisers said that they had built relationships with providers and that the number of referrals had increased dramatically. In the early months of implementation, advisers had struggled with the database of providers, which was described as 'impossible to use'. However this had been improved by Wave 2:

'We've just recently had a new professional and executive database out, an amended one, which hopefully may work better, but they only literally came out last week.'

(Wave 2 district 3 DM)

Despite improvements, however, there remained ongoing difficulties for advisers in using the database of providers. In some districts, advisers were instead relying on links they had developed with a few local providers. In addition, staff in some districts complained about a lack of professional providers in their area.

Feedback on support for professionals and executives varied between offices. In some offices, advisers felt that the providers were better than the general job-search support providers. For example, one adviser commented that the professional providers 'always pick up the phone'. In other offices the opposite was said. Advisers also reported that the referral process was not uniform and could be time-consuming and complicated. Sometimes there was said to be insufficient time during the NJI to complete the referral. Advisers praised providers for visiting Jobcentre Plus offices to promote their services and answer queries:

'We have actually had people come here and tell us what it's about and that sort of thing, that's the local professional and executive one, he came in our services, he came and gave us talks and they were able to ask him questions and that sort of thing, so I think that helps if you can do it that way.'

(Wave 2 district 5 ASM 2)

Advisers noted that most of the professional and executive provision was generic (to all professionals), and some felt that there was a lack of industry-specific support at this level.

Customer feedback was limited, but advisers reported the feedback they did receive was mostly positive.

6.4 Summary

SNU was well received by Jobcentre Plus staff, who welcomed having the additional services to offer new customers. Despite this, customer receptivity to taking up the SNU services remained lower than expected. Some Jobcentre Plus staff believed that it was unrealistic to expect newly unemployed customers to respond to an immediate offer of support, either because they had more pressing financial concerns or because they were confident that they would find a job quickly. Staff also pointed to constraints such as lack of resources (particularly desk space and staff) and a lack of time during the NJI to sell the SNU services properly.

The different component provisions of the SNU offer had been implemented at different speeds and to varying degrees. The one-hour Group Sessions delivered by Jobcentre Plus had improved by the time of the second wave of fieldwork and more were taking place. The One-to-One support had lower take up than the group sessions in the offices visited, and in some cases it was only offered after a group session. Customer reactions to the group sessions were mixed. Some welcomed the extra support to help them back to work; others felt that the information provided was too basic.

After a slow start, the support for professionals and executives had become more established and was popular among staff and customers. In the early days the national database was criticised for not being user-friendly although an improved version had been introduced by Wave 2. However, there remained some problems with accessing providers in some offices at Wave 2.

The one-day General Job Search support tended to be arranged with existing providers who offered the generic 'programme centre' support. This helped with the implementation as systems were already in place. Feedback from staff was mixed though, and some advisers felt that the generic service was less effective than that for professionals and executives.

7 The Six Month Offer

Like Support for the Newly Unemployed (SNU), the Six Month Offer (6MO) was also rolled out nationally in April 2009 in response to the economic downturn. It comprises additional support for jobseekers who reach six months of their claim. There are four main strands to the 6MO, available at the discretion of a personal adviser based on an assessment of the customer's individual needs and their barriers in returning to work. These comprise: (1) recruitment subsidy, (2) self employment, (3) volunteering and (4) work-focused training. In addition, extra advisory support from a Jobcentre Plus personal adviser is available for customers in phase 2 areas who do not receive this additional support via Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND) stage 3. This additional advisory support is not a separate strand of the 6MO, but underpins the four strands since it is through advisory meetings that customers receive information about and are referred to the services.

This chapter describes how the 6MO is presented to customers, what Jobcentre Plus staff think about it and how customers are reacting to it. Each of the strands of the 6MO is discussed in turn.

7.1 Offer of services

The majority of staff commented on the rapid introduction of the package of services that constitute the 6MO and felt that this negatively influenced its implementation, with limited staff preparation and services not available. (Refer to Chapter 2 for more detail on general implementation issues.) Three months later, by the second wave of fieldwork, these concerns had receded, but certain implementation issues remained – these are discussed below in relation to each strand of the 6MO.

About five months after the April 2009 introduction, by Wave 2, most advisers and managers were familiar with the four strands of the 6MO and readily discussed them all with the researchers. A few members of staff were still vague or confused though – for instance, several advisers mixed up the training available under the 6MO with other available training.

There were different practices among advisers in terms of presenting the offers to the customers. In some cases, customers attending a 26-week Restart Interview (JRFND Stage 3) meeting were introduced to all four of the offers: the self-marketing voucher, work-focused training, self-employment support and volunteering. These advisers briefly outlined each option and went into more detail if customers showed an interest in any of them. Some advisers felt that it was important to present all four options to customers, because this was usually their first meeting with the customer and it was not always possible to tell from the Jobseekers Agreement (JSAG) what the customer might be interested in:

'I think you need to run through everything, but then you need to work with a client to pick out what is relevant to them because if you don't, then they surprise you.'

(Personal Adviser, District 6, Wave 2)

However, in other cases, the self-marketing voucher was presented to everyone, but information about the three remaining options was not necessarily relayed. It was usually the self-employment and volunteering options that were not relayed to customers, as some advisers felt that these options were inappropriate for certain customers – for instance customers who were looking for routine manual jobs such as factory work or labouring, or customers with very limited English. Some advisers also stated that a 40-minute meeting did not provide sufficient time to cover all the options in detail. Over time, however, advisers reported they were able to discuss other elements of the 6MO at subsequent meetings with customers.

In one of the offices included in the study, the 26-week Restart Interview meeting was held in a group format. In this case, all attendees were told about all four of the options.

Although staff referred to the 'Six Month Offer', they rarely used this terminology with customers. Instead, some said the services were brought in as a response to the economic downturn, while others told the customer that, as he or she had been unemployed for six months, there was some extra support available. Observations of 26-week Restart Interviews indicated that advisers in all districts were making it clear to customers that the four substantive elements of the 6MO were voluntary – in other words, customers could choose whether or not to take them up – and that customers understood this. However, it was reported in one Phase 1 district that customers could be required to undertake training or volunteering as one of their JRFND Stage 3 mandatory activities (refer to Section 3.3.2).

Managers' opinions of their advisers' ability to deliver the 6MO varied. Some thought that helping customers choose from a range of voluntary options required advisers to adopt a new, more diagnostic approach, and that some advisers were finding it hard to adapt. In contrast, other managers felt that their advisers were handling the 6MO well, pointing out that the staff dealing with 26-week Restart Interview customers tended to be the more experienced advisers and were confident about making referrals to a range of provision.

Advisers themselves were mostly positive about the 6MO and said that they were comfortable with the level of discretion they had over how to present it. Many felt that they had more to offer customers than in the past, and welcomed the fact that the options were voluntary:

'The problem with New Deal before was that we were often telling our clients they had to go on this course, they had to do this and if they didn't they would stop their benefits. Now, Stage Three, the way it's presented is a lot more about what we can offer the customer and that helps immediately to create a friendlier tone with the client, it's a lot less aggressive.'

(Personal Adviser, District 5, Wave 1)

Some experienced advisers were more sceptical though. They argued that the four strands of the 6MO already existed in other guises and pointed out that two of them – the self-marketing voucher and self-employment support – were less generous than the previous New Deal versions¹⁹. Some felt that the 6MO should be revised to include an element of compulsion – for instance, by requiring customers to choose one item from a menu of options.

Several advisers felt that too much emphasis was being placed on the 6MO at the expense of other types of provision which might help customers. For instance, one adviser felt that some of her 26-week Restart Interview customers might benefit from the support for professionals and executives available under SNU, but had been instructed not to refer them to this because of referral targets for the 6MO services. Several advisers thought it would be helpful if parts of the 6MO were available to customers before they reached the 26-week Restart Interview point.

As noted above, advisers did not always explain to customers that the various strands of the 6MO were part of a package of measures, and from the customer's point of view they did not naturally appear that way. The strands of the 6MO are so different from each other that it makes little sense to discuss customer reactions to the 6MO as a whole. However, one point made by several advisers is that customers often did not react immediately during the 26-week Restart Interview meeting. Advisers thought that it took time for customers to digest the information and decide what to do. Subsequent meetings (see below) were considered useful to follow this up.

7.2 Additional advisory support

Underpinning the 6MO, all customers who reach 26 weeks of a claim are provided with additional advisory support of up to three hours. Although this applies to all districts, in phase 1 districts it duplicates the additional advisory support (caseloading) already provided under Stage 3 of JRFND, and so was not

¹⁹ Although these were only available after six months through the New Deal for 18-24 year olds; customers aged over 25 did not enter the New Deal until 18 months of their claim.

implemented separately in these districts. (Further information on caseloading as part of Stage 3 of JRFND is provided in Chapter 3.)

The additional advisory support was slow to be implemented in Phase 2 districts where customers were not being caseloaded as part of JRFND. While the additional support is intended to be mandatory for all customers, in some districts, two months after the April introduction, advisers appeared to regard it as voluntary and only made appointments for customers if it was necessary to help with arranging services or if the customer requested an interview. Another reason for the limited use of advisory support was customer volumes. In some offices, advisers said their diaries were so full that it was difficult to fit in the additional interviews. While things had improved by three months later, there were still offices where additional meetings were only just getting off the ground. One office reported backlogs which meant that customers had to wait six weeks for a meeting. One adviser tried to offer support by asking customers to come in outside of her scheduled appointments. In another office, advisers also reported finding it difficult to record additional meetings on the computer system.

There was also some confusion among staff over the amount of time available for additional advisory support²⁰. Some advisers thought that the rules provided for an average of three hours over the six month period, meaning that some customers might get more than this and others less. Other advisers thought that each customer was allowed up to three hours. In some offices, the default option was to recall customers for a 30-minute interview once per month for six months, unless advisers had a particular reason for departing from this pattern. Due to large caseloads, staff in one Phase 2 district reported that the amount of time available had been reduced from three to one-and-a-half hours.

Aside from the logistics of arranging additional interviews, most advisers and managers were positive about additional advisory support and the principle of caseloading. This is considered by advisers to be useful in building a bond between customer and the adviser, and regular contact is considered a generally positive influence in customers' lives.

7.3 Self-marketing voucher

The self-marketing voucher was the first strand of the 6MO to be fully implemented in all study districts. Initially, there was some confusion about how the voucher worked, and some offices were handing out photocopies because they had run out of vouchers, but most of these problems had been resolved by the time of the Wave 2 fieldwork. Nearly all eligible customers were presented with the voucher. Stock customers received a voucher by post or at Fortnightly Jobsearch Reviews (FJR) meetings. The main exception to this was that vouchers were not given to customers who were eligible for New Deal employment subsidies in Phase 2 districts.

²⁰ The policy states that 3.5 hours are available in Phase 1 areas as part of JRFND stage 3, and at least 3 hours are available in Phase 2 areas.

Advisers generally explained to customers how the voucher worked and encouraged them to mention it to prospective employers. Advisers sometimes suggested that customers highlight on their CV the fact that they had this voucher, but did not offer any advice on how they might phrase this. In one Phase 1 office, the voucher was marketed together with Work Trials, to be used as an extra incentive for employers to take on the jobseeker.

Advisers were generally enthusiastic about the voucher. They found it straightforward to administer and thought that it could make a real difference to some customers: several gave examples of customers who they thought had been offered jobs with the help of the voucher. There was a widespread view that the voucher was most useful for customers looking for low-paid work with small businesses. Several advisers, however, pointed out that some customers were so lacking in confidence that they would find it difficult to tell employers about the voucher.

Employer awareness of the voucher was felt to be low and there was some evidence to suggest that jobcentre staff were addressing this. Managers in two districts reported that employers were being told about the voucher when they registered vacancies with Jobcentre Plus.

The observations and brief customer interviews suggested that most customers were mildly positive about the voucher. A few were enthusiastic, while one customer disliked it, finding it 'embarrassing'. Advisers confirmed that, in their experience, the voucher tended to be fairly well received by customers. They reported that a minority of customers were negative about it, for various reasons: some customers felt that there was a stigma attached to it; customers with professional backgrounds were sometimes dismissive of the voucher because they thought that the face value (£500) would be unlikely to sway an employer in the sorts of jobs they were interested in; and some customers were disappointed when they realised that the subsidy was for the employer rather than themselves. One adviser warned that customers' initial reactions to the voucher could be deceptive, and that many of those who appeared positive when given the voucher did not go on to use it.

7.4 Work-focused training

Training was one of the most popular, yet also problematic, strands of the 6MO. It was the last service to be implemented, partly due to delays in getting contracts finalised between the relevant training authorities and local colleges. This was particularly the case in Wales, where, at the time of the Wave 2 fieldwork, five months after the April 2009 introduction, 6MO training was still not available.

In Scotland, work-focused training was being delivered through the existing Training for Work programme rather than through free-standing college courses, and was available to customers who had been unemployed for just 13 weeks, rather than six months as in England and Wales. The extent to which this provision

had been implemented was unclear, however, many advisers in the Scotland study district said that they had seen no changes in training availability as a result of the 6MO.

There were delivery issues in most districts. Some advisers were confused about the difference between the training available under the 6MO and other kinds of training, such as courses paid for by the European Social Fund. This problem may have been aggravated by the fact that the names used by staff to refer to the training available under the 6MO (such as 'work-focused training', 'pre-vocational training' and 'pre-employment training') were similar to those of existing training schemes, some of which were provided by the same colleges.

Advisers in several districts reported long delays in getting customers onto courses. There were also communication problems between Jobcentre Plus and the colleges in some districts. For instance, advisers in one Phase 2 district reported that it was difficult to speak to anyone at the local college by telephone and that they had received conflicting messages about how to refer customers, either by phone or by sending a form. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that contracts with the colleges were held with the Learning and Skills Council rather than Jobcentre Plus and, as a result, it was felt that colleges were less responsive to Jobcentre Plus's concerns.

There was substantial variation between the districts concerning the range of courses available under the 6MO, reflecting the fact that courses were negotiated locally between the colleges and Jobcentre Plus and were intended to reflect employer demand for skills at the local level. In one district customers were able to choose from a wide menu of courses – from childcare and gas fitting to teaching and IT – and in some cases were able to build their own courses from a range of modules, such as a Health and Social Care course including options in Food Safety and Paediatric First Aid. In contrast, the training in another district was limited to pre-designed courses in core subjects such as Retail, Care and HGV driving.

Advisers were keen on the principle of training and, after some initial suspicions about what it would involve, were generally positive about what colleges were delivering. On the whole, they welcomed the high level of customer interest in training and thought that the courses were an improvement on the types of training which had been available before – especially the mandatory New Deal training courses. Several advisers gave examples of customers who had received job offers as a result of the training.

However, advisers in some districts felt that the range of courses on offer was narrower than they had hoped. Some were disappointed that the training did not include the full college prospectus. There was also a general perception that training was not adequate to meet the needs of people neither with more advanced qualifications nor for those who needed to update their technical credentials:

'You need to be realistic with what jobs are available on the market and things like that, I know that, ...but when you've got plumbers and electricians come in that need to get a specific qualification that they've never needed to have because when they started they didn't need this qualification, and now everybody wants it, I feel the training should be a bit widened, to be honest.'

(Personal Adviser, District 8, Wave 2)

Advisers in all districts reported that customers were extremely interested in training, and many said that this had quickly become the most popular strand of the 6MO. According to advisers, feedback from customers who had attended courses was generally positive.

7.5 Self-employment support

Similar to the self-marketing voucher, the implementation of self-employment support was perceived as straightforward. Staff suggested that one reason for this was that Jobcentre Plus already had a strong relationship with the self-employment advisory agency who continued to offer similar support under an existing contract.

Advisers had mixed views about the usefulness of this option. Some made comments such as, 'Who wants to be self-employed in a recession?', while others thought that a recession, when jobs were scarce, was the right time to promote self-employment. Self-employment support was considered suitable for trades that did not require much capital to establish, such as taxi-drivers, gardeners and handymen, which could be funded directly by the customer with assistance from the Adviser Discretion Fund (ADF).

The main issue with self-employment support related to the referral procedure and how customer starts were recorded. Customers were expected to contact the provider themselves rather than being referred directly by Jobcentre Plus. Advisers did not necessarily know if contact had been made and offices were using staff resources to follow up customers to find out if they had contacted the provider. Consequently, some offices were recording very few starts.

There was little evidence collected about the Self-Employment Credit element of the 6MO. At the time of fieldwork, few customers had progressed from self-employment advice to trading. If they did, this could sometimes be a lengthy process requiring several meetings with a Jobcentre Plus adviser. Some advisers compared the Self-Employment Credit unfavourably with the New Deal Self-Employed option, which offered a higher level of financial support for a longer period and did not require customers to sign off Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). These advisers thought that signing off to receive the self-employment credit was an unattractive prospect and introduced a risk to customers. Advisers who had seen customers sign off to receive the Credit were more enthusiastic. One adviser, in a Phase 1 district, who had considerable success with this option, believed that it had huge potential for customers who may already be doing cash-in-hand work and could be persuaded to move into formal self-employment.

Fewer customers were perceived to be interested in self-employment than in the self-marketing voucher or training, as might be expected. Advisers were largely unaware of feedback from customers who had gone on to receive the support.

7.6 Volunteering

Implementation of the volunteering option was late due to delays to district level subcontracts²¹. The volunteer brokers generally did not have an existing relationship with Jobcentre Plus and because of this lack of familiarity, some advisers expressed a preference to refer their customers to a similar agency, but whom they knew and trusted.

Most advisers supported the principle of volunteering, often citing the many potential benefits to the volunteer: doing something worthwhile, getting into the habit of working again, getting a reference, learning new skills, and so forth. A few were rather negative and sympathised with customers who, they said, viewed volunteering as 'working for nothing'.

Staff who had experience of the New Deal felt that volunteering was not a new initiative and the main difference was in the bureaucracy surrounding it. This did seem to be complex in some cases, involving a referral to a central broker, who would then refer the matter to a local volunteer centre, who would then look for opportunities with local organisations and try to arrange a placement. Volunteer placements in most districts were with third sector organisations, although not necessarily in charity shops. It was rare for customers to be placed in private or public sector industries. Staff reported disappointment with the quality of the provision, claiming the brokers were not able to offer a broad enough range of placements or they could not cope with the volume of referrals.

Staff reported low take up of volunteering. Some thought that this was because customers who were inclined to do voluntary work were usually already doing it, while other customers were resistant to the idea of unpaid work. Advisers in the study districts had not received any feedback to report about customer's experiences of a volunteer placement. Several said that they had referred customers onto the provision and were still waiting to find out what had been arranged.

7.7 Summary

On the whole, the 6MO was welcomed by Jobcentre Plus staff. Many advisers liked the fact that the options were voluntary and felt that this helped to create a positive relationship with customers. Advisers generally felt confident about presenting the 6MO and discussing with customers what might help them. There were different practices among advisers in presenting the offers. Some presented

²¹ DWP holds national contracts with volunteering providers but services are delivered by subcontracted providers at the district level.

all options to all customers, others tailored the information according to perceived customer interest and need. In practice, the self-marketing voucher was presented systematically to all eligible customers and training (where available) was usually mentioned. However, self-employment support and volunteering were sometimes not mentioned if the adviser felt that they were inappropriate for the customer concerned.

The principle of additional advisory support, which underpinned the 6MO services, was popular with Jobcentre Plus staff, although it was slow to be implemented, mainly due to large customer caseloads.

The most straightforward options, and the first to be implemented, were the self-marketing voucher and self-employment support. The voucher was popular with advisers and was received positively by most customers, although some advisers doubted whether customers were applying it to the job search. Self-employment support attracted some customer interest, but at the time of the fieldwork few advisers had experience of customers who had started the service. Several felt that a greater monetary incentive was needed to persuade customers to take up this option.

Training was popular with customers, but was slow to be introduced, and in some districts there were communication problems between Jobcentre Plus and the colleges providing the courses. The range of courses varied widely between study districts, reflecting the fact that it was designed to meet local employer needs. However, in some districts advisers also identified gaps in meeting training needs.

The volunteering option was widely supported by staff but had not proved as popular as many had hoped. In some districts there had been problems with delivery and the referral process was seen to be unnecessarily complex.

Part II: JRFND Stage 1 Customer Survey

8 JRFND Stage 1 Customer Survey

Part II reports on the first in a series of quantitative surveys among customers experiencing different stages of Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND) support in Phase 1 and those experiencing the comparable stage of claiming in Phase 2 areas. This report will be followed by a longitudinal report exploring the longer term outcomes for the same cohort of customers followed up one year after their initial interview.

The overarching aims of the JRFND programme of survey research among customers are;

- To assess customer experience and outcomes:
 - Customer preferences on programme options.
 - Customer responses to a stronger framework of rights and responsibilities (progressive conditionality).
 - The influence of employment targets.
- To identify variation/patterns in delivery according to customer type:
 - Extent to which the approach is personalised, responsive and innovative.
 - How the barriers of those 'harder to help' are dealt with, and whether there is any evidence of 'parking'.
- To determine which elements of JRFND help customers progress into work.
 - How delivery and support affect customer behaviour.
 - What elements work best and why.
 - Whether the employment outcome is sustainable or not.

The specific research objective of the Stage 1 customer survey is to discuss, as far as possible, findings relating to the above aims, comparing the experiences, views and outcomes of customers who had begun a Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claim in Phase 1 JRFND areas with those of customers in Phase 2 comparison areas who started a JSA claim at the same time.

This report focuses solely on JRFND Stage 1 looking at the experiences, views and outcomes of customers who started a JSA claim between 11 and 13 weeks prior to the survey fieldwork and comparing them to equivalent Phase 2 customers and their experiences, views and outcomes.

Due to the economic climate, further measures were launched at the same time as the JRFND programme was introduced to Phase 1 areas in April 2009. Support for the Newly Unemployed (SNU) is available to customers in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 from the point they begin their claim, and where relevant this is discussed throughout the report. Furthermore, once customers have claimed for six months consecutively they become eligible for the voluntary Six Month Offer (6MO) (also available across both Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas). As this report only focuses on the first three months of JSA signing there is no coverage of the Six Month Offer; quantitative research among customers who have been claiming for six months consecutively will be conducted early in 2010.

8.1 Methodology

This is the first in a series of quantitative surveys among customers as outlined above.

Customers were eligible for the Stage 1/comparison survey if they had started a JSA claim in mid to late June 2009 (they had an NJI book date on or after 15th June and attended an NJI between 15th and 30th June 2009). The survey sample was drawn from the population of all eligible customers using a stratified sampling approach (stratified by JRFND phase and age), with customers randomly selected within each stratum. An opt-out exercise was undertaken prior to the survey fieldwork commencing. The full sampling strategy is detailed in the Technical Appendix.

30 pilot interviews were conducted before the main survey fieldwork to test the questionnaire structure and to ensure that respondents fully understood the nature of the questions being asked.

Telephone interviews were conducted from the IFF on-site computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) centre in central London with the main fieldwork period taking place between Monday 7th and Sunday 20th September 2009 inclusive, 11 to 13 weeks after customers had started a JSA claim.

Customers were eligible for interview irrespective of whether they were still claiming JSA at the time of the interview or had ended their claim. Interviews were conducted in the evening and weekend, as well as during normal working hours, to ensure those who may have entered work were able to participate.

In all 6,001 interviews were achieved (3,000 with Phase 1 customers and 3,001 with Phase 2 customers) as detailed in Table 8.1. The overall response rate was 80 per cent (completes as a percentage of completes plus refusals). Details of all fieldwork outcomes can be found in the Technical Appendix.

Table 8.1 Achieved interviews by Phase and age at start of claim according to DWP records

	Phase 1	Phase 2	All
Under 25	1,000	1,001	2,001
25 – 49	1,000	1,000	2,000
50 or over	1,000	1,000	2,000
All	3,000	3,001	6,001

A demographic breakdown of those interviewed by Phase based on demographics reported during the interview is also in the Technical Appendix. Alongside this is shown the overall profile by age, gender, ethnicity and disability of all those who started claims in the same weeks of the sample used for this survey, based on population counts provided by DWP.

Quotas on Phase and age were set to ensure robust findings at the subgroup level, and to ensure that a sufficient number of interviews were conducted with each key customer group to enable a minimum sample size of 400 follow-up interviews with each age group within Phase in a year's time.

Data have been weighted to ensure findings are representative of the population of customers in each Phase. Further details can be found in the Technical Appendices 1 and 2.

8.2 Statistical significance and confidence intervals

All findings presented in this report are based on weighted data. Unweighted bases (the number of responses from which findings are derived) are displayed where appropriate as an indication of the robustness of results.

Unless explicitly stated otherwise, **all differences between Phases described in this report are statistically significant at the 95 per cent confidence level.** That is to say, there is a 95 per cent probability that the difference reported is real and not the result of sampling error.

Table 8.2, Confidence intervals, illustrates the confidence intervals for a range of findings (percentages) at overall Phase level based on a sample size of 3,000. So, if the report states that 30 per cent of customers had entered paid work in Phase 1, there is a 95 per cent probability that the 'real' proportion lies between 28.4 per cent and 31.6 per cent.

Table 8.2 Confidence intervals

Finding (%)	Confidence interval at 95% level, sample of 3,000 (+/-)
5	0.8
10	1.1
15	1.3
20	1.4
25	1.5
30	1.6
35	1.7
40	1.8
45	1.8
50	1.8
55	1.8
60	1.8
65	1.7
70	1.6
60	1.8
65	1.7
70	1.6
75	1.5
80	1.4
85	1.3
90	1.1
95	0.8

Please note that findings based on customer sub-groups (for example different age groups within Phases) will be based on smaller sample sizes and will therefore have larger confidence intervals. Again, only sub-group differences that are statistically significant are presented in this report, apart from where explicitly stated otherwise.

8.3 Reporting conventions

The following conventions are observed throughout this report:

- All references to 'customers' refer specifically to those customers who attended an NJI between 15 June and 30 June and had an NJI book date on or after 15 June. Similarly all references to 'claims started in June 2009' refer to this cohort of customers.
- 'Phase 1' refers to Jobcentre Plus districts where the JRFND programme has already been rolled out. All references to 'Phase 2' areas refer to Jobcentre Plus districts where the existing JSA regime is still in place. Phase has been determined via the Jobcentre Plus district on the customer database base supplied by DWP.

- Throughout this report 'current' situation refers to the situation at time of interview in mid to late September 2009.
- All references to demographic groups are based on the information provided by customers during the survey interview and not on the demographic information provided on the original sample supplied by DWP (an analysis of inconsistencies between survey information and that supplied on the database are detailed in the Technical Appendix).
- 'PSA 16' refers to the Public Service Agreement which forms part of the set of 198 national indicators for English local authorities. The agreement, which was implemented in April 2008, focuses on people falling into any of the following four groups and are subsequently at risk of social exclusion:
 - care leavers at age 19;
 - offenders under probation supervision;
 - adults receiving secondary mental health services;
 - adults with learning disabilities known to councils.

8.4 Structure of Part 2

Following this introduction outlining the survey background, methodology and reporting conventions, the following two chapters focus on findings relating to customer experience of the first three months of claiming JSA. The first of these covers the nature of the support offered to customers and customer views on the usefulness of this support. The next chapter then presents overall views on the service received from Jobcentre Plus during the first three months of claiming.

Following this, outcomes are presented, looking initially at the proportions of customers remaining on JSA then examining the destinations of those who ended their claims and whether they entered (and remained in) paid employment. This is followed by chapters on the nature of any employment entered and customer views on the appropriateness of the role they took.

Throughout this part of the report the experiences, views and outcomes of Phase 1 customers are compared with those of Phase 2 customers to identify any statistically significant differences. The conclusion to Part 2 then reviews key findings from each chapter.

Finally, Technical Appendices 1 and 2 detail the sampling, fieldwork outcomes, weighting and the profile of customers in the study.

9 Customer experiences: Nature of JRFND Stage 1 support

This chapter describes the support offered to customers during Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND) Stage 1, and compares this with the support offered to customers undergoing regular signing in the first three months of their claim in Phase 2 areas. It also explores whether the support offered varies by customer type. Finally, it discusses customer perception of the usefulness of the different types of support offered in helping them find work or move closer to work.

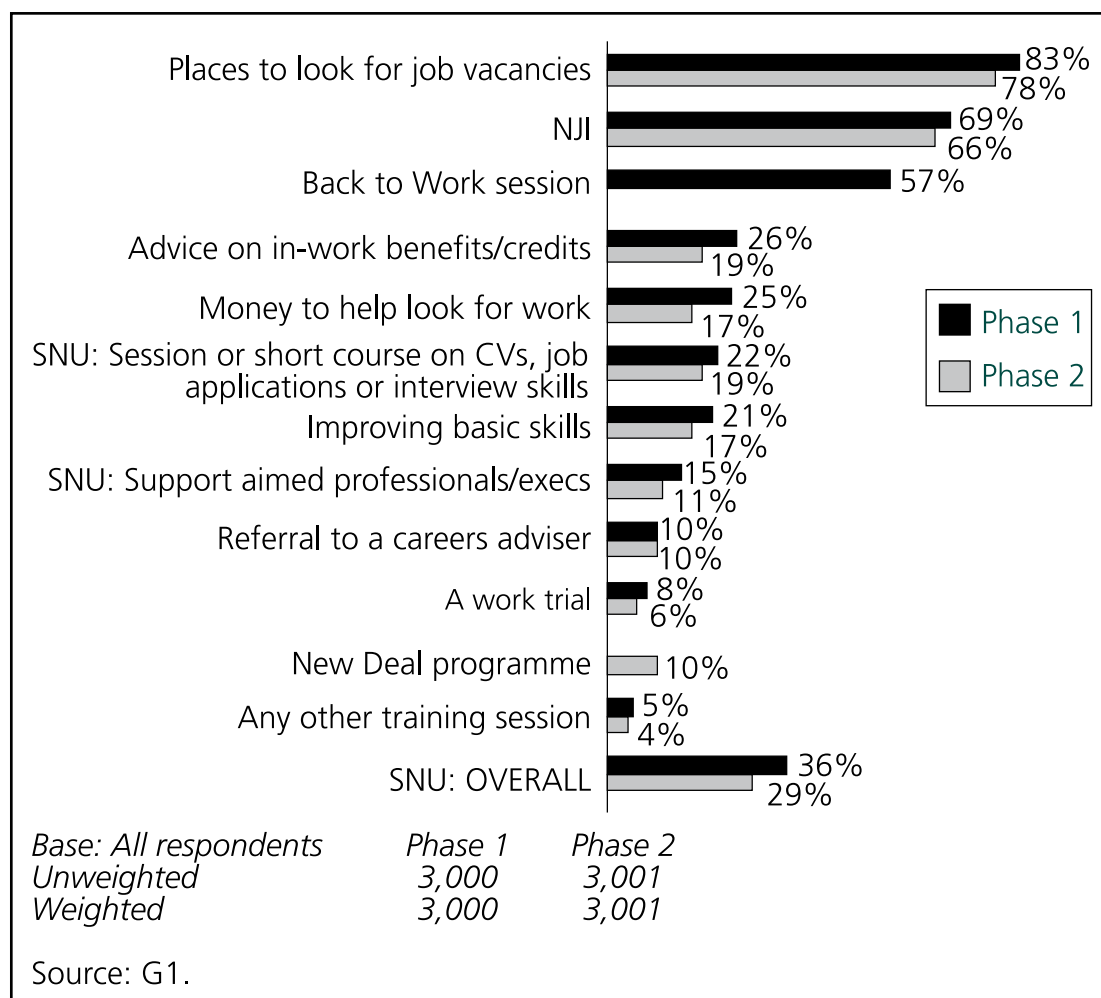
Although not specific to JRFND Stage 1 provision, we also comment on experiences of Support for the Newly Unemployed (SNU) provision across both Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas.

9.1 Support offered

Customers were asked whether they recalled being offered a range of different types of support that are available during the first three months of a Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claim (Figure 9.1)²².

²² It should be noted that the survey did not distinguish between those who were offered particular forms of support and those who attended any sessions or appointments they had been referred to. Once Jobcentre Plus administrative data is available it will be possible to cross-reference survey data against recorded 'referrals' and 'starts' for each type of provision to provide a more accurate measure of support offered. Furthermore, it should be borne in mind that customer recall of the exact nature of the provision offered (both in terms of remembering all support offered and being able to accurately distinguish between different types of provision which are often similar in content) is fallible.

Figure 9.1 Support offered by Phase



Around four in five customers in each Phase (83% in Phase 1, 78% in Phase 2) reported that they were offered advice on places to look for job vacancies, such as the Job Points, the internet or recruitment agencies.

About two-thirds (69% Phase 1, 66% Phase 2) could recall the New Jobseeker Interview (NJI)²³. This is reasonably low given that we can assume that the vast majority, if not all customers did have a NJI (recall generally decreased with length of claim).

Overall, approaching three in five (57%) customers in Phase 1 areas recalled being offered a Back to Work Session (BtWS)²⁴. Among those customers who were still claiming at the time of interview (and had done so continuously for at least 11 weeks) this rises to almost three-quarters (72%).

²³ This was described as a 'New Jobseeker Interview – a face-to-face meeting with an adviser lasting up to 40 minutes when you first started the claim' in the survey questionnaire.

²⁴ The BtWS is a key part of the Stage 1 JRFND provision. Customers can be mandated to attend a BtWS and they typically occur at 6-9 weeks of consecutive claiming.

All other forms of support were offered to fewer than half (or a minority) of customers. Between a fifth and a quarter in each Phase were offered: advice on in-work benefits and credits; money to help look for work; and a basic skills²⁵ course.

Less common forms of support offered or arranged by Jobcentre Plus (each offered to less than one in ten customers in each Phase) were a work trial or a referral to a careers adviser. In Phase 2 districts one in ten customers had been offered referral to a New Deal programme. Early referral to a New Deal programme during the first three months of claiming is available in Phase 2 areas but not in Phase 1 JRFND areas where fast-tracking (from Stage 1 to 3) is available instead. As detailed in the report of qualitative work above fast-tracking in Stage 1 areas is not widely occurring, and none of the customers in the Stage 1 sample had been fast tracked.

Around one in twenty customers (5% Phase 1, 4% Phase 2) reported being offered some other type of learning or training course (i.e. not any of those already mentioned). Customers described a wide range of courses as being offered but the most common (each mentioned by one% of customers in each Phase) were: construction training typically towards a Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) Skills Card or a Construction Plant Competence Scheme (CPCS) card; training towards driving licenses such as HGV or Fork-Lift; or IT courses.

9.2 Support for the Newly Unemployed (SNU)

SNU provision is divided into jobsearch support aimed specifically at professionals and executives (often delivered by a specialist external provider off-site) and more general jobsearch support for those who are newly unemployed (either delivered in the Jobcentre by Jobcentre Plus staff or at a Programme Centre).

As customers would not recognise the term 'Support for the Newly Unemployed' they were asked first whether or not they been offered advice or support aimed specifically at professionals or executives. If not, they were asked whether they had received a session or short course on CV writing, interview skills or job applications.

Overall, over a third (36%) of Phase 1 customers recalled being offered one of these forms of SNU provision (15% aimed specifically at professionals or executives and 22% more general SNU support). This compares with three in ten (29%) customers in Phase 2 areas (11% professional or executive SNU support, 19% general SNU support).

²⁵ Defined as literacy, numeracy or English language skills.

9.3 Differences between Phase 1 and Phase 2 support offered

During the first three months of claiming, only one type of support – the BtWS – is exclusive to Phase 1 areas. Despite this, as illustrated in Figure 9.1, Phase 1 customers were more likely²⁶ to be offered support than customers in Phase 2, particularly:

- Advice on in-work benefits or credits (offered to 26% of Phase 1 customers compared with 19% of Phase 2 customers);
- Money to help whilst looking for work (25% Phase 1, 17% Phase 2); and
- SNU provision (36% Phase 1, 29% Phase 2).

These findings may be linked, in part, to the interplay between JRFND and the timing of the roll-out of these policy changes. Jobcentre Plus advisers in Phase 1 districts may have been better equipped to ‘hit the ground running’ with these additional support options given that they are naturally complementary to JRFND provision. By comparison, transition to the new support offer for Phase 2 Jobcentres may have been more abrupt, and consequently Phase 2 provision is lagging behind Phase 1 slightly in terms of delivering SNU provision and other forms of support such as money to help look for work (offered as part of the Adviser Discretionary Fund (ADF)).

9.4 Variation in support offered by customer type

This section considers whether certain types of customer are more likely to be offered particular types of support during the first three months of their claim (and how, if at all, this varies by Phase).

Among Phase 1 customers only, the likelihood to be offered several forms of support **decreases significantly with age**. This is true for:

- Advice on where to look for job vacancies (88% of 18-24 year old Phase 1 customers compared with 80% of 25-49 year olds and 75% of those aged 50 or over).
- Attendance at BtWS (61% among younger claimants aged 18-24 compared with 53% of customers aged 50 or over).
- A referral to a careers adviser (12% among 18-24 year olds compared with 7% of customers aged 50 or over).
- SNU provision (40% of 18-24 year olds compared with just over a third - 33% - of those aged 50 or over).

²⁶ All reported differences by Phase are statistically significant at the 95 per cent level (see Section 1.2).

There were also a number of differences by **gender**, with men significantly more likely to be offered:

- Access to a basic skills course (23% of Phase 1 men compared with 17% of women).
- Any form of SNU provision (38% of men compared with 33% of women).
- Access to any other type of training course (6% men compared with 3% women).

However, such a breakdown does not account for differences arising from tailored service delivery by specific customer need or requirement.

As might be expected, for some support types the higher a customer's **qualification level**, the less likely they were to be offered: work trials, advice on in-work benefits or credits, referral to a careers adviser or basic skills training.

The patterns of the support offered by customer type described for Phase 1 in terms of age, gender and highest qualification level were also evident in Phase 2 areas.

However, there were some variations in support offered by customer type that appear to have emerged in Phase 1 areas that were not observed in Phase 2. Firstly, there was some indication of differentiation by claim history in Phase 1 areas, with customers who had claimed before being slightly, albeit significantly, more likely than those on their first claim to be offered:

- advice on in-work benefits and credits (27% compared with 24% on their first claim);
- access to a basic skills course (23% compared with 19%);
- a referral to a careers adviser (11% compared with 9%);
- a work trial (10% compared with 7%).

Those on their first ever claim in Phase 1 were, however, significantly more likely to be given advice on where to look for job vacancies (84% compared with 81% of those who had claimed previously).

By contrast, no such difference occurred in Phase 2 areas in terms of support offered by claim history.

Similarly, the propensity of being offered any form of SNU provision varied significantly by customer type in Phase 1 areas, but not in Phase 2 areas where SNU provision appeared to be offered to the same degree independent of customer type. In Phase 1 areas, the likelihood of being offered SNU – either aimed specifically at professionals or executives or more general support – decreased by age (40% 18-24, 34% 25-49 and 33% 50+) and by highest qualification level (42% of Phase 1 customers without a Level 2 qualification were offered SNU provision compared with 34% of those with a Level 2 or 3 qualification and 30% of those with a degree level or higher qualification).

However, in Phase 2 areas there was very little variation in likelihood to be offered SNU by customer type apart from by claim history – those who had not previously claimed were more likely to get offered SNU (31%) than those who had made a previous claim in the last three years (27%). It is interesting that the opposite was true in Phase 1 areas where those with at least one previous claim were more likely to be offered SNU (38% compared with 34%).

Notably, lone parents (i.e. those who during the interview identified themselves a single parent living with children under the age of 16) were twice as likely to be offered SNU provision in Phase 1 as in Phase 2 (45% compared with 22%).

SNU provision is intended to provide additional support for those who are new to looking for work; however these findings suggest that in Phase 1 areas SNU support is perhaps also more commonly offered to some customer groups who are perceived to be in need of additional support, as well as those who are newly unemployed.

Some patterns in the type of support offered to different customer groups were either exclusive to, or more marked in, Phase 2 areas. Looking just within Phase 2, PSA 16 customers (those who have recently left care or prison; are in contact with secondary mental health services; or have moderate to severe learning disabilities) were significantly more likely than Phase 2 customers as a whole to have been offered:

- early referral to a New Deal Programme;
- a referral to a careers adviser;
- a referral to a basic skills course;
- SNU provision.

These differences compared with the Phase 2 average are statistically significant for individual sub-groups of customers who have: recently left prison; those in contact with secondary mental health services; and those with a moderate to severe learning difficulty²⁷.

Conversely, although customers who had recently left prison in Phase 1 areas were more likely than average to be referred to a careers adviser, other PSA 16 groups analysed (those in contact with secondary mental health services and those with moderate to severe learning disabilities) were not significantly more likely to be offered these forms of support compared to similar Phase 1 customers.

Moreover, Phase 2 PSA 16 customers were also more likely to receive each of these forms of support than their PSA 16 counterparts in Phase 1 (noting that New Deal is only available in Phase 2) – in fact, this is the only sub-group of customers for whom support of this nature (i.e. that involving referral to specialist provision) was systematically more prevalent in Phase 2 than Phase 1.

²⁷ Base sizes for customers who had recently left care were too small to analyse (unweighted bases of seven customers in Phase 1 and ten in Phase 2).

9.5 Early progression to Stage 2

A small minority of Phase 1 customers (4%) claimed to have had their Initial Stage 2 Review at the time of the interview (which took place at least eleven weeks after the NJI book date). The qualitative research to date indicates this is plausible²⁸. Of these customers:

- 24 per cent reported that they had been offered a move to weekly signings;
- 12 per cent reported that they had been offered longer Fortnightly Jobsearch Reviews (FJR);
- 20 per cent said that they had been offered one or two longer interviews with an adviser not including the Initial Stage 2 Review (possible evidence of early implementation of the Stage 2 Targeted Reviews).

By comparison, significantly fewer Phase 2 customers reported having had their 13 Week Interview²⁹ at the time of the interview (2%).

These experiences of Stage 2 provision are not discussed further in this report due to small base sizes. The discrete JRFND Stage 2 customer survey report available in spring 2010 will consider experiences of Stage 2 support in detail.

9.6 Usefulness of support offered

This section explores customer perceptions of the usefulness of each of the different types of support on offer. Where a customer could recall being offered a particular form of support they were asked how useful they found it.

Overall, each form of support offered to customers within the first three months of claiming was rated as very or quite useful by the majority of customers that had experienced that support. On the whole, differences in perceived usefulness of each form of support by Phase were minimal.

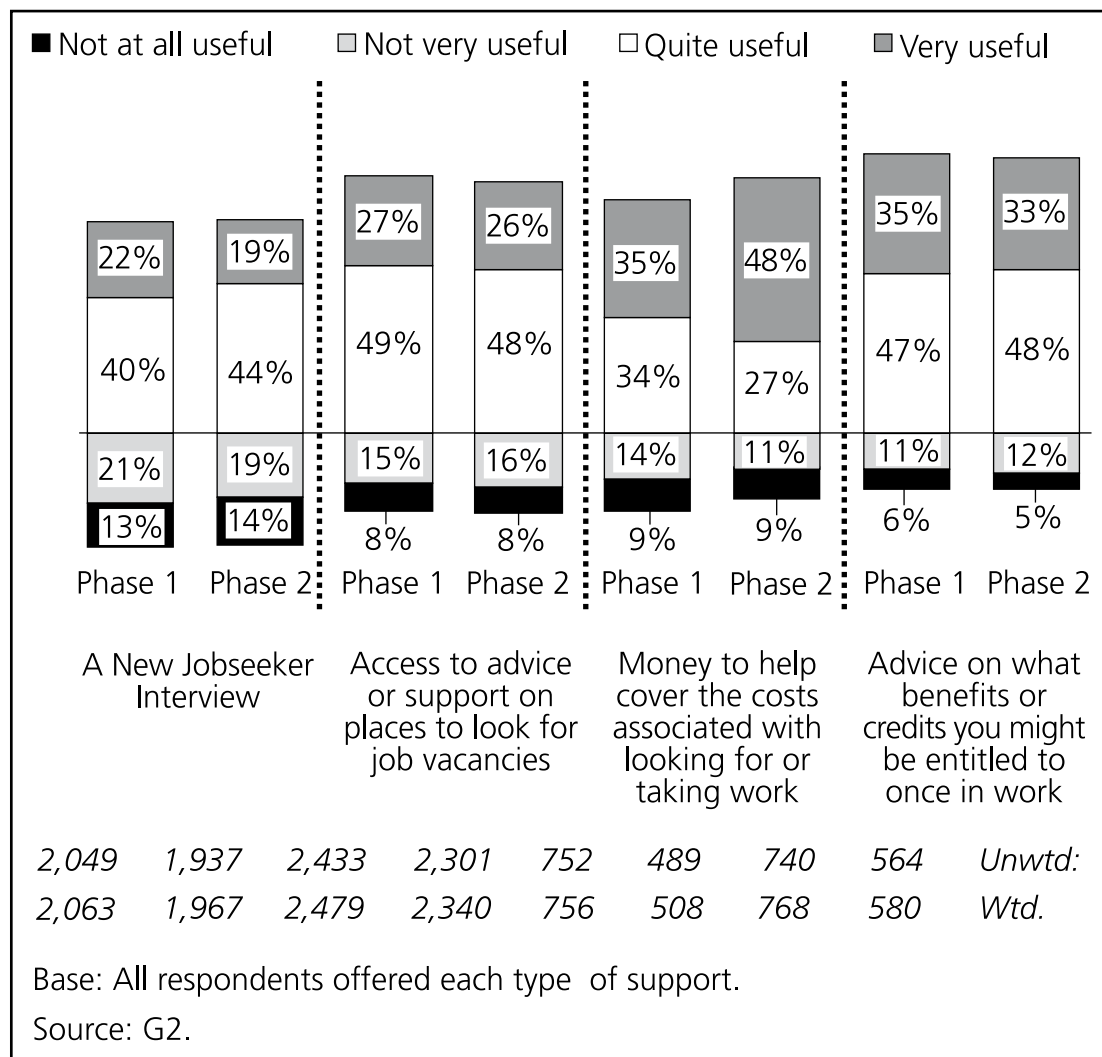
²⁸ Targeted Reviews as part of Stage 2 JRFND provision were not rolled out until October 2009 – after the survey fieldwork took place. There will be a degree of error regarding customer recollection and reporting of the nature of the provision they received which may account for this (and indeed the finding that the Initial Stage 2 Review had in some cases occurred early in Phase 1 areas). However, the qualitative work does indicate that some districts were offering Targeted Reviews at Stage 2 prior to the October 2009 roll-out and that Initial Stage 2 Reviews are sometimes conducted from 11 weeks of consecutive claiming onwards. It is not possible at the time of writing to link survey responses with Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) administrative data to cross-reference customers' recollections with Jobcentre Plus records.

²⁹ The 13 week interview occurs at the equivalent point to the Initial Stage 2 Review.

Figures 9.2, 9.3, 9.4 and 9.5 illustrate the relative usefulness of each form of support as reported by customers.

Figure 9.2 shows customer views on the usefulness of some of the most common forms of support offered (not including SNU provision and the BtWS which are discussed separately later in the section).

Figure 9.2 Customer views on usefulness of support (I)



Access to advice or support on places to look for job vacancies – the most common form of support recalled by customers – was regarded as useful (either ‘very’ or ‘quite useful’) by around three quarters of those that had received this support (76% Phase 1, 75% Phase 2).

Slightly smaller proportions found the NJI useful, although a majority of customers still reported that this was very or quite useful (62% Phase 1, 63% Phase 2). In Phase 1 areas, customers were significantly more likely overall to report that they had found the NJI ‘very useful’ (22% compared with 19%). This difference by Phase was particularly marked for customers with a long term health condition or disability (with a quarter – 25% – of all customers with a long-term illness or health disability in Phase 1 finding the NJI ‘very useful’ compared with just 15%

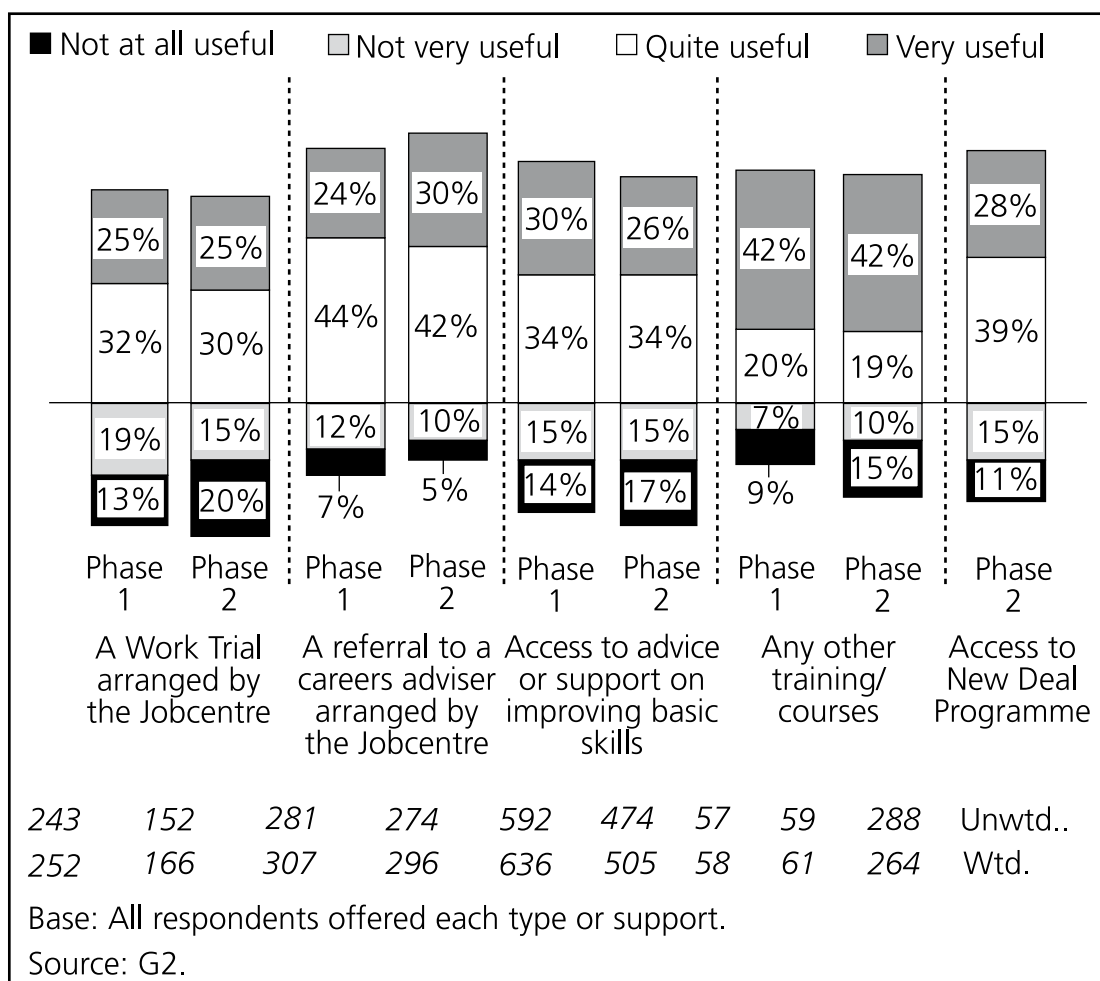
of their Phase 2 counterparts) and for customers from non-white ethnic groups (28% saying 'very useful' in Phase 1 compared with 20% Phase 2).

Advice on what benefits customers might be entitled to once in-work was considered particularly useful; over eight in ten customers reported this to be useful in both Phases (81% in both Phase 1 and Phase 2).

Money to help cover the costs associated with looking for or taking work was viewed as more useful among Phase 2 customers (75% said this was useful compared with 69% in Phase 1). Furthermore, almost half (48%) of Phase 2 customers described this support as 'very useful', a significantly higher proportion than in Phase 1 (35%). This difference was consistent across most customer groups, though was particularly marked for Phase 2 customers with children aged under five who were significantly more likely to rate the money as very useful than their Phase 1 counterparts (49% compared with 20% respectively).

Figure 9.3 illustrates how useful customers in Phase 1 and Phase 2 found some of the less common forms of support (typically involving referral to an activity, session or course outside of the Jobcentre).

Figure 9.3 Customer views on usefulness of support (II)



Relative to other forms of external provision, Work Trials tended to be seen as less useful by customers on the whole (although a slight majority still reported them to be useful in both Phases). Work Trials were slightly better received among customers in Phase 1 areas compared with those in Phase 2, with a fifth (20%) of all those who had been offered a Work Trial in Phase 2 viewing it as 'not at all useful' compared with 13% of Phase 1 customers.

A referral to a careers adviser was well received among customers with around 70 per cent considering this to be useful (68% Phase 1, 72% Phase 2).

On balance, customers who had been offered a basic skills course had found it useful (64% Phase 1, 60% Phase 2). However, around one in six customers in each Phase said they had found this 'not at all useful' (14% Phase 1, 17% Phase 2). Certain customer groups were significantly more likely to find a basic skills referral useful in Phase 1 than in Phase 2:

- Customers with no previous qualifications (and therefore a key target group for referral to entry level or Level 1 basic skills courses) – 82% of these in Phase 1 found the referral to a basic skills course useful compared with 70% in Phase 2.
- Younger customers (under 25 years old) were particularly likely to find the basic skills course offered useful in Phase 1 with over a third – 35% – describing it as 'very useful'. By comparison, younger customers in Phase 2 were no more likely than Phase 2 customers as a whole to describe the course as 'very useful' (25% compared with 26% of all Phase 2 customers).

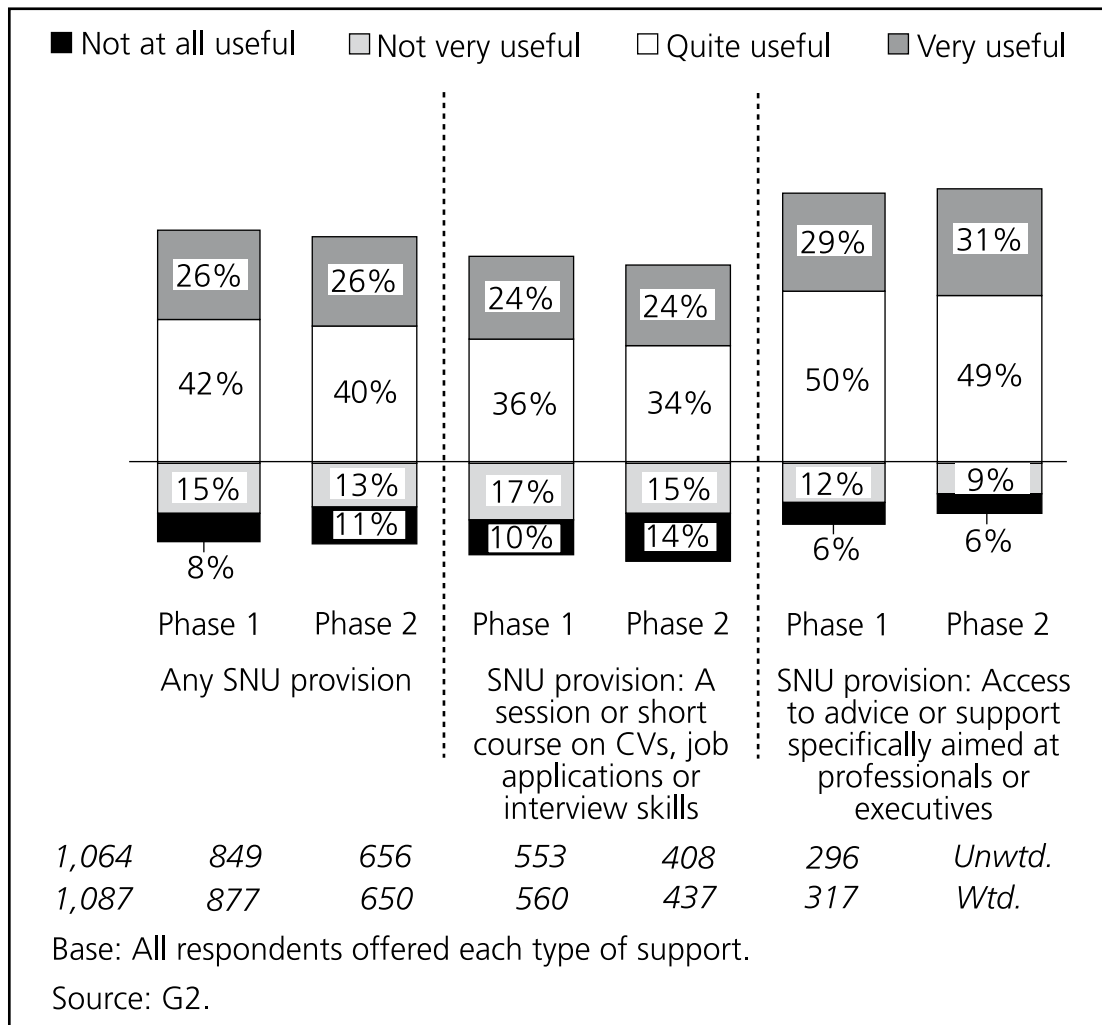
Those customers in Phase 2 that had been offered referral to a New Deal programme within the first three months of their claim tended to find it useful (67%). However, a quarter of customers who had experienced early referral to a New Deal programme found it either 'not very' or 'not at all' useful (15% and 11% respectively).

Relatively small numbers of customers had been offered another type of training course (as described earlier in this section this typically involved courses in construction training, driving licences or IT courses), however, where these were offered they were generally found to be very useful by customers. This was particularly true in Phase 1 areas where almost half (48%) of all those offered a training course described it as 'very useful' (compared with 38% in Phase 2). Perceived usefulness of the training course was particularly high among younger customers (under 25 years) in Phase 1 where 81% described the course offered as useful (either very or quite useful) compared with just 47% of younger customers offered a course in Phase 2. This suggests that where training courses are being offered in Phase 1 they may be more appropriately tailored to the needs and interests of the customer.

Figure 9.4 shows how useful customers found the SNU provision they were offered. At an overall level there was little difference in customer views on the usefulness of SNU provision by Phase. In both Phases around a quarter of customers (26% in both Phases) found the support offered to be 'very useful' with a further two

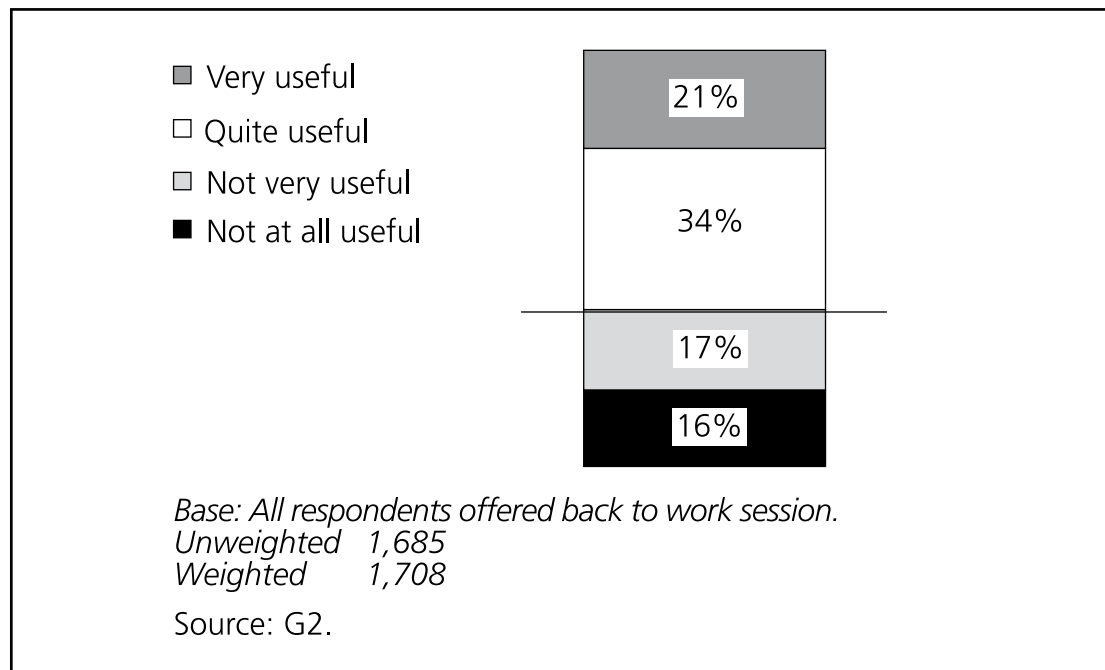
fifths (42% Phase 1, 40% Phase 2) reporting it to be 'quite useful'. Customers who had received an offer of SNU support aimed at professionals and executives were more likely to find this useful than those who have received the general SNU support (this was the case in both Phases).

Figure 9.4 Customer views on usefulness of SNU provision



Reported usefulness of the general SNU session decreased as customers' highest qualification increased, with around seven in ten (71% Phase 1, 67% Phase 2) of those with no qualifications finding it useful compared with around four in ten (43% Phase 1, 41% Phase 2) of customers with a degree level or above qualification. This pattern was evident across both Phases.

Figure 9.5 presents customer views of the usefulness of the BtWS provided in Phase 1.

Figure 9.5 Customer views on usefulness of the BtWS

BtWS were considered useful by a slight majority of customers (55%) that had been offered this support. However, a significant minority felt the session was not useful, with around one in six (17%) finding it 'not very useful' and a similar proportion reporting it to be 'not at all useful' (16%). Unfortunately, this information cannot account for whether the customers then chose to take up the support, as the survey design had planned to use administrative data for this, hence some of this finding may reflect customers who were offered, but did not take up, the support.

Some customer groups were more likely than average to find the BtWS useful:

- younger customers (under 25 years old) – 61% said 'very' or 'quite' useful;
- those who had recently left prison were on probation or serving a community sentence (72%);
- those with no or low level qualifications (below a Level 2) – 61%.

The qualitative work found strong variation in the delivery of BtWS; this analysis cannot fully account for such variation.

9.7 Most useful form of support

Customers who had been offered more than one form of support were asked which they considered the most useful in helping them find work or move closer to work.

Table 9.1 shows the proportion of customers who selected each form of support as the most useful. The table shows row percentages and findings are based on the number of customers offered the type of support in question in combination with at least one other form of support. All those who were offered only one

form of support are excluded from the analysis, as are those who did not find any support useful.

As well as being the most common type of support received by customers, access to advice or support on places to look for job vacancies was also considered the most useful (over a third – 34% in Phase 1, and 37% in Phase 2 – of those who had been offered this support in combination with other support said it was the most useful in terms of helping them find work).

Table 9.1 Most useful form of support

<i>Phase 1 base</i>	<i>Phase 2 base</i>		Phase 1	Phase 2
<i>Unweighted</i>	<i>Unweighted</i>			
<i>Weighted</i>	<i>Weighted</i>		%	%
1,996	1,724	Access to advice or support on	41	49
2,060	1,783	places to look for job vacancies		
1,428	N/A	BtWS	23	N/A
1,460				
1,660	1,490	New Jobseeker Interview	21	24
1,708	1,534			
682	426	Money to help cover the costs	19	27
691	455	associated with looking for work		
578	470	SNU: general session or short	19	27
578	471	course on CVs or job applications		
694	521	Advice on what benefits or	14	13
728	543	credits entitled to once in work		
260	253	A referral to a careers adviser	12	11
289	274			
229	141	A work trial	10	7
240	153			
387	270	SNU: aimed at professionals or	9	14
418	291	executives		
544	430	Access to advice or support on	7	10
594	463	improving writing, maths, or		
		English language skills		
	253	Access to a New Deal	N/A	14
	275	programme		

Base: All customers offered each form of support in combination with at least one other and rating more than one form of support useful.

Note: Table shows row percentages.

Despite receiving a lower usefulness score relative to other forms of support when rated individually, approaching a quarter (23%) of all Phase 1 customers who had been offered a BtWS in combination with other support said that this was the most useful in helping them find work or move closer to work.

Similarly, while some forms of support involving specialist provision such as referral to a careers adviser or SNU aimed at professionals and executives had

received relatively high usefulness scores when explored individually, they were less commonly selected as the most useful form of support. For example, around one in ten customers who had been offered a referral to a careers adviser as well as receiving other forms of support chose this as the most useful form of support (12% Phase 1, 11% Phase 2). However, these customers were significantly more likely to consider advice on where to look for job vacancies as the most useful form of support offered (26% Phase 1, 36% Phase 2). The same pattern was observed for professional and executive SNU support, where customers receiving this were more likely to select advice on where to look for job vacancies (30% Phase 1, 37% Phase 2), the NJI (16% Phase 1, 16% Phase 2) or the BtWS (18% Phase 1) as the most useful support ahead of the SNU professional/executive support they were offered (9% Phase 1, 14% Phase 2).

These findings suggest that while the offer of referral to external or specialist provision tends to score highly with customers in terms of individual usefulness, they most commonly reported one of the 'core' elements of the Jobcentre Plus offer during Stage 1/the first three months of claiming when asked to select the single most useful form of support in finding work or moving closer to work. These included advice on where to look for job vacancies, the NJI and, in Phase 1, the BtWS. However, it is worth noting that this could also be an effect of overlap in content across different types of provision, with each reinforcing the other. For example, a customer might identify more with the content of the service received (such as advice on where to look for job vacancies) rather than how or by whom this was delivered (by a careers adviser or during a SNU session).

9.8 Summary

The key difference between the JRFND Stage 1 regime and regular JSA signing in Phase 2 areas is the BtWS, which is a mandatory requirement for customers from six weeks of consecutive claiming onwards. A slight majority of Phase 1 customers interviewed could recall being offered the BtWS.

Alongside this, Phase 1 customers were significantly more likely to be offered most other forms of support (including SNU) than their Phase 2 counterparts. This is likely to be linked to the fact that Adviser Flexibilities (AF) were also being tested in Phase 1 areas.

On the whole, the offer of support appeared to be more targeted by customer type in Phase 1 areas, particularly at customers who had claimed JSA previously and lone parents. By contrast, in Phase 2 areas support was more commonly offered to the same degree independent of customer type. The only exception was among PSA 16 customer groups where certain forms of specialist support were significantly more prevalent in Phase 2 areas than in Phase 1.

Where customers in Phase 1 had been offered more than one form of support they were most likely to state that advice on where to look for job vacancies or the BtWS was the single most useful support offered in helping them find work or

move closer to work. BtWS were significantly more likely to be considered useful by younger customers, prison leavers and those with lower qualification levels (or no qualifications).

10 Customer experiences: Views of Stage 1 support

10.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on customers' overall views on the support they received from Jobcentre Plus during the first three months of their Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claim and discusses how appropriate they considered this support to be. The positive association of this support with 'soft' outcomes such as confidence, motivation and job search skills are also explored.

10.2 Overall satisfaction

Figure 10.1 shows overall customer satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus support by Phase. There was very little difference by Phase; at an overall level the majority of both Phase 1 and Phase 2 customers were satisfied with the support they received from Jobcentre Plus (60% either satisfied or very satisfied in Phase 1, 59% in Phase 2).

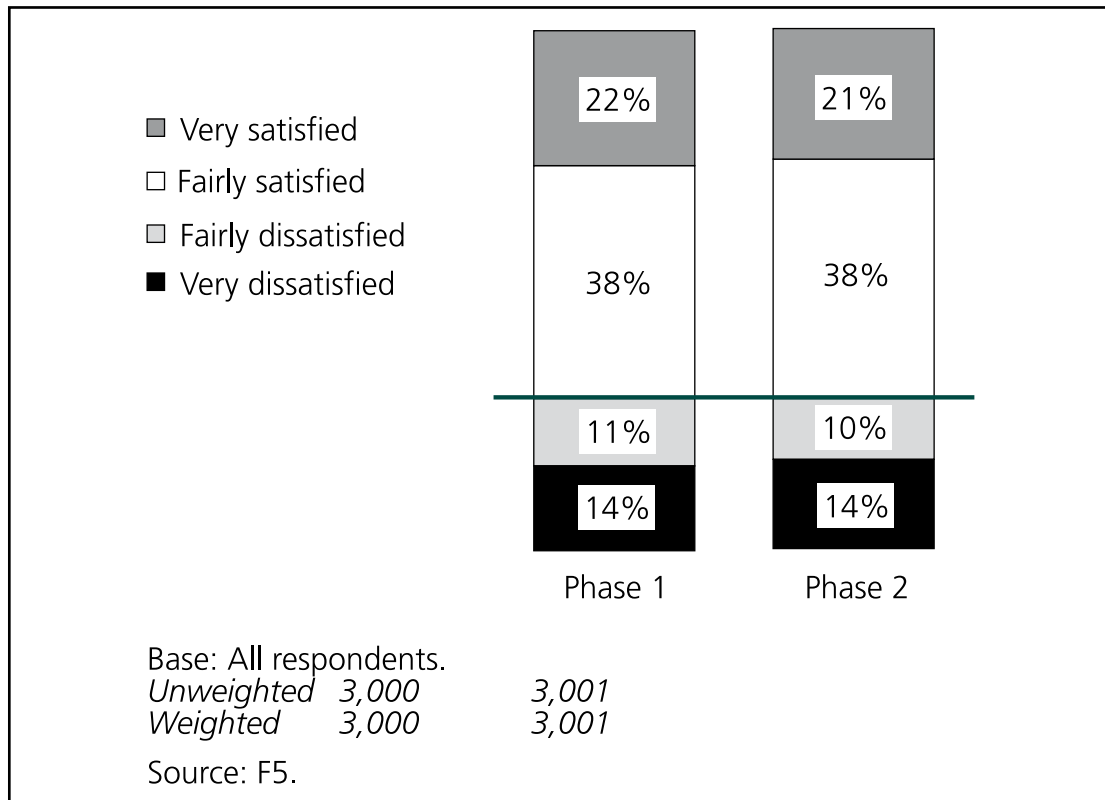
However the proportion of customers dissatisfied with the support they received from the Jobcentre Plus was reasonably high with around a quarter of customers either fairly or very dissatisfied in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 (25% and 24% respectively).

Despite there being no difference in satisfaction between Phase 1 and Phase 2 at an overall level, some customer groups were significantly more likely to be satisfied in Phase 1 than Phase 2:

- Female customers (62% very or quite satisfied in Phase 1 compared with 56% in Phase 2).
- Customers from non-white ethnic backgrounds (64% Phase 1, 57% Phase 2).

- Customers who had recently left prison, with those in Phase 2 significantly more likely to be very dissatisfied with the Jobcentre Plus service than their counterparts in Phase 1 (20% and 5% respectively).

Figure 10.1 Overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus support



However, customers with moderate to severe learning difficulties in Phase 1 were significantly more likely to be very dissatisfied with the overall service received than Phase 2 customers with moderate to severe learning difficulties (27% Phase 1 compared with 11% Phase 2). This may be explained by the finding, described in the previous chapter, that customers with moderate to severe learning difficulties were significantly less likely to have been offered a referral to a careers adviser, a referral to a basic skills course, or Support for the Newly Unemployed (SNU) provision in Phase 1 than in Phase 2.

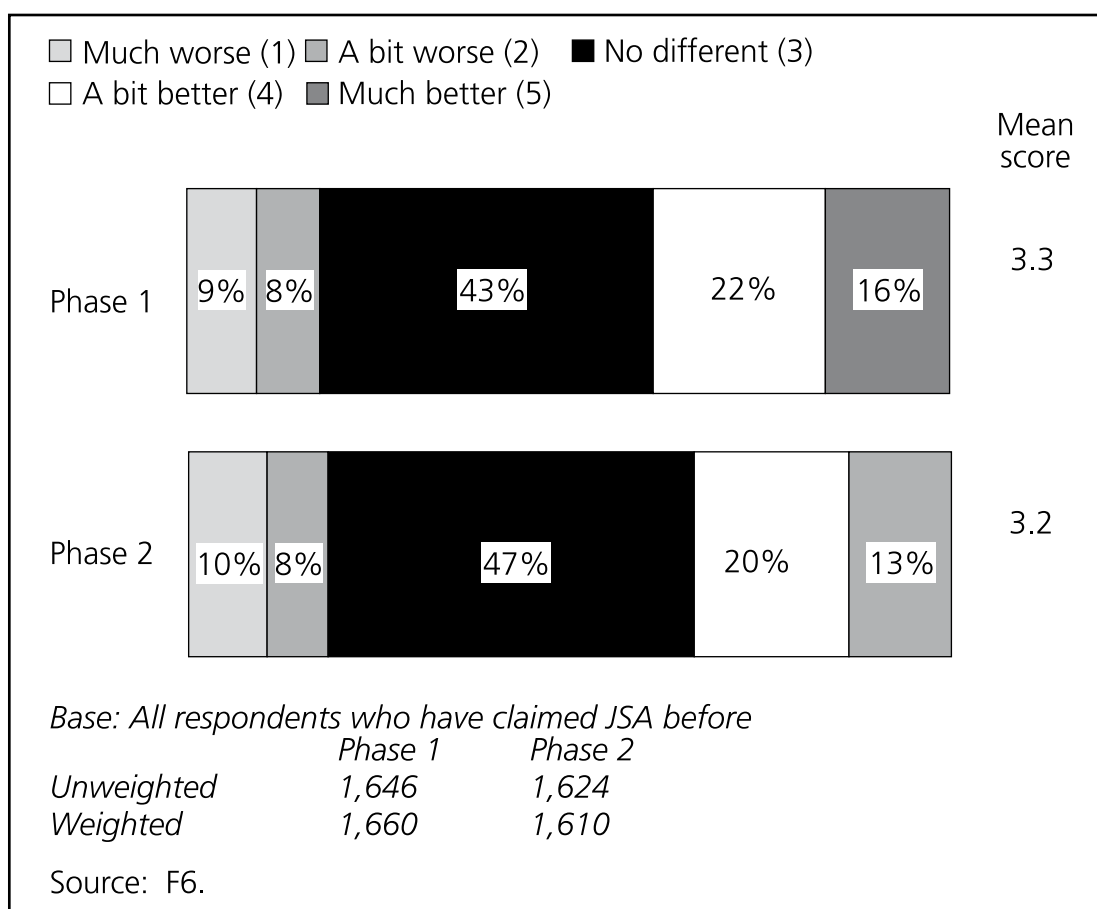
Customer satisfaction also varied by length of claim. Customers in Phase 2 tended to become more satisfied as length of claim increased while Phase 1 customers tended to become more dissatisfied. Once customers had been claiming for nine consecutive weeks or more significantly more Phase 1 customers were very dissatisfied with the overall support compared to Phase 2 customers (21% compared with 14% respectively).

However, Phase 1 customers who had taken part in a Back to Work Session (BtWS) were significantly more likely to be satisfied with the Jobcentre Plus service in comparison to customers from Phase 1 who had claimed for six weeks or more but not had a BtWS (66% compared with 54% respectively).

10.3 How support experienced during recent claim compares with previous experiences

Customers who had claimed JSA before were asked how the recent support received from Jobcentre Plus compared with the support received previously. Figure 10.2 presents the proportions of customers in each Phase stating that the support had improved as well as the proportion stating that it had got worse. Nearly two in five (38%) Phase 1 customers who had claimed before felt that the support was better (either 'a bit' or 'much better') than that received before, a significantly higher proportion than in Phase 2 (33%). Correspondingly, significantly more Phase 2 customers felt that the support had not changed at all (47% compared with 43% of Phase 1 customers). Roughly equal proportions in each Phase felt the support was worse (17% Phase 1, 18% Phase 2).

Figure 10.2 How Jobcentre Plus support received during claim started in June 2009 compares to support received during previous JSA claims



Significantly more women in Phase 1 felt that the service was 'much better' than women in Phase 2 (18% compared with 13% respectively), who as mentioned previously were also more likely to be satisfied with the overall service. This difference was not observed between Phase 1 and Phase 2 men.

Views on whether the Jobcentre Plus service was better than that experienced previously also varied by whether customers had children. The support was significantly more likely to be rated as improved by customers with children under the age of 16 in Phase 1 areas in comparison with those in Phase 2 areas (42% Phase 1 compared with 30% Phase 2). This difference was even greater for customers with children under the age of five. Nearly half of Phase 1 customers with children under five (48%) rated the service as improved compared to 30 per cent of Phase 2 customers with children under five.

This suggests that, for those who may face some barriers to entering work in terms of childcare or time out of the labour market, the support offered as part of Stage 1 Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND) is being better received than that available in the first three months of normal JSA signing in Phase 2 areas.

10.4 Jobcentre Plus support

Customers were also asked how the support they had received from Jobcentre Plus during the first three months of claiming had affected various skills and attributes. Figure 10.3 shows the proportion saying each skill or attribute listed had increased greatly or increased to some extent as a result of the support received.

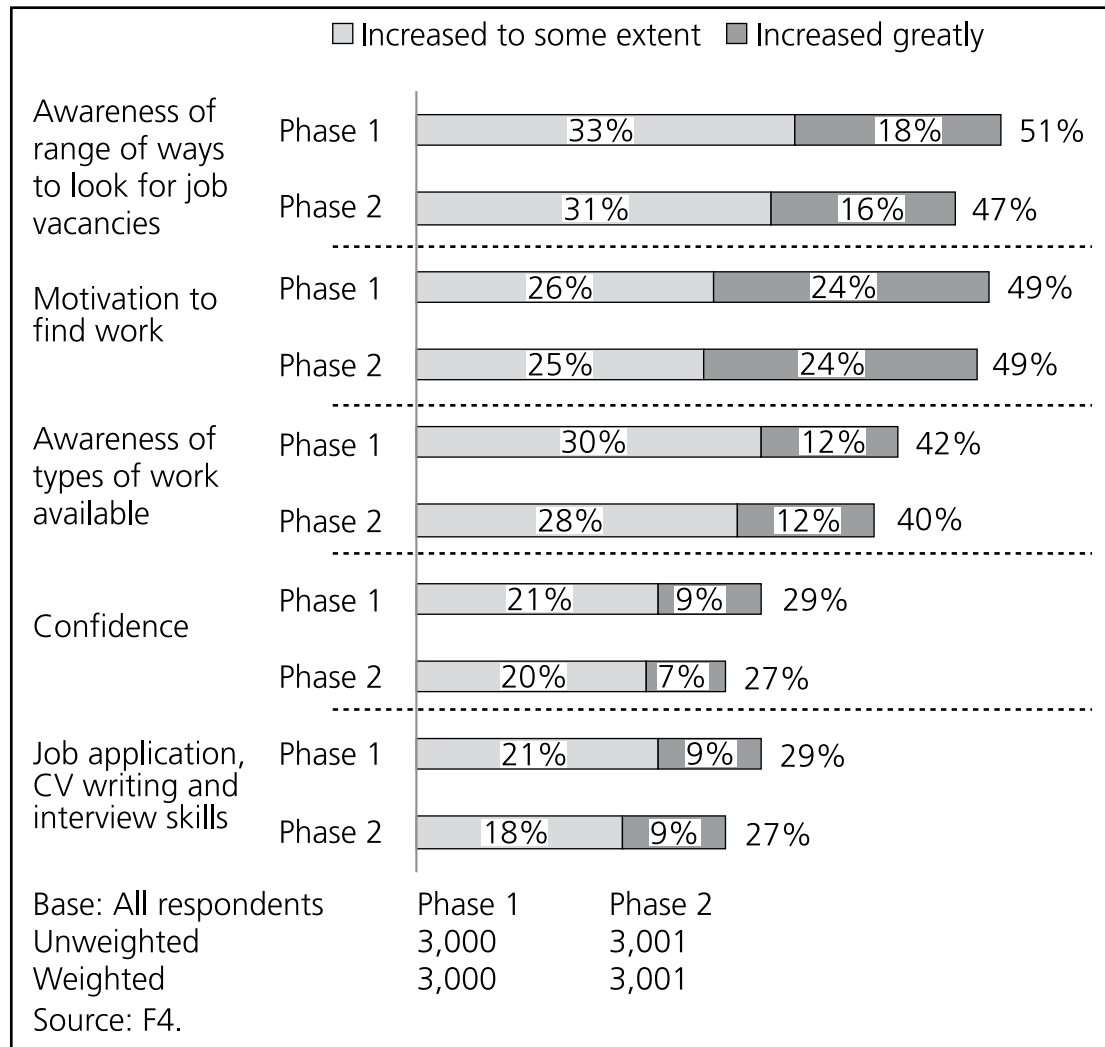
In Phase 1, support from Jobcentre Plus had greatest association with customer awareness of the range of ways to look for job vacancies, with half of customers having experienced some form of increase (51%). An increased awareness of the range of ways to look for job vacancies was also reported by a slightly, yet significantly, lower proportion of Phase 2 customers (47%).

Motivation to find work had increased for roughly half of the customers in both Phases (49% in Phase 1 and 49% in Phase 2), and was the factor most likely to have increased in Phase 2. Just under a quarter of customers in both Phases felt their motivation had increased greatly (24% Phase 1, 24% Phase 2).

Jobsearch skills were less commonly reported to have increased among customers with less than three in ten mentioning any form of increase in each Phase (29% in Phase 1 and 27% in Phase 2).

Across each of these skills and attributes, greater proportions of customers reported increases as a result of Jobcentre Plus support in Phase 1 than in Phase 2. Although not large differences, increases were significantly greater in Phase 1 than in Phase 2 for awareness of the range of ways to look for job vacancies (51% Phase 1, 47% Phase 2) and confidence (29% Phase 1, 27% Phase 2). Some customer groups in Phase 1 were more likely to report positive aspects of Jobcentre Plus support than their equivalents in Phase 2. Variation was most marked by whether customers had children, and if so whether customers were lone parents. For parents generally and for lone parents, Phase 1 support appears to have been more beneficial in terms of generating these softer outcomes than Phase 2 support.

Figure 10.3 Jobcentre Plus support association with various skills and attributes



Reflecting the finding that customers with children under the age of 16 in Phase 1 were more likely to report an improved service compared with what they had experienced previously, these customers were significantly more likely to report that their awareness of the ways in which it was possible to look for job vacancies had improved compared to their counterparts in Phase 2 (47% compared with 37% respectively). This was particularly marked among lone parents in Phase 1 who were more than twice as likely to report an increased awareness as lone parents in Phase 2 (47% compared with 23%).

The support offered by Jobcentre Plus had further positive influences on lone parents in Phase 1 in terms of motivation to find work; lone parents with children under the age of 16 in Phase 1 were significantly more likely to feel that their motivation to find work had increased greatly in comparison with their counterparts in Phase 2 (28% compared with 13% respectively).

Lone parents in Phase 1 were also significantly more likely (than both lone parents in Phase 2 and Phase 1 customers as a whole) to report that their jobsearch skills had increased greatly or to some extent (37% of lone parents in Phase 1 compared with 22% of lone parents in Phase 2, and 29% in Phase 1 overall. This is likely to be explained by the finding reported in the previous chapter that lone parents in Phase 1 were significantly more likely to be offered SNU provision (45% in Phase 1 compared with 22% in Phase 2).

Confidence had also increased greatly for significantly more lone parent customers in Phase 1 than in Phase 2 (13% compared with 4%). However, significantly more lone parents in Phase 1 also mentioned spontaneously that their confidence had decreased as a result of Jobcentre Plus support (12% compared with 1% in Phase 2). Correspondingly, Phase 2 lone parents with children under the age of 16 were significantly more likely to report that their confidence was unchanged by any support they had received from Jobcentre Plus (76% compared with 51% for Phase 1).

On the whole, the service provided by the Jobcentre Plus in Phase 1 areas appears to have been viewed particularly positively by customers with children, including lone parents. They were more likely to report a better service than that experienced previously and, correspondingly, were more aware of how to look for jobs, had improved their job search skills, were more motivated to find work and in some cases were more confident. This is an interesting finding in the context of recent policy changes relating to lone parents such as Lone Parent Obligations³⁰.

There was a further variation in likelihood to report an increase in confidence by customer group: one in ten customers with health problems or disabilities in Phase 1 reported that their confidence had increased greatly (10%) compared with one in twenty in Phase 2 areas (5%).

10.5 Evidence of tailoring to customer needs or pressure to undertake unsuitable activities

Providing a flexible, responsive service that is reactive to the needs of the customers is a core part of JRFND provision and customers were asked to rate the extent to which they agreed the support they received from Jobcentre Plus was well tailored to their needs and circumstances. Customers were also asked whether they felt they had been put under any pressure to take part in any activities they felt were not suited to them. Figure 10.4 illustrates the proportion of customers agreeing and disagreeing with each of these statements.

As discussed in Chapter 9, Phase 1 support appeared more targeted at particular groups compared with Phase 2 where support was provided more evenly across

³⁰ As of November 2008 lone parents who were claiming benefit solely on the grounds of being a lone parent, and are capable of work, were required to claim JSA when their youngest child is 12 or over. This has dropped to the age of 10 in October 2009 and will drop to 7 in October 2010.

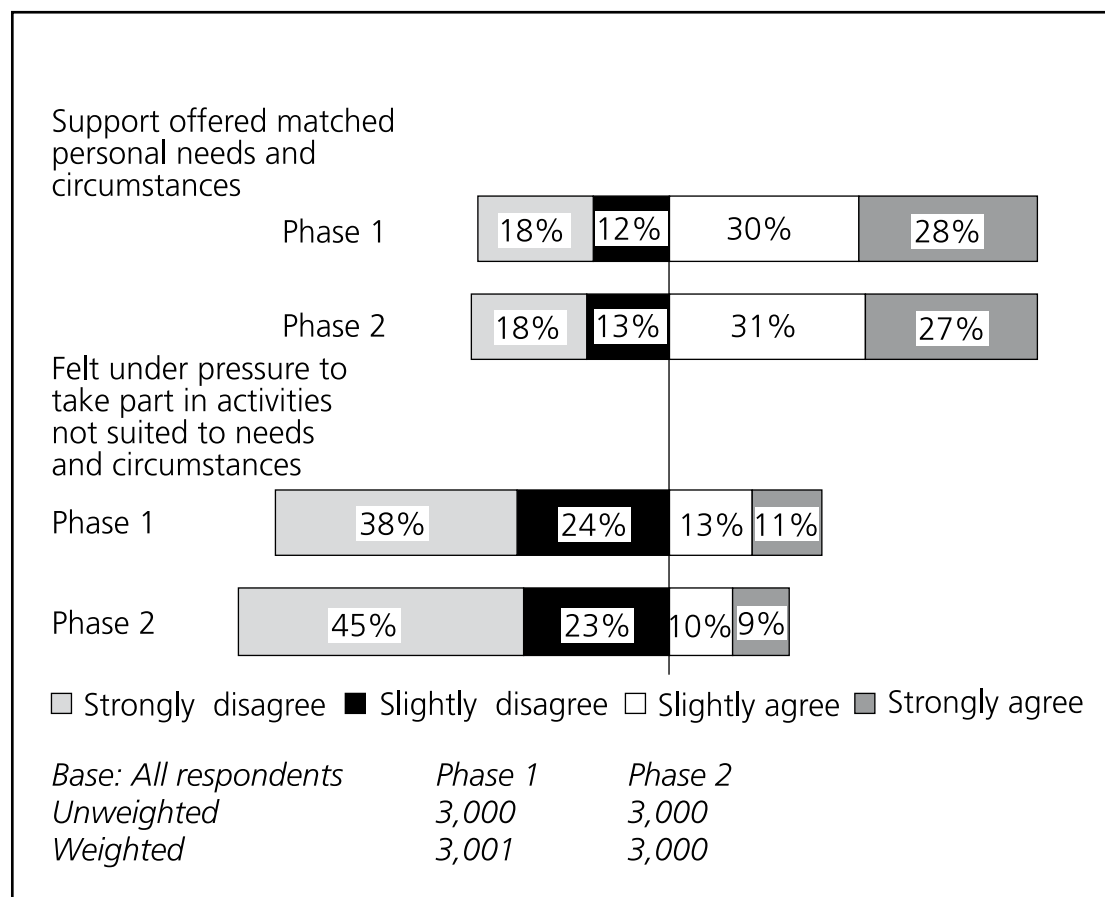
customer group. However, there was no difference at an overall level between the views of Phase 1 and Phase 2 customers in terms of how appropriate support offered was to their needs and circumstances.

Overall, a slight majority of both Phase 1 and Phase 2 customers agreed that the support that had been offered to them matched their personal needs and circumstances (59% agreed in Phase 1, 58% agreed in Phase 2). Three in ten in both Phases disagreed (31%).

However, customers from certain groups were more likely to agree that the support offered matched their personal needs and circumstances with Phase 1 females significantly more likely than Phase 2 females to agree support was appropriate (61% compared with 56% respectively).

In line with findings described earlier in this chapter, Phase 1 customers in PSA 16 groups were more likely to disagree that the support offered was appropriate for their personal needs and circumstances in comparison with those in Phase 2 (41% disagreed in Phase 1 compared with 29% in Phase 2). This was most evident for customers with moderate to severe learning difficulties in Phase 1 where two in five customers (40%) disagreed the support was appropriate, significantly more than in Phase 2 (25%).

Figure 10.4 Whether customer agreed that support offered was appropriate and whether felt under pressure to take part in unsuitable activities



Customers also reported on the extent to which they felt under pressure to take part in activities not suited to their specific needs and circumstances. The majority of customers across both Phases disagreed that they felt under pressure to take part in any unsuitable activities (62% Phase 1, 68% Phase 2). This is to be expected given that almost all activities within the first 13 weeks of claiming are voluntary, with the exception of the BtWS, in Phase 1 areas.

Overall, significantly more customers in Phase 1 agreed that they felt under pressure to take part in activities not suited to their needs and circumstances with around a quarter agreeing (slightly or strongly) that they felt under pressure compared with a fifth of Phase 2 customers (25% Phase 1 compared with 19% Phase 2). This finding was largely driven by those customers who were offered a BtWS – 28% of whom agreed they felt under pressure to participate in unsuitable activities. However, customers who claimed for at least six weeks in Phase 1 but who could not recall being offered a BtWS were still significantly more likely to report feeling under pressure compared with those who claimed for at least six weeks in Phase 2 (22% compared with 18%).

That said, lone parents with children under the age of 16 in Phase 1 were less likely to feel under pressure to take part in unsuitable activities than their counterparts in Phase 2 (22% Phase 1, 29% in Phase 2).

10.6 Summary

Phase 1 customers were more positive about their experiences of Jobcentre Plus than Phase 2 customers, being significantly more likely to report that:

- Jobcentre Plus provision had improved (where they had claimed previously);
- The support received had resulted in an increased awareness of ways to look for job vacancies;
- Confidence had increased as a result of Jobcentre Plus support.

However, Phase 1 customers were also more likely to say they felt under pressure to take part in activities they did not feel were suited to their needs and circumstances.

The service provided by Jobcentre Plus in Phase 1 areas appeared to have been particularly well received among customers with children, and specifically lone parents – with the latter being significantly more likely to report increases in motivation to find work, confidence, job search skills and awareness of the different ways to look for job vacancies compared with their counterparts in Phase 2 areas.

Similarly, customers with a long-term health condition or disability in Phase 1 areas were significantly more likely to find their New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) useful. They were also significantly more likely to report an increase in confidence as a result of the support received from Jobcentre Plus than those in Phase 2 areas.

11 Outcomes: Claim status

11.1 Introduction

This chapter explores customers' claim status to see if, at the point they were interviewed for this research, customers in Phase 1 were more or less likely to have ended the Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claims they started in June than those in Phase 2. Customers included in the study had an New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) booked date of 15th-30th June 2009 so if they had continued to claim they would be between week 11 and 13 of their claim when interviewed. Throughout the report, 'current' situation refers to the situation at time of interview in mid to late September 2009.

This section also presents significant differences by Phase as to whether customers in Phase 1 were more or less likely to have remained off JSA or not. If the claim was ended we compare how long customers claimed for. Differences within Phase 1 are also explored to ascertain whether some types of customers were more likely to end their claims during Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND) Stage 1.

11.2 Moving off JSA

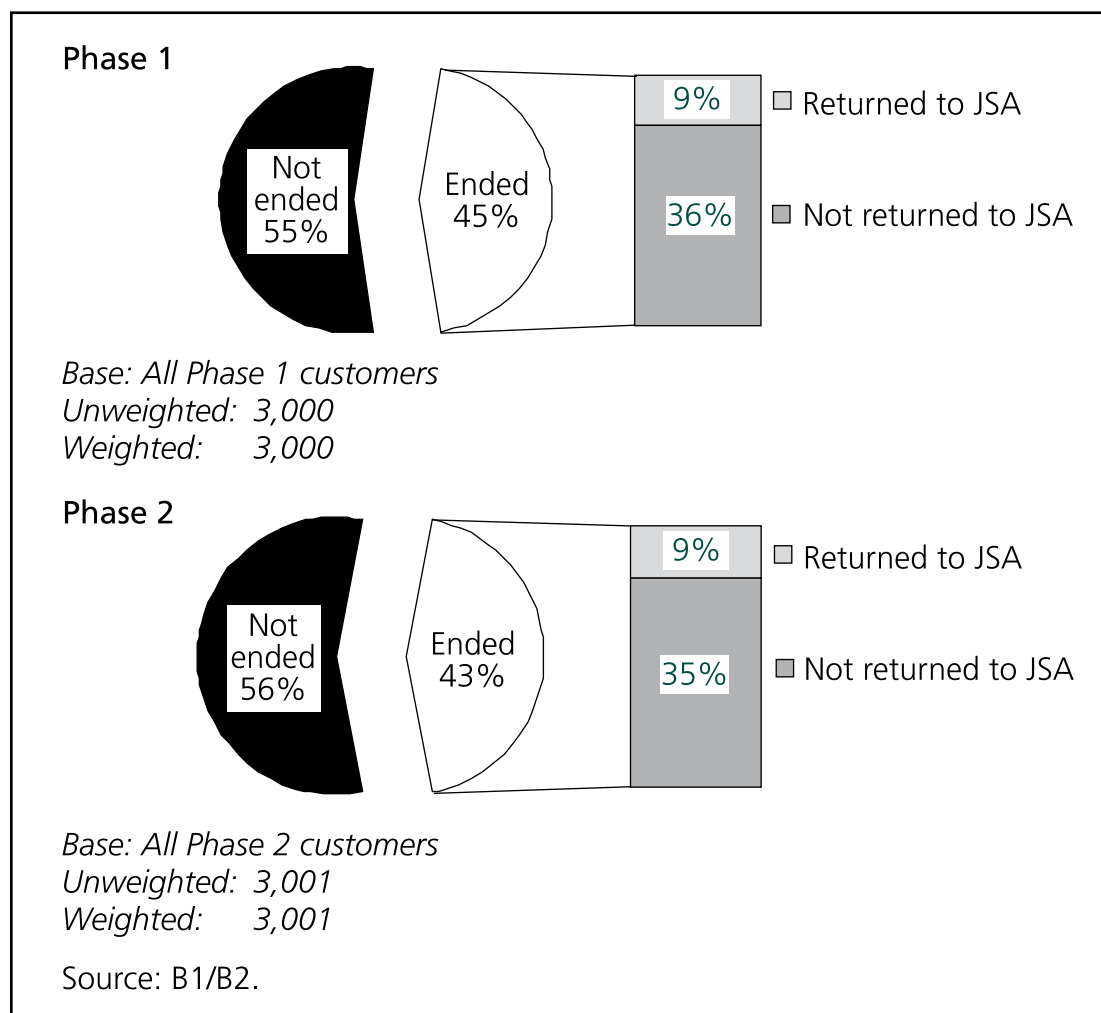
At an overall level there was no evidence that Stage 1 JRFND support was better (or worse) in helping customers end their claims than the support received during the first three months of regular JSA signing. Those in Phase 1 were slightly more likely to have ended their JSA claim than those in Phase 2 but this difference is not statistically significant (45% of customers in Phase 1 had done so and 43% in Phase 2). So, just over half of customers in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas (55% in Phase 1, 56% in Phase 2) had claimed JSA continuously for around three months since beginning their claims in June 2009 – again not a significant difference.

As well as showing the overall proportion of customers that had ended their JSA claim, Figure 11.1 also shows whether or not these customers had returned to claiming JSA by the time of the survey fieldwork. Those leaving the register in Phase 1 were just as likely to be leaving for a short time and then returning as those in Phase 2 – just under one in ten across both Phases (9% each) had ended

the claim they began in June but were claiming JSA again at the time of the survey fieldwork, with one per cent in both Phases also having ended this second claim and started a third claim. The temporary destinations for these customers are covered in the following chapter.

Overall, just over a third of customers in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas were not claiming JSA when interviewed (36% and 35% respectively, not a statistically significant difference). The current activities of these customers are discussed in the next chapter.

Figure 11.1 Whether by time of interview in September 2009 had ended JSA claim started in June 2009



The following types of customers were significantly more likely to have ended their JSA claim in Phase 1 than in Phase 2:

- Those aged 50 or over (48% in Phase 1 compared with 43% Phase 2 had ended their claim) –but only slightly (and not significantly) more likely to have entered paid work in Phase 1 than in Phase 2.

- Those who owned their home outright (57% in Phase 1 compared with 48% in Phase 2) – so the more financially secure were perhaps less willing in Phase 1 to undertake suggested activities or apply for suggested jobs.

However, where customers had ended their claim they were not significantly more likely to have entered paid work.

Likelihood of ending the original claim also varied by the type of support customers had received while claiming, with customers who had not experienced certain forms of support being significantly more likely to have ended their JSA claim in Phase 1 than in Phase 2, and significantly more likely to have entered paid work (as discussed in the following chapter).

- Those only offered an NJI and no other form of support (78% of those in Phase 1 and 47% of those in Phase 2 offered just NJI support). This suggests that Phase 1 has been most successful at identifying those that need minimal support (an NJI only) to get back into the job market
- Those whose claim lasted for at least six weeks but had no Back to Work Session (BtWS) (37% in Phase 1 compared with 27% in Phase 2).

Three in ten (31%) of those who had a BtWS in Phase 1 went on to end their claim – smaller than the overall proportion of customers leaving their claim in Phase 1 (45%) but also smaller when compared with those in Phase 1 whose claims lasted six weeks or longer who did not have a BtWS (37% or whom ended their claim). This may be a reflection of BtWS being targeted at those who are perceived to be in most need of additional support and therefore are furthest from the labour market³¹.

However, those who were offered a BtWS were more likely to have ended their claim than those whose claim lasted six weeks or longer in Phase 2 where BtWS were not available (27% of whom ended their claim).

The only group who were significantly more likely to have ended their claim in Phase 2 than in Phase 1 were those reporting a mental health condition (60% in Phase 2 compared to 35% in Phase 1)³².

11.3 Length of claim

Figure 11.2 illustrates length of claim at the time of the interview, with the top two bars showing length of claim for all customers, the middle two bars showing

³¹ While the intention is that the BtWS is attended by all customers during the sixth to ninth week of consecutive claiming findings from the evaluation suggest that it is being offered more selectively so far and in some cases later on in the claiming process.

³² Small base sizes should be taken into account here (unweighted: 48 in Phase 1, 46 in Phase 2) – although the difference reported is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

length of claim among customers who had left JSA and not returned and the bottom two bars among customers who had left JSA temporarily but were claiming again at the time of the survey fieldwork.

Customers in Phase 1 were no more or less likely to have ended their JSA claim earlier, with 12 per cent of all customers in Phase 1 ending their claim within three weeks of their NJI book date in Phase 1 and 11 per cent doing so in Phase 2. In both Phases a further one in six customers ended their claims in the second month of their claim (16% of those in Phase 1, 14% of those in Phase 2) with the remaining ten per cent in Phase 1 and 12 per cent in Phase 2 ending them nine weeks or more after their NJI book date. Neither of these differences is statistically significant. These similar patterns in claim lengths would mean that equal proportions of customers from both Phases would have been exposed to support from Jobcentre Plus offered later in the first three months of claiming.

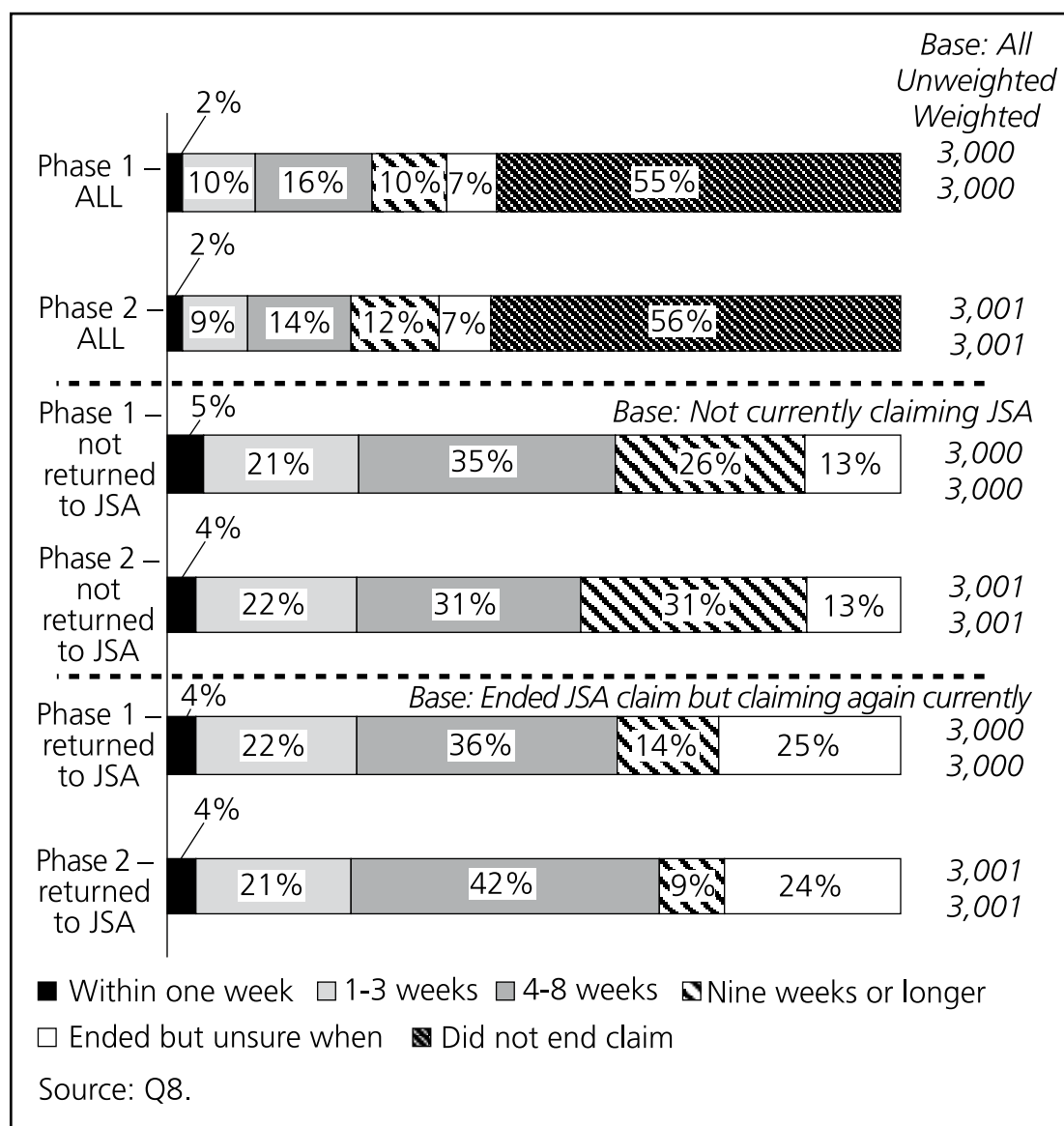
However, removing those customers from the analysis who had left the register for just a short time (i.e. looking solely at those customers who left JSA and who had not returned to JSA by the time of interview), those in Phase 1 were significantly more likely to have had a shorter claim, and to have moved off JSA sooner than their Phase 2 counterparts (61% did so within eight weeks in Phase 1 compared to 56% in Phase 2). Only just over a quarter (26%) of these customers in Phase 1 areas claimed for nine or more weeks compared with 31 per cent in Phase 2 areas. This suggests that those who end their claim and enter more sustainable destinations (as they remain not claiming) do so sooner in JRFND Phase 1 areas than those in Phase 2.

Although equally likely to have ended their claim in the first eight weeks, or indeed to be continuing to claim JSA, some customers were significantly more likely to have ended their claim after the nine week point in Phase 2 than in Phase 1. These were customers who may face barriers to work;

- PSA 16 customers (12% ended their claim after nine weeks in Phase 2 compared to just 4% in Phase 1). Bases sizes are too low to explore further the actual destinations of this group.
- Those whose highest qualification was below Level 2 (13% ended their claim after nine weeks in Phase 2 compared to 9% in Phase 1). The majority of these customers in both Phases paid work (57% in Phase 1 and 60% in Phase 2) – this is not a significant difference.

So it seems that upon reaching the nine week point the Phase 2 JSA signing regime is more effective in assisting some 'harder to help' customers to move off JSA than the Phase 1 JRFND Stage 1.

Figure 11.2 Length of JSA claim (weeks from NJI book date)



11.4 Claim status summary

Overall, similar proportions of customers in each Phase: had claimed continuously at the time of the interview – i.e. almost three months after starting a claim (just over half); had ended claims and not returned to the register (just over a third); and ended claims but then started claiming again by the time of the interview (just under 10%).

However, where customers had ended a claim and not returned to the register this was significantly more likely to have happened sooner (within eight weeks) for Phase 1 customers experiencing JRFND compared with Phase 2 customers under the old regime.

Looking just among customers who claimed for at least six weeks, those in Phase 1 who were asked to attend a BtWS were significantly more likely to end their claim compared with those claiming for the same length of time in Phase 2. Although we cannot conclude that this finding is definitely a result of the BtWS (the forthcoming impact analyses will explore causality in more detail) this would seem to be indication of success for JRFND Stage 1.

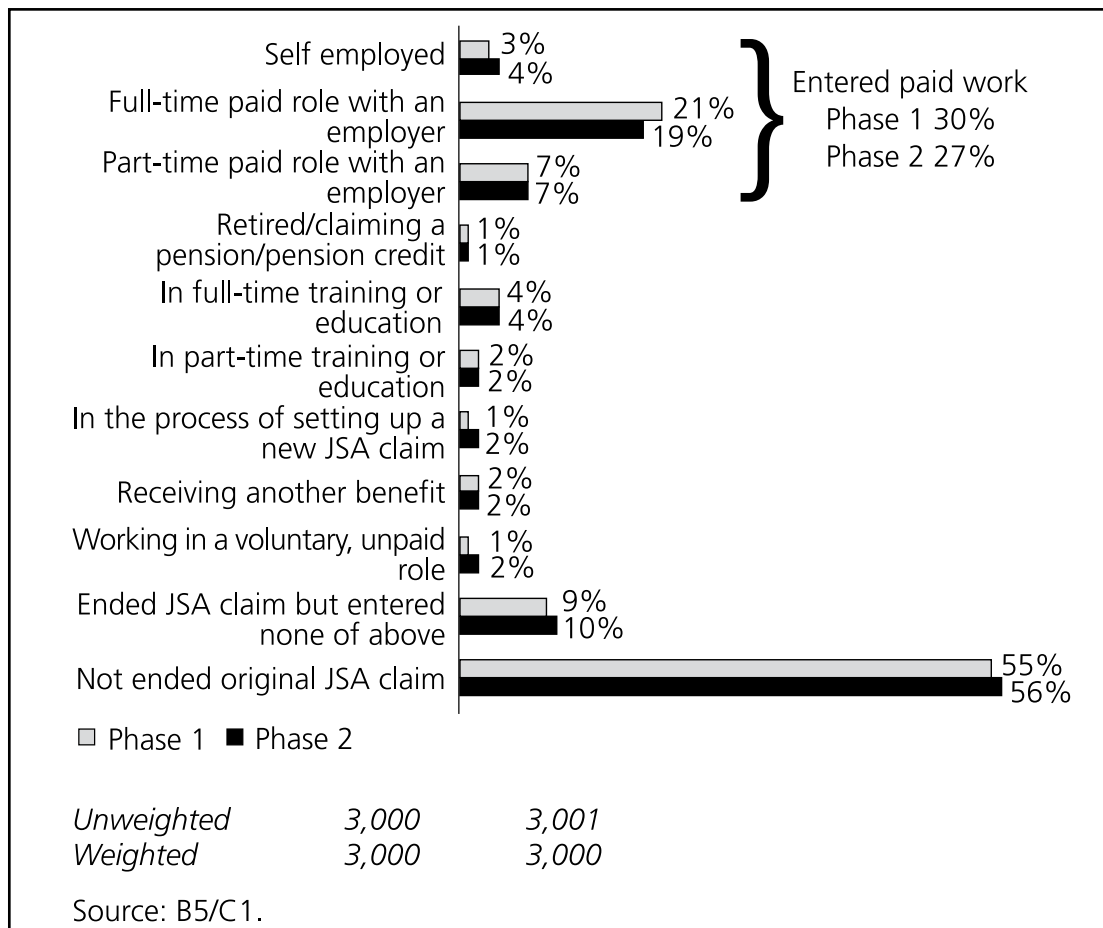
Older customers (aged 50 or over) and those who own their homes outright (and who therefore might be considered more financially secure) were significantly more likely to have ended their JSA claim within the first three months of claiming in Phase 1 than in Phase 2. However, these groups were not significantly more likely to have left JSA to enter paid work. This suggests that increased conditionality in Phase 1 areas may have been having a deterrent effect on some groups who were not willing to undertake suggested activities or apply for suggested jobs.

12 Outcomes: Entering paid work

12.1 Introduction

In both Phases the majority of customers had claimed Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) continuously from June 2009 (55% in Phase 1 areas and 56% in Phase 2 areas) until the time of interview around three months later, as discussed in the previous chapter. Figure 12.1 summarises the destinations of all customers.

Figure 12.1 All destinations



In this chapter the employment outcomes of those customers who reported ending the original JSA claim that they had started in June are explored (45% of those in Phase 1 and 43% of those in Phase 2). The destinations and likelihood of entering paid work of customers in Phase 1, with those in Phase 2 are compared. Initially reference is to all customers who ended their JSA claims whether or not they returned to claiming JSA. Later in the chapter we discuss these groups separately.

We focus primarily on three groups, all of whom had ended their JSA claims but at the time of the interview:

1. Were in paid work and not claiming JSA. Among this group we examine their current work only, not any previous work they may have done since ending the claim.
2. Had returned to claiming JSA, covering any work they may have done in the period between ending their claim and re-starting, but not any work they may have continued to do while claiming again.
3. Were neither claiming JSA nor in paid work, covering any work they may have done since ending their claim, given they were not in work at the time of the interview.

12.2 Entering paid work after ending claim

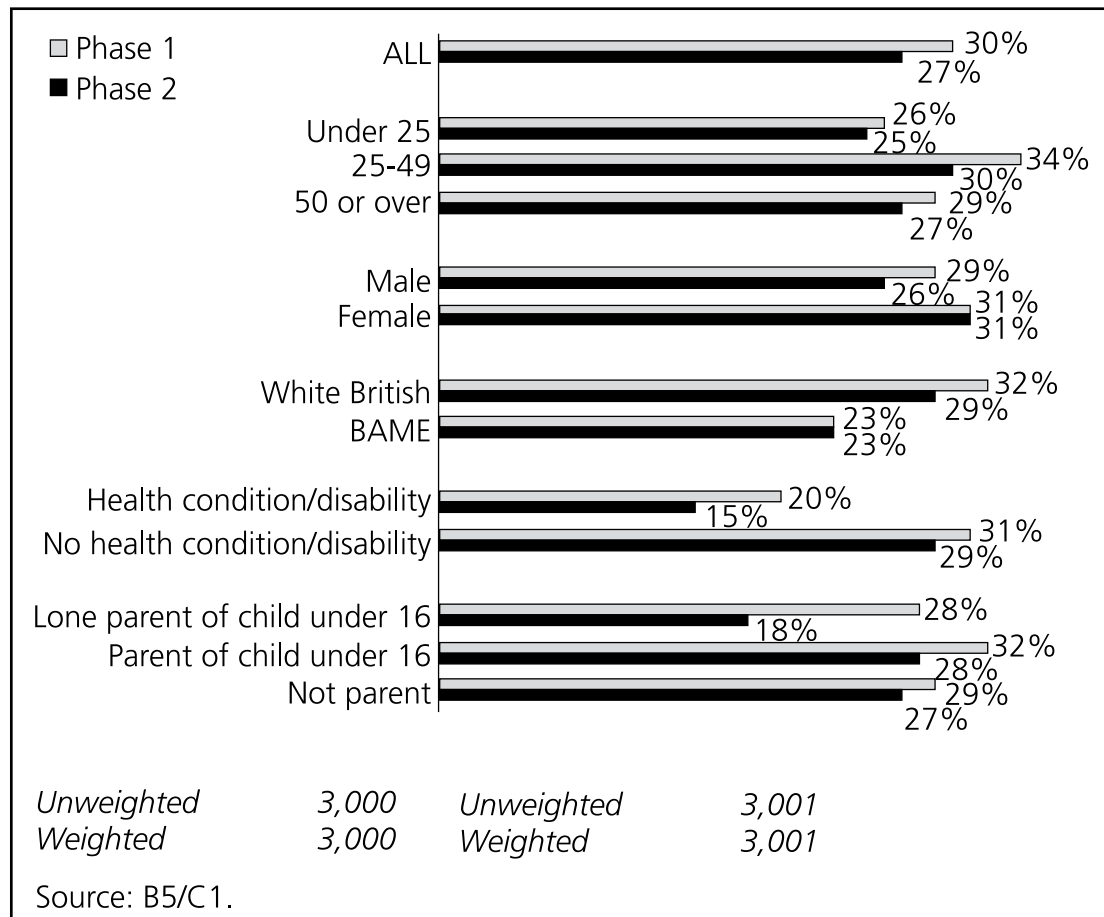
Phase 1 customers were significantly more likely to have entered paid work overall since ending their claim – 30% had done so compared with 27% in Phase 2 areas (see Figure 12.1 above).

This difference was driven by Phase 1 customers being significantly more likely to have been or be working full time (30 hours or more per week) for an employer in a paid role (21% compared with 18% of Phase 2 customers). Phase 2 customers were equally likely to have entered paid part time work with an employer (6% in each Phase), and slightly but not significantly more likely to have been or be self employed or freelancing (4% in Phase 2, 3% in Phase 1).

12.3 Customer types within Phase 1 who are less likely to enter paid work

At an overall level, Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND) Stage 1 (Phase 1) seemed slightly more effective than the Phase 2 regime in helping customers into paid work. As illustrated in Figure 12.2 and Figure 12.3, the likelihood to enter paid work varied by customer group within both Phases. However, no particular group was more likely to have entered paid work in Phase 2 than in Phase 1.

Figure 12.2 Those who entered paid work – by age, gender, ethnicity, health/disability and parental status

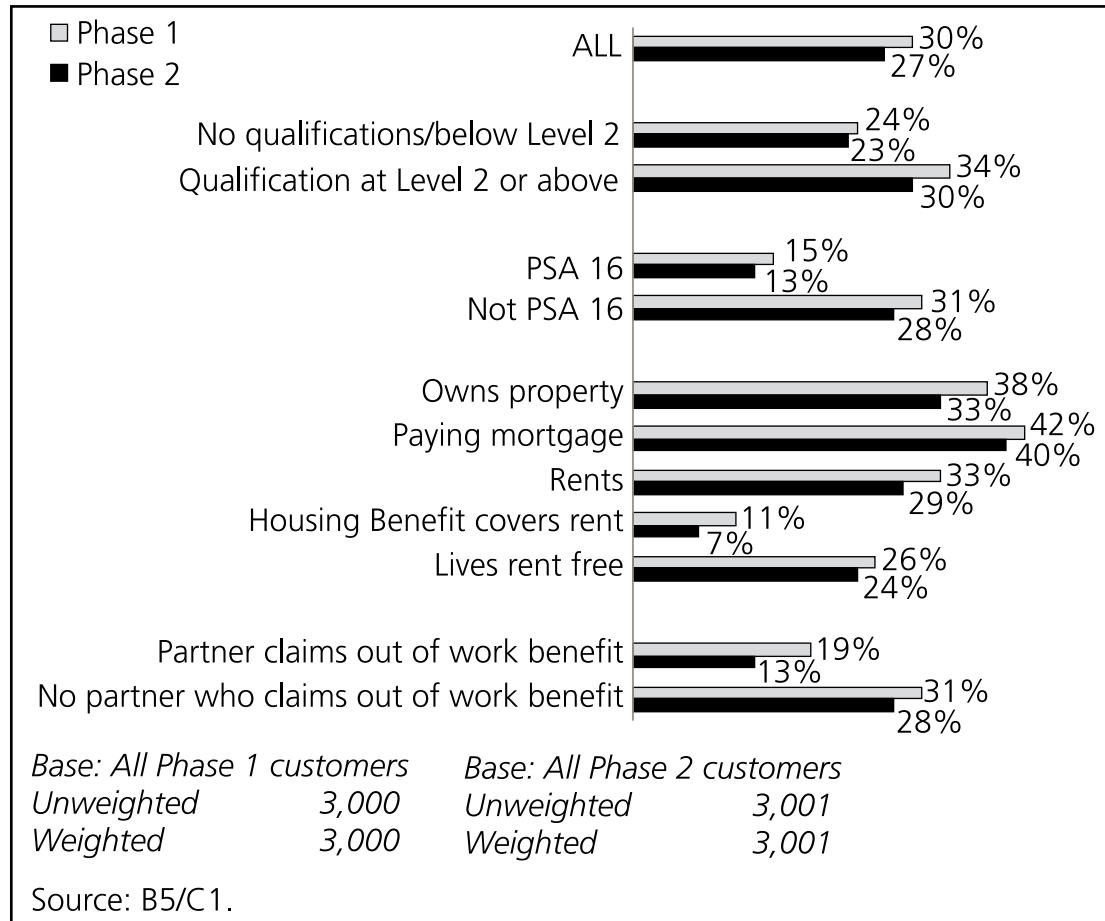


Looking first within Phase 1, some customers who may be considered ‘harder to help’ were significantly less likely to have entered paid work than customers in general in Phase 1, including those facing one or more PSA 16 barriers. Customers in this group were only half as likely to enter work than Phase 1 customers as a whole (only 15% had entered paid work), those who have a partner claiming an out of work benefit (19%), those who have a health condition or disability (20%) and those who hold no qualifications or low level qualifications below Level 2 (24%).

Young people under 25 (26%) were also significantly less likely to have entered work than Phase 1 customers generally.

Furthermore, customers who faced fewer financial pressures in terms of housing were significantly less likely to have entered work than customers in Phase 1 generally, with those who had their rent covered by Housing Benefit or who lived rent free being less likely than Phase 1 customers overall to have entered paid work (11% and 26% respectively). This could reflect the fact that these customers were not in need of a higher income as immediately as others who needed to pay mortgages or rent may have been and were content to wait longer for the ‘right’ job. It could also reflect a restraint that entering work might lead to a change in circumstances which would alter Housing Benefit eligibility.

Figure 12.3 Those who entered paid work – by qualification level, PSA 16 status, housing situation and partner's claiming status



Although all these customer types were significantly less likely than Phase 1 customers as a whole to have entered work, these patterns by customer group were also evident in Phase 2. It is perhaps not surprising that some 'harder to help' groups in Phase 1 were less likely to enter paid work than average during the first three months of claiming. Nor is it unexpected that these groups are no more likely to enter paid work than their 'harder to help' counterparts in Phase 2, given that the focus of Stage 1 JRFND is on self-managed job search rather than the provision of intensive support³³. Chapter 15 noted that certain forms of support were more likely to be offered to some of these harder to help groups in the first three months of claiming in Phase 1 areas, although the implication seems to be that this additional support did not necessarily translate into increased employment outcomes within the first three months of starting a claim.

³³ It should be noted that under the JRFND regime customers in need of more intensive support can be fast-tracked to Stage 3 provision upon starting a claim. According to the information on the sample supplied, no customers were included within this research that had been fast-tracked to Stage 3.

12.4 Customer types more likely to enter paid work in Phase 1 than in Phase 2

The following customers groups were significantly more likely to have entered paid work in Phase 1 than in Phase 2:

- Men (29% had entered paid work compared with 26% in Phase 2 – as noted above there was no difference in the likelihood of women entering paid work by Phase);
- White customers (32% had entered paid work in Phase 1 compared with 29% in Phase 2). By contrast, ethnic minority customers were equally likely to have entered paid work in both Phases (23% in each Phase);
- Customers aged 25-49 (34% had entered paid work in Phase 1, compared with 30% in Phase 2);
- Those with a qualification at Level 2 or above (34% had entered paid work in Phase 1, compared with 30% in Phase 2).

None of these customer groups would typically be thought of as further from the labour market than other customers, perhaps suggesting that Phase 1 has mainly been successful in helping those who might be considered 'easier to help' to return to paid work, more so than in Phase 2.

As mentioned above, those facing one or more PSA 16 barriers were significantly less likely to have entered work than other customers in both Phases (15% Phase 1, 13% Phase 2), but when broken down to the individual barrier level those with severe to moderate learning difficulties were significantly less likely to enter work than other customers in Phase 1 (17% had done so compared to 30% overall), but not in Phase 2 (21% compared to 27% overall). Indeed, customers in this group were slightly more likely to have entered work in Phase 2 than customers overall, making them the only group even slightly (but not significantly) more likely to have entered work in Phase 2 than in Phase 1.

In Phase 2 areas, lone parents were less likely to have entered paid work than other customers (only 18% compared with 27% overall),³⁴ but this was not the case in Phase 1, where 28 per cent of lone parents had done so, only a little less than the overall proportion of 30 per cent. This suggests that the reported improvements in confidence and motivation among lone parents in Phase 1 had, for some, translated into successful work outcomes.

³⁴ Due to the small base size for lone parents this difference is only statistically significant at the 92 per cent level rather than the 95 per cent level used throughout the report.

12.5 Length of claim, support offered and the likelihood of entering paid work

As reported in the previous chapter, those who ended their claims after at least nine weeks of claiming in Phase 1 were more likely to have entered paid work than those leaving the register after a similar period in Phase 2 (66% in Phase 1, compared to 58% in Phase 2), leaving longer claiming Phase 2 customers more likely to have a destination other than paid work. A similar pattern was observed among those ending their claim between four and eight weeks sooner (68% of those ending claims after four to eight weeks entered work in Phase 1 compared to 63% in Phase 2). There was little difference in likelihood to enter paid work among those leaving the register within three weeks by Phase.

This could point to the support under JRFND Stage 1 becoming more effective as the claim continues, more so than under the JSA signing regime in Phase 2. This could perhaps be explained by the introduction of the Back to Work Session (BtWS), typically offered at weeks 6-13 of the claim in Phase 1 areas, as there are no other differences the support offered over the course of the first three months of claiming between Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas.

However, the survey cannot reliably conclude that BtWS are responsible for the findings described above. There may also be influences such as differing labour markets across the two Phases, or different approaches used by advisers in Phase 1.

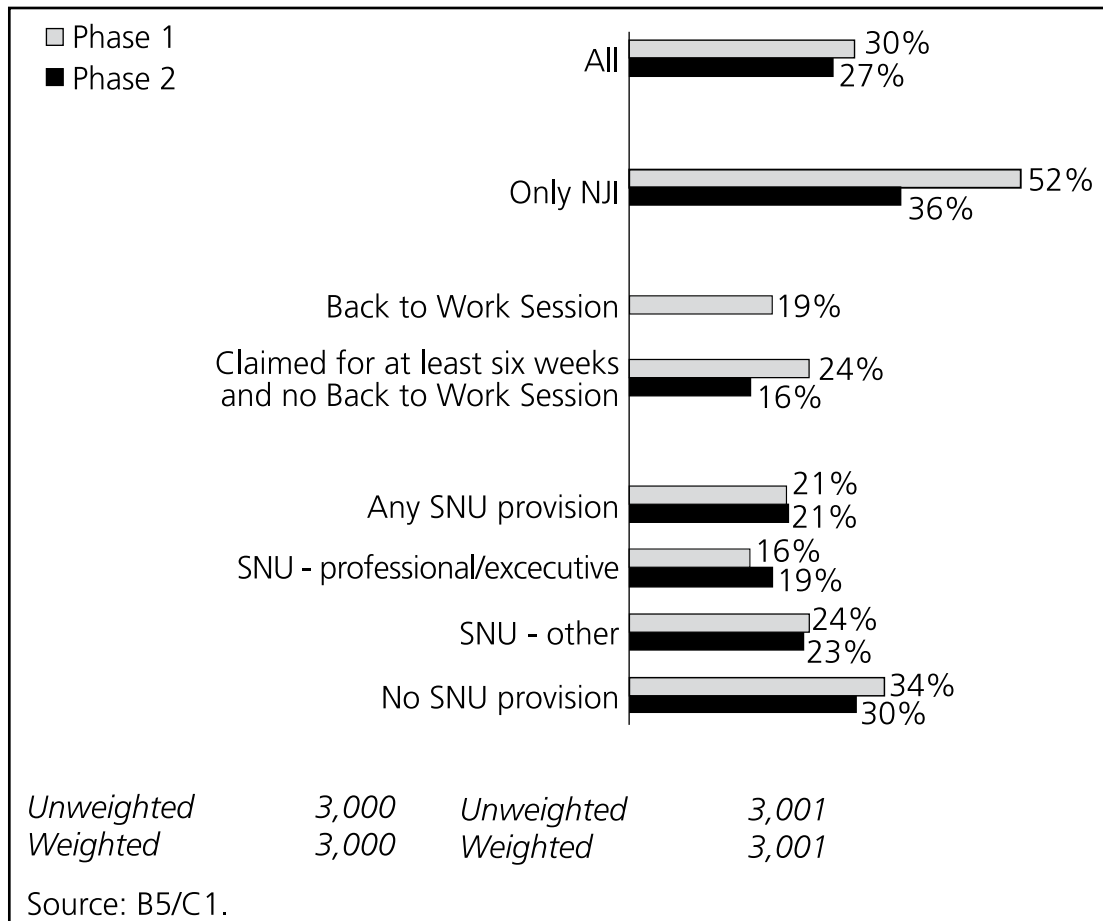
In general, those who did not report receiving a great deal of support from Jobcentre Plus (i.e. who mentioned only a New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) or had no Support for the Newly Unemployed (SNU) provision) were more likely across both Phases to have entered paid work. Those who had been offered more support (SNU, BtWS or more than the NJI alone) were less likely to have done so, as shown in Figure 12.4 which presents the proportion of customers entering paid work by the different support offered. This finding is likely to be explained by the fact that across both Phases, but particularly in Phase 1, support is targeted at customers who are identified as needing additional help and who are furthest from the labour market.

However, these differences were particularly marked in Phase 1 areas. Those who received less support in Phase 1 were significantly more likely to have entered paid work compared with both Phase 1 customers generally and their equivalents (i.e. those who received less support) in Phase 2.

Those only offered an NJI and no other form of support in Phase 1 were significantly more likely to have entered paid work than those offered a comparable level of support in Phase 2. In Phase 1, over half (52%) of customers who had only been offered an NJI had entered paid work but in Phase 2 just over a third (36%) had done so. NJIs are not vastly different in Stage 1 JRFND from those in Phase 2, so it does not seem likely that this is a difference caused solely by the content of the NJI. Who is being offered access to extra support on top of the NJI and who is not,

as discussed above, seems to be the most important factor. The implication is that those not offered any additional support in Phase 1 areas are those who are most able to manage their own job search effectively.

Figure 12.4 Those who entered paid work – by Jobcentre Plus support offered



Customers who entered paid work in both Phases were more commonly those who were closest to the labour market (as discussed earlier in this chapter), and less commonly the ‘harder to help’ groups in need of the most tailored support. This effect seemed even more prevalent in Phase 1 areas, where men, those aged 25-49 and those with a Level 2 qualification or above were more likely to enter paid work in Phase 1 than in Phase 2. This is linked to the finding that those only offered an NJI in Phase 1 areas were significantly more likely to enter paid work than those only offered an NJI in Phase 2 – when only offered an NJI a slight majority of Phase 1 customers (52%) entered paid work. However, in Phase 2 areas, a minority of customers only offered the NJI and no additional support found paid work (36%).

This suggests that support was being offered in a more targeted way in Phase 1 areas, with support being directed at those who need it most and less commonly offered to those who were able to obtain work within the first three months

of claiming anyway. Correspondingly, this suggests that a good proportion of customers in Phase 2 may have benefited from additional support that they did not receive.

It is difficult to say what accounts for the higher proportions of Phase 1 customers finding paid work compared with Phase 2, as it does not appear to be a result of the nature of the support offered during the first three months of claiming. It is possible that it is linked to the message of increased conditionality within Phase 1 areas that may have been conveyed at the NJI.

Overall, take-up of SNU provision (available in both Phases) does not appear to have increased the likelihood of entering paid work: only 21 per cent of those in each Phase who were offered this entered paid work. This is also likely to be a reflection of the fact that SNU was targeted at those perceived to be furthest from the labour market and in need of the most support (and therefore less likely to find employment quickly), rather than SNU provision itself reducing the chances of employment.

When SNU provision is broken down into the two separate elements there is still no significant difference between phases in the likelihood of customers entering paid work. Within each Phase, those offered the professional/executive SNU provision were significantly less likely to have entered paid work than customers overall in their Phase (16% had done so in Phase 1 compared to 30% overall and 19% had done so in Phase 2 compared to 27% overall). However, only within Phase 1 were those offered the general SNU support significantly more likely to have entered paid work than those offered the professional/executive SNU (24% had done so compared to just 16%).

Similarly, only within Phase 1 were those offered the general SNU support significantly less likely to have entered work than customers overall in the Phase (24% compared to 30% overall). In Phase 2 those offered general SNU were not significantly less likely to enter work than customers overall (23% compared to 27%), nor were they significantly less likely to do so compared to those offered the professional/executive SNU support (23% compared to 19%).

Within Phase 1 a quarter (24%) of those who had claimed continuously for at least six weeks but had not had a BtWS went on to enter paid work, compared with less than a fifth (19%) of those who had been offered a BtWS. However, it is interesting to note that those who did have a BtWS were significantly more likely to have entered work than those in Phase 2 (where the BtWS was not available) who would have claimed for around the same length of time (six weeks or more) – 19 per cent compared to 16 per cent.

To summarise, JRFND Stage 1 customers are slightly, albeit significantly, more likely to have entered paid work than customers experiencing the former JSA regime in Phase 2. Those entering paid work in Phase 1 tend to be those who might be considered closer to the labour market, and those who may be considered 'harder to help' are no more likely to enter paid work in Phase 1 than in Phase 2

(though nor are they less likely). Thus, Phase 1 provision seems to be slightly more effective in moving job-ready customers into work within the first three months of claiming. However, this analysis does not control for factors affecting entry to work. The forthcoming impact analyses will present robust evidence on work and benefit outcomes from causal analysis, and these will be reported in 2010.

12.6 Types of paid work

The most common form of work entered was full-time paid work with an employer, with those in Phase 1 areas being slightly, but significantly, more likely to have entered this type of work since ending their JSA claim than those in Phase 2 areas (20% in Phase 1 compared to 18% in Phase 2), as shown in Figure 12.5³⁵. Part-time employment was the main or most recent paid activity for a further seven per cent in Phase 1 and six per cent in Phase 2 and self-employment or freelancing was for a further three per cent in each Phase.

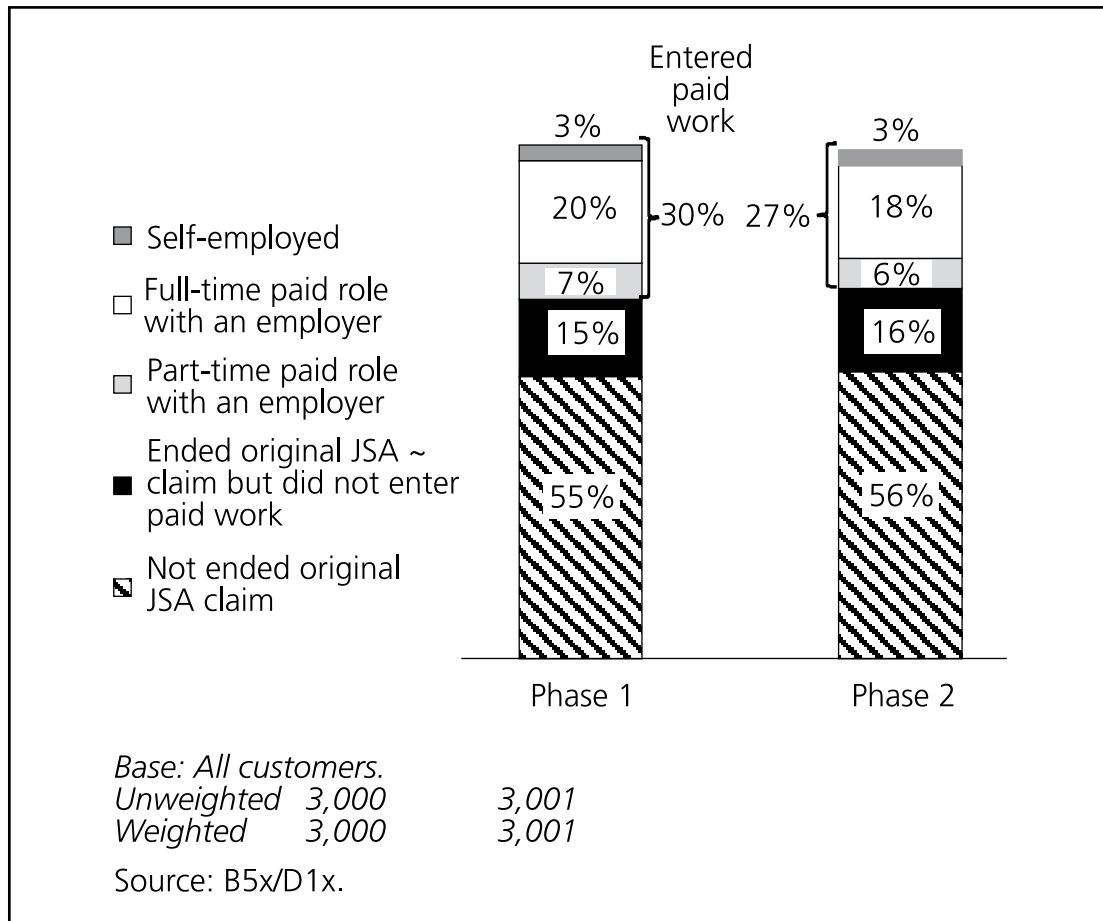
Looking just among those customers who entered paid work there were no significant differences by Phase in types of work entered with over two-thirds of those entering paid work in each Phase entering full-time work with an employer (68% in Phase 1, and 65% in Phase 2), over a fifth entering part-time work (22% Phase 1 and 23% Phase 2) and at least a tenth becoming self-employed (10% Phase 1, 12% Phase 2).

Some customers reported having entered multiple forms of paid work concurrently. Most frequently this involved customers reporting self-employment or freelancing in combination with working full time for an employer (17% of those whose main or most recent role was self-employment or freelancing had been or were working for an employer full time in Phase 1, compared with 25% in Phase 2). However, this may have been those actually freelancing or contracted to a company reporting both outcomes even though it was only one role.

Figure 12.5 illustrates customers' main role, or if they were not currently working, but had worked since ending their claim, their most recent role.

³⁵ If the customer had taken up more than one form of paid work they were asked to identify their 'main' (if currently working) or most recent (if returned to claiming JSA or no longer currently working) job to enable later questions about their work to focus on one role.

Figure 12.5 Main or most recent type of paid work entered



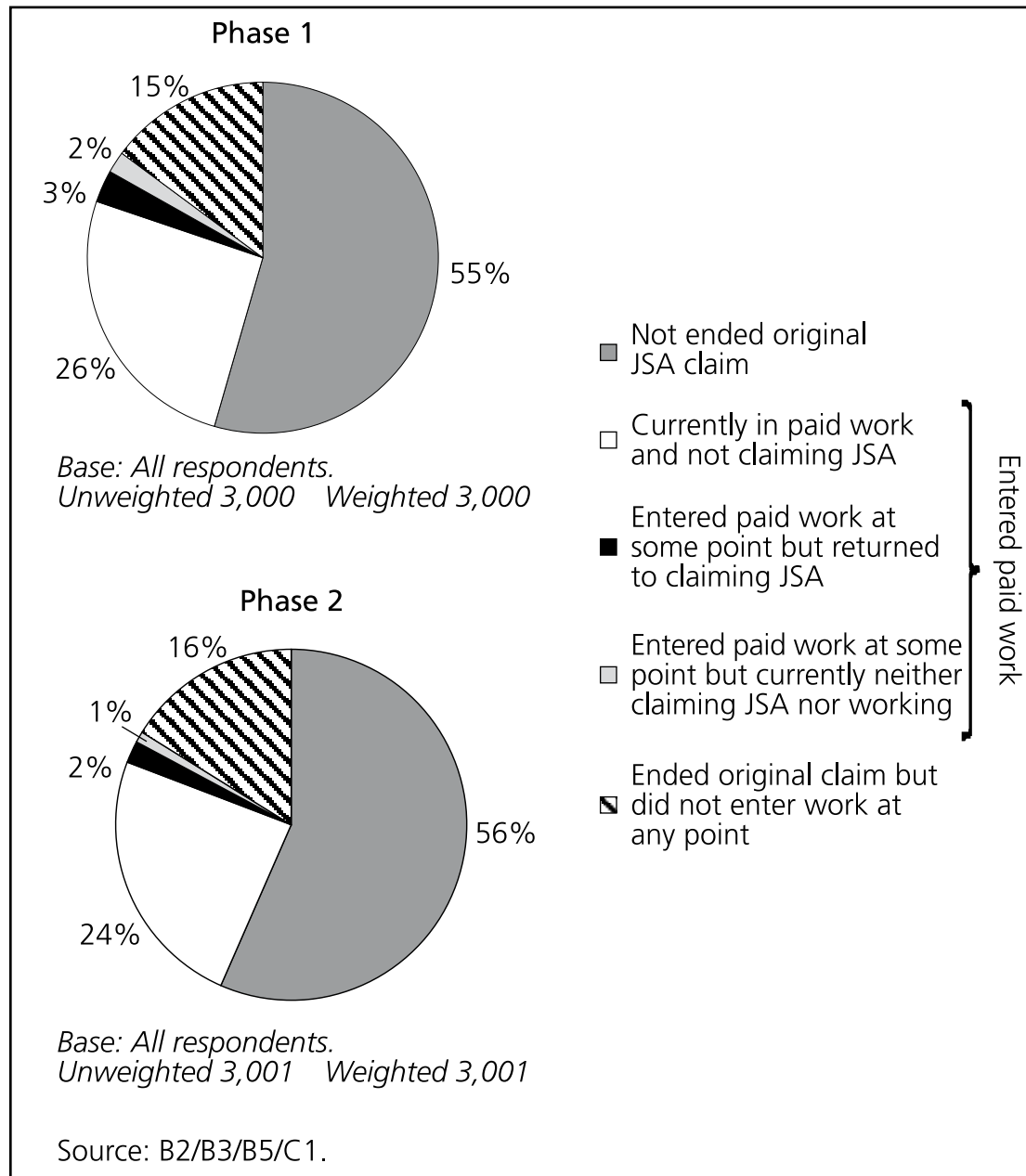
We go on to examine the type of work in terms of pay, hours, contract, sector and occupation in Chapter 7.

12.7 Remaining in paid work (not returning to JSA)

Figure 12.6 shows employment and claim status at the time of the interview. The proportion of customers who ended their JSA claim, had not returned to JSA claiming and were working at the time of the interview is consistent across Phase – a quarter in each (26% in Phase 1 and 24% in Phase 2). Just under a fifth (18% in Phase 1 and 17% in Phase 2) were working full time (30 hours or more per week) for an employer as their main job.

The only difference by customer group across Phase that emerges at this 'current' work level which was not present at the 'any' work level is that those customers with a child under 16 were significantly more likely to be in paid work at the time of the interview than their Phase 2 counterparts (30% in Phase 1 compared with 24% in Phase 2).

Figure 12.6 Whether entered paid work and/or returned to JSA claiming



12.8 Leaving paid work or returning to JSA claiming

As illustrated in Figure 12.6, only small proportions of customers in either Phase had returned to JSA claiming after being in paid work (3% in Phase 1 and 2% in Phase 2)³⁶. Even smaller numbers were no longer in paid work nor had returned to claiming JSA (a further 2% in Phase 1 and 1% in Phase 2).

³⁶ Some in this group may actually have continued in paid work earning below the threshold.

There are a few points to note about the profile of these customers who had worked at some point since ending the JSA claim, but who were not working at the time of interview in Phase 1 areas:

- Approaching half (45%) of all those in this situation were younger customers (18-24 years old) compared with just a third (33%) of all those still in work at the time of the interview.
- They were twice as likely as those who were still in work at the time of the interview to be customers with a health problem or a disability (12% compared with 6%).

These patterns were not replicated in Phase 2 areas. However, in Phase 2 areas those who had worked at some point since ending the JSA claim, but who were not working at the time of the interview were significantly more likely than those still in work to be repeat claimants (62% had claimed JSA before compared with 49% of those who were still in work). This difference was not observed in Phase 1 areas. Those in Phase 1 who had ended their original claim but had returned to JSA claiming or were no longer working at the time of the interview were significantly more likely to have been in paid work at some point than those in Phase 2 (23% of those ending the original claim but starting another claim in Phase 1 compared with 18% in Phase 2), reflecting the overall greater likelihood of Phase 1 customers having entered work compared with Phase 2. This difference was more exaggerated among certain groups in Phase 1 who might be considered closer to the labour market, including those who:

- Held qualifications at Level 2 or above (25% in Phase 1 and 18% in Phase 2)
- Did not have children under 16 (24% in Phase 1 and 17% in Phase 2)
- Were under 25 (23% in Phase 1 and 15% in Phase 2)
- Had not claimed JSA before (20% in Phase 1 and 14% in Phase 2)

Therefore it seems that in Phase 1 these customers (who may find it easier to obtain work), although more likely to end their original claim and enter paid work, are less likely to find this work sustainable and were either no longer in paid work or had returned to JSA claiming at the point of interview. The outcomes for those neither working nor claiming JSA are discussed in the following chapter.

12.9 Summary

Phase 1 customers were slightly, albeit significantly, more likely to have entered paid work (and full-time work for an employer specifically) than Phase 2 customers.

The customer groups that were more likely to enter paid work in Phase 1 areas than in Phase 2 areas appear to be those who were nearest the labour market or facing fewer barriers to employment (and linked to this are those who received minimal Stage 1 JRFND support), such as those aged 25-49 and those with a

highest qualification of Level 2 and above. Harder to help customers, such as those in the PSA 16 groups, were no more or less likely to have entered paid work in Phase 1 than in Phase 2.

In both Phases, young people were significantly less likely to have entered work than customers generally, while those aged 25-49 were the most likely to have entered work, and were significantly more likely to have done so in Phase 1 than in Phase 2.

The longer customers claimed, the less likely they were to have entered paid work if and when they did end their claim. While this was evident across both Phases it was much less marked in Phase 1 areas – that is, those ending their claim in the third month of consecutive claiming in Phase 1 were significantly more likely to go into paid work than those leaving the register at a similar point in Phase 2.

Previous chapters show that lone parents in Phase 1 areas were more likely to receive SNU provision and were more likely to express positive views about the support received from Jobcentre Plus. This appeared to be translating into employment outcomes, with lone parents in Phase 1 areas being just as likely as other customers to enter paid work (whereas in Phase 2 areas lone parents were significantly less likely than other customers to do so).

13 Outcomes: Destinations other than paid employment

This chapter discusses the other destinations (aside from paid employment) of customers who ended the original Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claim they had started in June 2009. We explore the likelihood of entering non-paid work destinations, looking at those entering education or training, retiring, taking up voluntary unpaid work or ending claims for other reasons.

Here we report on all customers who ended their original JSA claim, again focusing on three main groups, those who ended their JSA claims and at the time of the interview:

1. Were in paid work and not claiming JSA, discussing other current activities that they were doing alongside paid work (for example, in training, education or claiming a benefit other than JSA) but not exploring any previous destinations since ending the claim (such as previous training or other benefit claims).
2. Were neither claiming JSA nor in paid work, describing other current activities (for example in training, education or claiming a benefit other than JSA), as well as any outcomes they experienced during the period in which they were not claiming JSA.
3. Had returned to claiming JSA, capturing any outcomes they experienced during the period in which they were not claiming JSA, but not covering any other current activities they may do whilst now claiming JSA again.

Multiple destinations were recorded so if a customer entered paid work and training we discuss the training element. We do not capture whether customers who remained on a continuous JSA claim throughout the period also entered any other destinations although some may have entered other destinations such as training or voluntary work. In Chapter 9 we covered any training or voluntary activities which may have been offered by the Jobcentre Plus.

13.1 Not entering paid work

Overall 15 per cent of Phase 1 customers and 16 per cent of Phase 2 customers ended their JSA claim, but did not enter paid work at any point, as shown in Figure II 12.6. Among these customers, just under a fifth in each Phase had entered training or education at some point (19% Phase 1 and 21% in Phase 2), equivalent to three per cent of all customers in each Phase.

At an overall level there is no evidence that Phase 1 customers were any more (or less) likely than Phase 2 customers to leave JSA without entering paid work. Indeed there are several groups who were significantly more likely to have ended a claim, but not moved into paid work (detail of their destinations is outlined in the following sections) within Phase 2 than in Phase 1;

- Those with a health problem or disability (22% in Phase 2 and 15% in Phase 1).
- Those who reported having a mental health condition (49% in Phase 2 compared to just 21% in Phase 1)³⁷.
- Those facing PSA 16 barriers (19% Phase 2 versus 13% Phase 1).

However, those who were only offered a New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) and no other form of support were more likely to report ending a claim without moving into paid work in Phase 1 than in Phase 2 (26% and 11% respectively).

Around one in twenty customers had ended their original JSA claim, had not entered paid work and had returned to claiming JSA at the time of the interview (5% Phase 1 and 6% Phase 2). This left around one in ten (9% in Phase 1 and 10% in Phase 2) who had ended their claim, did not enter paid work at any point and had not (yet) returned to claiming JSA.

13.2 Entering unpaid work

Very small proportions of customers in each Phase had taken up voluntary, unpaid work or internships with an employer (1% Phase 1, 2% Phase 2).

13.3 Entering training or education

Phase 1 customers were significantly less likely to have ended their claims and entered training or education (5%) than in Phase 2 (6%), although this is clearly not a large difference. Within Phase 1 those significantly more likely to have ended their claims and entered training or education were:

- Younger people (8% of those under 25 compared to 5% of those 25-49 and just 2% of those 50 or over).

³⁷ Although a statistically significant difference, the small base sizes should be taken into account here (unweighted: 48 in Phase 1, 46 in Phase 2).

- Those with a Level 2 qualification or higher (7% compared to 4% of those with no or lower qualifications).
- Those who had not previously claimed JSA (7% compared to 5% of those who had previously claimed).

These were also the customers more likely to have entered training or education in Phase 2 so again there is no evidence that the Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND) Stage 1 regime was having any influence on customers' decisions to end their claims and enter training instead.

In each Phase those who ended their claims and entered training or education were more likely to have entered paid work at some point than customers in general, with just under half of these customers in each Phase doing so at some point, (48% of those in Phase 1 and 42% in Phase 2), compared to the three in ten in general in each Phase (30% Phase 1, 27% Phase 2). Part-time work was the most common employment outcome for those who had ended their original claim and entered training or education: 19% of those entering part time work in Phase 1 and 14% of those in Phase 2 had also taken up training or education at some point. However none of these differences between Phases are significant.

13.4 Returning to JSA claiming

At the time of the interview, a small minority (1% in Phase 1 and 2% in Phase 2) were in the process of setting up a new JSA claim. Those who moved quickly off JSA (within three weeks) in Phase 1 were significantly more likely to now be setting up a new JSA claim again (4%) than those ending their claim within three weeks in Phase 2 (1%).

In addition, a further nine per cent in each Phase had ended the JSA claim started in June, but were claiming JSA again when interviewed in September. This outcome was the same in both Phases.

13.5 Moving onto another benefit for the out of work

A small proportion in each Phase (2%) reported moving off JSA to start a claim for a different out of work benefit, most commonly Incapacity Benefit/Employment and Support Allowance, or Income Support. Again, there were no significant differences by Phase.

13.6 Retiring, claiming a pension or Pension Credit

Overall one per cent in each Phase had ended their claim due to retirement, or were starting to claim Pension Credit.

13.7 Other destinations

Almost one in ten customers in each Phase (9% Phase 1 and 10% Phase 2) ended their claim but had not entered work (either paid or unpaid), training or education, started a new benefit claim or retired at any point since ending their claim. Again there is no evidence that Phase 1 customers were deciding to leave for these 'other' destinations more commonly than Phase 2 customers.

An 'other' destination was more likely to be an outcome for those in Phase 2 who reported having a mental health condition (17% in Phase 2 compared to just 4% in Phase 1).³⁸

Some of these customers then returned to JSA signing leaving less than one in twenty customers overall in each Phase (4% in each) neither claiming JSA or another benefit, nor in paid or unpaid work, training or education, nor retired. The most common reason for having ended their JSA claim was being told they were no longer eligible or their benefit being stopped (2% in each Phase) or simply deciding not to claim (1% in each Phase). There is some suggestion of a proportion perhaps not agreeing to the conditions of claiming JSA within their respective regimes, but it does not point to this being any more prevalent in Phase 1 under JRFND than in Phase 2 under existing JSA signing.

Overall, there is no indication that the JRFND Stage 1 regime is having a marked influence on customers' decisions to end their claims, with customers equally likely to end claims, but not enter paid work in Phase 2 as they are in Phase 1.

13.8 Summary

Around one in seven customers in each Phase had ended their JSA claim but had not entered paid work at any point. Among these customers, in each Phase just under a third had entered training or education. Other destinations (taking up voluntary work, moving on to another benefit, retiring or claiming a pension or returning to JSA claiming) were mentioned by very small proportions of customers and there were no significant differences by Phase.

Overall, there was no indication that the JRFND Stage 1 regime is having a marked influence on customers' decisions to end their claims, with customers as likely to end claims but not enter paid work in Phase 2 as in Phase 1.

³⁸ Small base sizes should be taken into account here (unweighted: 48 in Phase 1, 46 in Phase 2).

14 Outcomes: Nature of employment

14.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on customers who had entered work (either paid or unpaid) at some point since ending their June 2009 Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claim and discusses the nature of the employment entered by Phase. It explores differences in the employment outcomes of customers still in work at the time of the interview compared with those who had been in work at some point since ending their claim³⁹, but had either returned to JSA claiming or were no longer in employment at the time of the interview.

This chapter will concentrate specifically on the following issues:

- contract type and number of hours worked;
- broad industry sector;
- occupation;
- take up of tax credits;
- salary.

14.2 Number of hours worked

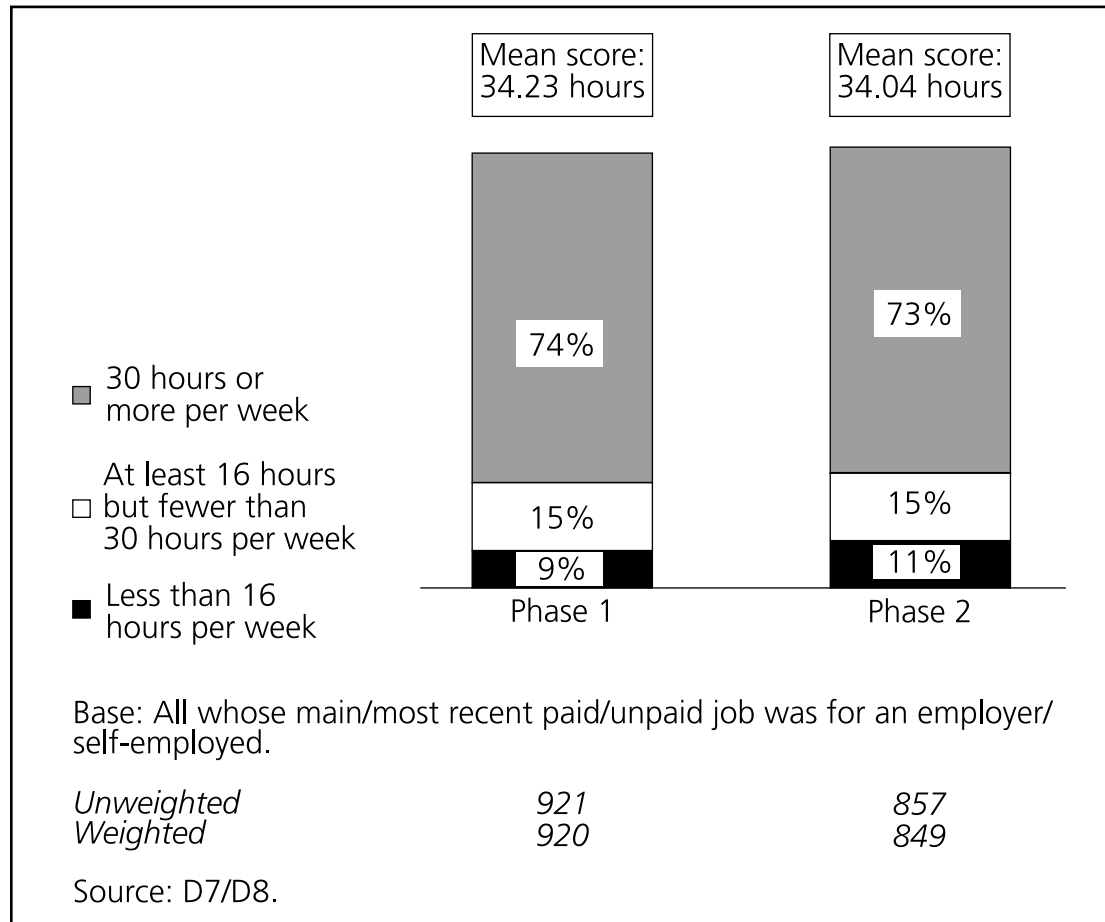
As reported in Chapter 12, among those who had left JSA and entered paid work this was usually full-time paid work for an employer (68% in Phase 1 and 65% in Phase 2). Just over a fifth had worked part-time for an employer (22% in Phase 1

³⁹ Where customers had more than one paid job since ending their JSA claim or had more than one job at the time of interview and they were asked about their main (if currently working in more than one role) or most recent role. These findings therefore do not take into account any other employment that customers may have had since ending their original claim.

and 23% in Phase 2). Around one in ten were working on a self-employed basis (10% in Phase 1 and 12% in Phase 2).

Figure 14.1 shows the numbers of hours worked by customers (either paid or unpaid) in their main or most recent job role.

Figure 14.1 Number of hours worked per week



The average number of hours worked per week was 34, reflecting the fact that most customers were working full time. This does not differ by Phase.

Demographically some variation in the number of hours worked emerged between the Phases:

- Men in Phase 1 areas were significantly less likely to work less than 16 hours per week than men in Phase 2 areas (6% compared to 10%).
- Phase 1 customers with children under the age of five years were significantly less likely to work part time than those with children of the same age in Phase 2 areas (6% compared to 17%).

Phase 1 customers with no mortgage or rent payment pressures (as derived from their stated housing situation during the interview) worked significantly more hours per week on average than their counterparts in Phase 2 areas (33 hours in Phase 1

areas compared with 30 hours per week in Phase 2 areas). Some differences were observed in full-time compared with part-time working by whether a customer was still in work at the time of the interview or whether the employment had ended. Table 14.1 shows the percentage of customers working 30 hours or more per week by working status at the time of interview across Phase.

Table 14.1 Proportion working 30 hours or more per week, by working status at time of interview and Phase

			Percentage working 30 hours or more per week	
<i>Phase 1 base</i>	<i>Phase 2 base</i>	Working status at time of interview	Phase 1	Phase 2
<i>Unweighted</i>	<i>Unweighted</i>			
<i>Weighted</i>	<i>Weighted</i>			
779	726	In paid work at the time of interview	76%	75%
784	728			
142	131	Had worked at some point since ending the JSA claim, but not working at the time of interview	66%	59%
136	120			

Base: All customers in paid or unpaid work at some point since ending their JSA claim.

Note: Table shows row percentages.

Across both Phases, customers who were still in work at the time of interview were significantly more likely to work 30 hours or more per week on average, compared to those who had been working but left work by the time of interview.

Looking among those who had worked at some point after ending their claim but were no longer in work at the time of the interview, around three in ten (59%) of those in Phase 2 areas had been employed in roles offering 30 hours or more work per week, compared with two-thirds (66%) of their counterparts in Phase 1 areas (although this seven percentage point difference is not statistically significant).

14.3 Channel by which employment was gained

Just under a third of customers in paid work (31% in both Phase 1 and Phase 2) gained their employment through an agency. Customers in Phase 1 areas who had not previously claimed JSA were significantly less likely to have used an employment agency to gain their employment than their counterparts in Phase 2 areas (77% in Phase 1 had not done so, compared to 69% in Phase 2). So, these customers who were less accustomed to being out of work were less likely to take up the services of an agency in Phase 1 than Phase 2.

Most of these customers were being paid by the agency, not the employer, this being the case for significantly more customers in Phase 1 than Phase 2 (78%

compared with 68% respectively). This difference is particularly marked for some particular customer groups:

- Women, who in Phase 1 areas were significantly more likely than women in Phase 2 areas to be paid by an agency (81% compared to 66%).
- Those in the 50+ age band (85% in Phase 1 compared with 68% in Phase 2).

Table 14.2 shows the proportion of customers in each Phase who gained their employment via an agency by working status at the time of interview. In both Phases, those who were still in paid work at the time of interview were significantly less likely to have gained their employment through an agency than those whose paid employment had ended by the time of interview. In Phase 1, over two in five (44%) of all customers who had gained and then left employment or returned to JSA claiming by the time of the interview had gained this employment via an agency.

Table 14.2 Proportion who gained employment through an agency, by working status at time of interview and Phase

<i>Phase 1 base</i>	<i>Phase 2 base</i>	Working status at time of interview	Percentage who gained employment through an agency	
			Phase 1	Phase 2
<i>Unweighted</i>	<i>Unweighted</i>			
<i>Weighted</i>	<i>Weighted</i>			
692	631	In paid work at the time of interview	28%	30%
700	635			
121	100	Had worked at some point since ending the JSA claim, but not working at the time of interview	44%	40%
113	89			

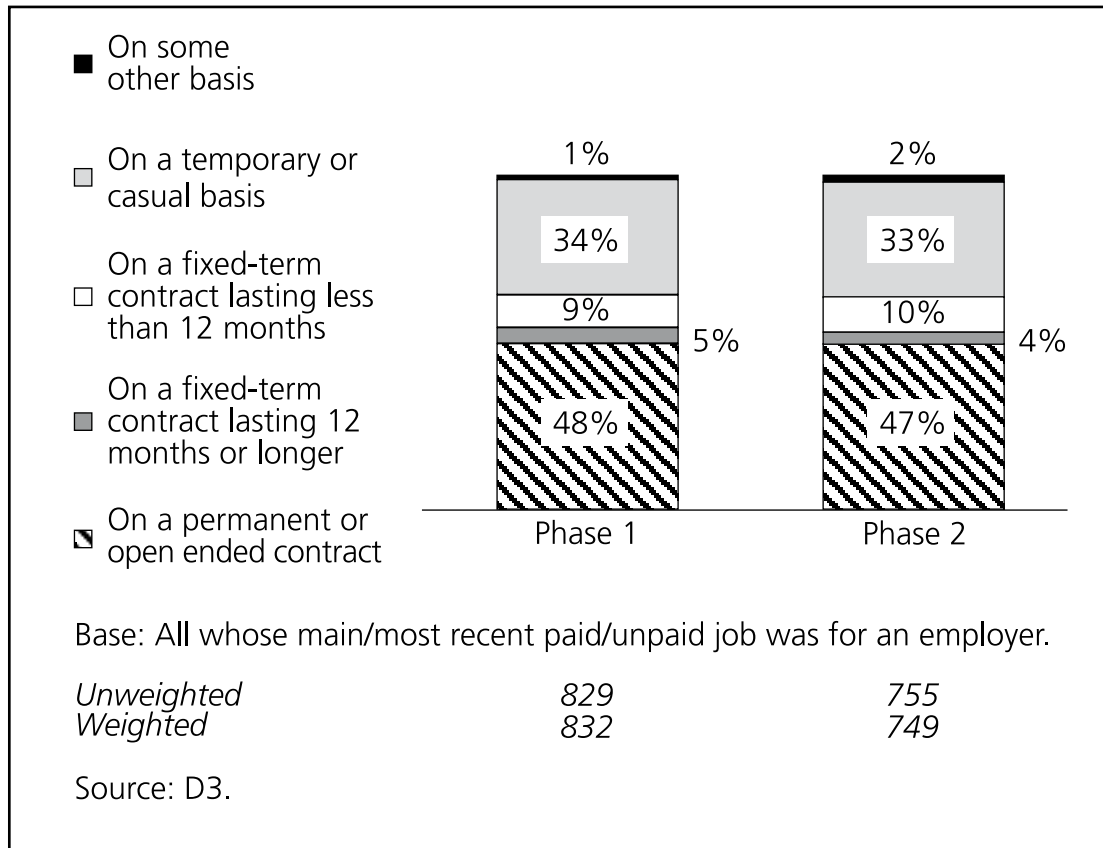
Base: All customers who have been in paid work for an employer at some point since ending their JSA claim.

Note: Table shows row percentages.

14.4 Contract type

Just under half of customers in either paid or unpaid work were employed on a permanent or open-ended contract (48% in Phase 1 and 47% in Phase 2 areas). Around a third were employed on a temporary or casual basis (34% in Phase 1 and 33% in Phase 2 areas). Figure 14.2 illustrates the proportions of customers employed on each contract type, which do not vary significantly by Phase.

Figure 14.2 Contract type of all those who have worked for an employer at some point since ending their JSA claim



Customers in Phase 1 areas who had not claimed JSA before were significantly more likely than their equivalents in Phase 2 areas to have been on a permanent or open ended contract (56% compared to 49%).

As might be expected, customers in Phase 1 areas who were still working at the time of interview were significantly more likely than those who were no longer working at the time of interview to have been employed on a permanent or open ended contract (53% and 18% respectively). Correspondingly, those who were no longer working at the time of interview were significantly more likely to have been employed on a temporary or casual basis (71% compared with 28% of those still working). A similar pattern was observed in Phase 2 areas. The proportions of customers employed on a temporary or casual basis by working status at the time of interview and Phase are summarised in Table 14.3.

Table 14.3 Proportion employed on a casual or temporary basis by working status at time of interview and Phase

		Percentage employed on a casual or temporary basis		
<i>Phase 1 base</i>	<i>Phase 2 base</i>	Working status at time of interview	Phase 1	Phase 2
<i>Unweighted</i>	<i>Unweighted</i>			
<i>Weighted</i>	<i>Weighted</i>			
703	644	In paid work at the time of interview	28%	28%
713	649			
126	111	Had worked at some point since ending the JSA claim, but claiming JSA or not working at the time of interview	71%	67%
119	100			

Base: All customers who have been in paid or unpaid work for an employer at some point since ending their JSA claim.

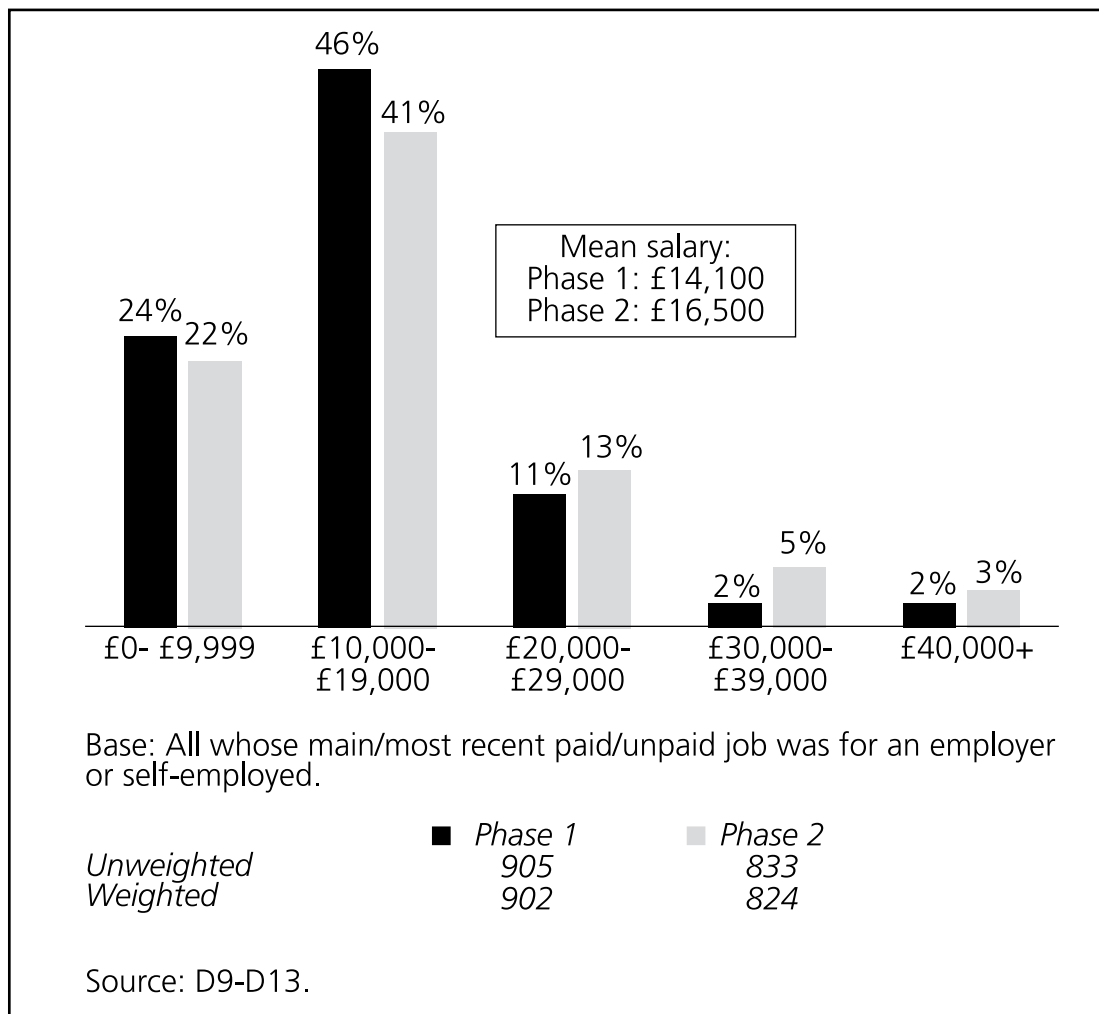
Note: Table shows row percentages.

14.5 Salary Information

Customers were asked how much they were paid on an annual, monthly, weekly, daily or hourly basis. Where enough information was provided an annual salary has been calculated for each customer. Results are shown in Figure 14.3.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Please note all annual salaries calculated in this section have been rounded to the nearest £50.

Figure 14.3 Annual salary of those who have entered work at some point since ending their JSA claim



N.B Mean salaries based on those providing enough salary information to calculate a derived annual salary. Customers in Phase 1 areas that had entered work after ending their original JSA claim reported earning a significantly lower average mean salary than customers in Phase 2 areas (£14,100 compared with £16,500 – a difference of £2,400).

Table 14.4 summarises the customer groups in Phase 2 areas earning a significantly higher average annual wage than their Phase 1 counterparts.

**Table 14.4 Annual salaries of customer groups in Phase 2 areas
annual salaries among those working for an employer
since ending their JSA claim**

	Average salary (rounded to the nearest £50) Phase 1		
	Phase 1	Phase 2	
Demographic Group			
Men	£15,900	£18,500	*
Women	£10,700	£13,350	*
Aged 18-24	£11,050	£11,650	
Aged 25-49	£15,800	£19,000	*
Aged 50+	£16,300	£18,600	
White British	£14,400	£16,400	*
Ethnic minorities	£11,750	£16,900	*
Parents of children aged under 16	£15,250	£21,750	*
Housing situation: paying mortgage	£17,300	£21,800	*
Housing situation: renting	£13,500	£16,400	*
Qualified at Level 2 or 3	£13,350	£15,650	*
Qualified at Level 4 or 5	£16,100	£20,100	*
Employment Status			
Currently in paid work (at time of interview) and not claiming JSA	£14,250	£16,950	*
Working/worked full time for an employer	£15,850	£18,750	*
Claim history			
Not previously claimed JSA	£13,050	£16,700	*
Jobcentre Plus support offered			
Only NJI	£13,300	£18,600	*
Any SNU provision	£13,950	£17,200	*
<i>Unweighted base:</i>	905	833	

* indicates a significant difference between Phases.

Average mean salaries also varied by Phase according to an individual's work status at the time of interview. As shown in Table 14.4 above, those in still work at the time of interview in Phase 2 (i.e. those who had not returned to claiming JSA) were earning a significantly higher mean salary than those in work at the time of interview in Phase 1 (£16,950 in Phase 2 compared to £14,250 in Phase 1). By comparison, there was little variation in average mean salary by Phase among those who had obtained paid work, but who were no longer working at the time of interview (£13,300 Phase 1, £13,500 Phase 2).

Particular groups in Phase 1 areas were significantly more likely than their counterparts in Phase 2 to fall into the lowest wage band, i.e. to be on a wage of less than £10,000 per year, in particular those who:

- are/were employed part-time (77% compared to 68%);
- were renting their accommodation (25% compared to 15%);
- were only offered New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) support (27% compared to 12%);
- were not offered a Back to Work Session (BtWS) (31% compared to 21%)

However, it should be noted that London districts are not distributed evenly across Phase, with the majority falling into Phase 2, meaning that although interviews were split evenly across Phase, a greater number of interviews with customers living in London areas were conducted in Phase 2 than Phase 1, as shown in Table 14.5.

Table 14.5 Number of interviews with customers who had entered work conducted in London and non-London districts across Phase

District	Number of interviews conducted	
	Phase 1 customers	Phase 2 customers
London	30	137
Non-London	875	696

It is well established that London's labour market differs from those of other regions in the UK. Given this, and the skew towards a larger number of London interviews achieved for Phase 2, we now look at annual salary among just those customers based London areas and then among all those excluding the London districts separately, thereby rationalising this 'London effect'. Table 14.6 shows the average mean salaries of those in London and non-London districts by Phase.

As bases were small for the London districts no significant differences emerged in average mean salary between Phases. However, there was a general trend that customers in London districts in Phase 2 earned slightly higher wages than their counterparts in Phase 1 areas. Therefore it is likely that the 'London effect' drives up the average mean salary of all customers in Phase 2 areas.

Table 14.6 Average mean salaries of those in London districts compared to those customers in non-London districts

District	Average mean salary (rounded to the nearest £50)	
	Phase 1 customers	Phase 2 customers
London	£16,200	£21,150
Non-London	£14,050	£15,350

Looking just among non-London districts, certain customer groups in Phase 2 areas earned a significantly higher mean average wage than their Phase 1 counterparts.

This is particularly the case among:

- Women (£12,450 in Phase 2 compared to £10,650 in Phase 1).
- Those working/worked full time for an employer (£17,300 compared to £15,750).
- Those with children under 16 years of age (£19,200 compared to £15,300 in Phase 1).
- Those whose claim lasted between four and eight weeks (£15,800 compared with £13,750).
- Those who had not previously claimed JSA (£15,400 in Phase 2 compared with £12,300 in Phase 1).

Hence, it would seem that women in Phase 1 were more likely to have taken up lower paid work than women in Phase 2, even when the 'London effect' is removed. Importantly, women in Phase 2 areas were not working significantly more hours than women in Phase 1 areas, so this higher wage cannot be explained by this factor alone. It is worth noting however that Phase 2 customers who responded to the survey were more likely to have higher qualification levels than those in Phase 1 (28% in Phase 2 had degree level or above qualifications compared with 23% in Phase 1), which may also be influencing the differences observed in average salaries across the Phases. Indeed, customers in Phase 2 areas with qualifications at Levels 4 or 5 were earning a significantly higher average wage than their counterparts in Phase 1 (£20,100 compared with £16,050 in Phase 1). However, it should also be noted that this discrepancy in average mean salary across Phase still prevails when salaries of just those with qualifications at Levels 3 or below are examined, with the average mean salary in Phase 2 for this group £14,650 compared with £13,400 in Phase 1. This shows that the slight skew towards more highly qualified customers in Phase 2 does not fully account for overall higher mean salary in Phase 2 areas.

The forthcoming impact analyses (available in 2010) will enable any Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND) impacts on salary to be estimated with full account for the range of observed factors that might affect this, using regression analyses.

14.6 Tax credits

The vast majority of customers in each Phase, who were in a paid role at the time of research or had been in a paid role since ending their June JSA claim, had received neither working tax credits nor a job grant (87% in Phase 1 and 89% in Phase 2).

One in ten (10% in both Phases) had received working tax credits (including Return to Work, In work or Child Tax Credits). Those who owned a property outright in

Phase 1 areas were significantly more likely than those in Phase 2 areas to have claimed working tax credits (17% compared with 6%).

A very small minority in each Phase (1%) received a job grant with no significant variation demographically.

14.7 Sector and Industry

The majority of customers who were working at the time of the research or had worked since ending their JSA claim entered the private sector. A higher proportion of customers had done so in Phase 1 than in Phase 2 (81% versus 74% respectively).

Men in Phase 1 were even more likely to have entered a job in the private sector (85% in Phase 1 and 77% in Phase 2).

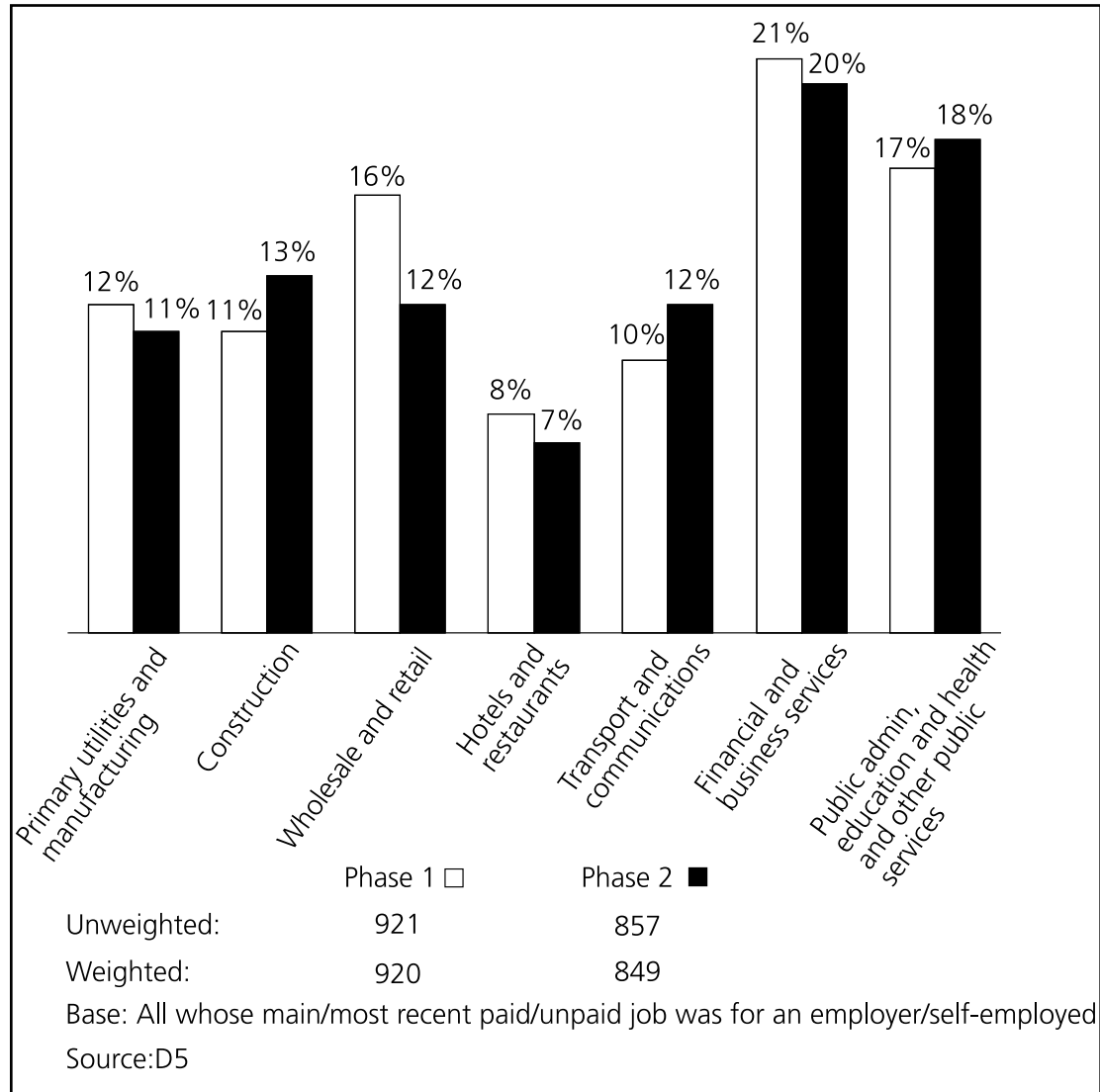
Most of the remaining customers worked in the public sector in both Phases (12% in Phase 1, 14% in Phase 2) although a small percentage worked for charities or voluntary organisations (2% in Phase 1, 4% in Phase 2).

A number of groups were particularly likely to have worked for charities or voluntary organisations in Phase 2 areas including:

- those with no qualifications or qualifications below Level 2 (6% compared with less than 1% in Phase 1);
- those who claimed for nine weeks or more before ending their claim (6% compared with 1% in Phase 1).

Figure 14.4 shows the detailed breakdown of industrial sector by Phase for all customers who had at some point entered either paid or unpaid work since ending their JSA claim.

Figure 14.4 The main or most recent sector customers have worked in since ending their JSA claim



In both Phases, customers were most likely to have ended their claim to work in the finance and business services sector (21% in Phase 1, 20% in Phase 2), or the public administration, education and health and other public services (17% in Phase 1, 18% in Phase 2). There was little variation by Phase in the business sector entered among those who left JSA to enter work.

The most notable difference was for wholesale and retail in which significantly more Phase 1 customers than Phase 2 customers were in work or had been working (16% compared to 12%). In terms of demographic variation between Phase, differences occurred most frequently within the construction sector and the wholesale and retail sector. The following Phase 2 customer types were significantly more likely to have entered the construction industry than their counterparts in Phase 1:

- men (20% compared to 15% in Phase 1);
- those aged 25-49 (17% compared to 11% in Phase 1);
- those who had returned to JSA claiming by the time of interview (23% compared to 10%).

Conversely, the following demographic groups were significantly more likely to have entered the wholesale and retail sector in Phase 1 areas than Phase 2 areas:

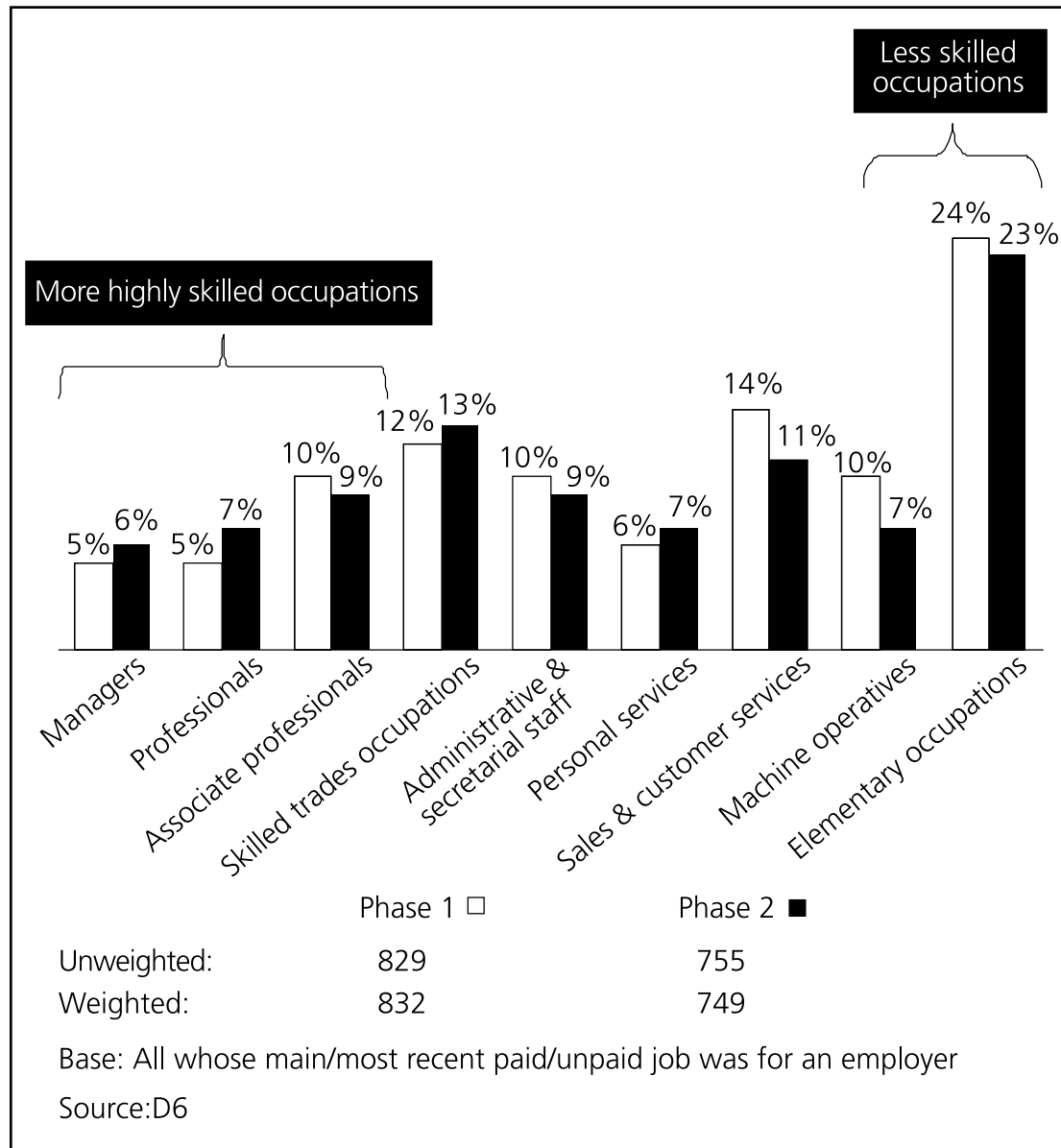
- those with qualifications at Levels 2 or 3 (20% compared to 12% in Phase 2 areas);
- those who claimed for four weeks or longer before ending their claims (19% compared to 12% in Phase 2 areas).

At the overall level, customers in Phase 1 were not significantly more likely to enter lower paid sectors or those offering less secure employment (such as the construction or hospitality industries), although they were significantly more likely to enter the more 'fluid' wholesale and retail industry sector, and particularly so after claiming for a month.

14.8 Occupation

Figure 14.5 shows the types of occupations entered by those who were working or had worked at some point since ending their JSA claim.

Figure 14.5 The main or most recent occupations of customers who have worked at some point since ending their JSA claim



In each Phase, elementary occupations including labouring, bar work, postal work and hospital portage, were by far the most common occupational type for customers to have entered (24% in Phase 1 and 23% in Phase 2). Just over one in ten held or had held managerial or professional positions (9% in Phase 1 and 12% in Phase 2).

The differences between Phase 1 and Phase 2 were relatively slight with the higher proportion of Phase 1 customers in sales and customer service occupations linked to the finding that more customers in Phase 1 had entered the wholesale and retail sector. There were also significantly more Phase 1 customers working, or who had worked, in jobs which would be classified in the 'machine operatives' category (which includes drivers) than Phase 2 customers (10% in Phase 1 compared with

7% in Phase 2). Although at an overall level there were no significant differences by Phase in terms of customers being more or less likely to have entered lower skilled jobs (i.e. elementary or machine operative roles), there were some customer groups within Phase 1 who were significantly more likely to have entered lower skilled jobs than their Phase 2 counterparts, including:

- those aged 25-49 (34% in Phase 1 compared with 26% in Phase 2);
- those with children under five years (41% in Phase 1 compared to 22% in Phase 2);
- those who owned their property outright (33% in Phase 1 compared to 18% in Phase 2).

Also of note is that, although not statistically significant, those with higher qualification levels in Phase 1 were more likely to have entered lower skilled jobs. This shows that the work outcome may not always have been well suited to the individual.

Conversely, customers in full-time employment in Phase 2 were significantly more likely to have entered higher skilled occupations than their Phase 1 counterparts (25% in Phase 2 compared with 20% in Phase 1), which is important given the majority of customers are entering full time employment after ending their claim.

Looking just among those customers who had left employment or had returned to JSA claiming by the time of the interview, those in Phase 1 were significantly more likely to have been working as machine operative roles compared with Phase 2 (18% compared to 8%), whereas those no longer working in Phase 2 were significantly more likely to have been working in elementary occupations (34% compared with 22% of those not working in Phase 1).

However, Phase 1 customers that were no longer in work at the time of the interview were also significantly more likely to have been employed (albeit temporarily) in more higher skilled associate professional roles than those in Phase 1 who were still employed at the time of the interview (17% and 9% respectively).

In conjunction with the earlier point about customers in Phase 1 being more likely to enter the wholesale and retail sector, customers whose highest qualification level was Level 4 (i.e. degree level) or above in Phase 1 were significantly more likely to be in sales and customer service positions than those with comparable qualification levels in Phase 2 areas (16% compared to 8%). This suggests that while Phase 1 customers may have been more likely to get work quickly, the jobs were not necessarily more likely to be suited to their skills and experiences. Indeed, customers in Phase 1 areas who felt that their work did not match their skills and interests were significantly more likely to be in sales and customer services occupations (23% compared to 13%).

In summary, there is a suggestion that at the overall level customers in Phase 1 were more likely to take lower skilled work that was less suited to their skills, interests and qualifications than was the case in Phase 2. Given this analytical form, it is difficult to say whether the differences observed in this chapter are a causal function of differences in the local labour markets of Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas, or whether this is a 'real' finding that is being driven by differences between the Phase 1 and Phase 2 regimes. The impact analyses will provide more evidence on the causality in these relationships.

Customer views on the suitability of their work outcome are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

14.9 Summary

Despite Phase 1 customers being more likely to enter paid work than Phase 2 customers, there was some indication that this work was slightly more likely to be lower skilled, lower paid, or considered 'unsuitable' by the customers in the context of their skills and interests, although it is worth noting that the great majority of customers in both Phases felt the job role they had entered was a good match for them.

There is some evidence of higher qualified customers (i.e. those with a degree level or above qualification) in Phase 1 being more likely to take lower skilled roles (such as sales or customer services roles) than similarly qualified customers in Phase 2. These higher qualified customers were also less likely in Phase 1 areas to state that the role they had taken up offered opportunities for career progression.

On average, if in work, Phase 1 customers were earning around £1,600 less a year than Phase 2 customers.

15 Outcomes: Views of employment

15.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on those customers who have entered work (either paid or unpaid) at some point since ending their June 2009 Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) claim (irrespective whether or not they were still working at the time of interview). The following points will be addressed:

1. The duration of the most recent role for those who worked at some point since ending the JSA claim, but were not working at the time of the research.
2. The reasons why this cohort of customers left their most recent role.
3. The opinions of all those who have entered work (either paid or unpaid) about the appropriateness of the position they took.
4. Promotion prospects and opportunities for training and development of those currently working for an employer.

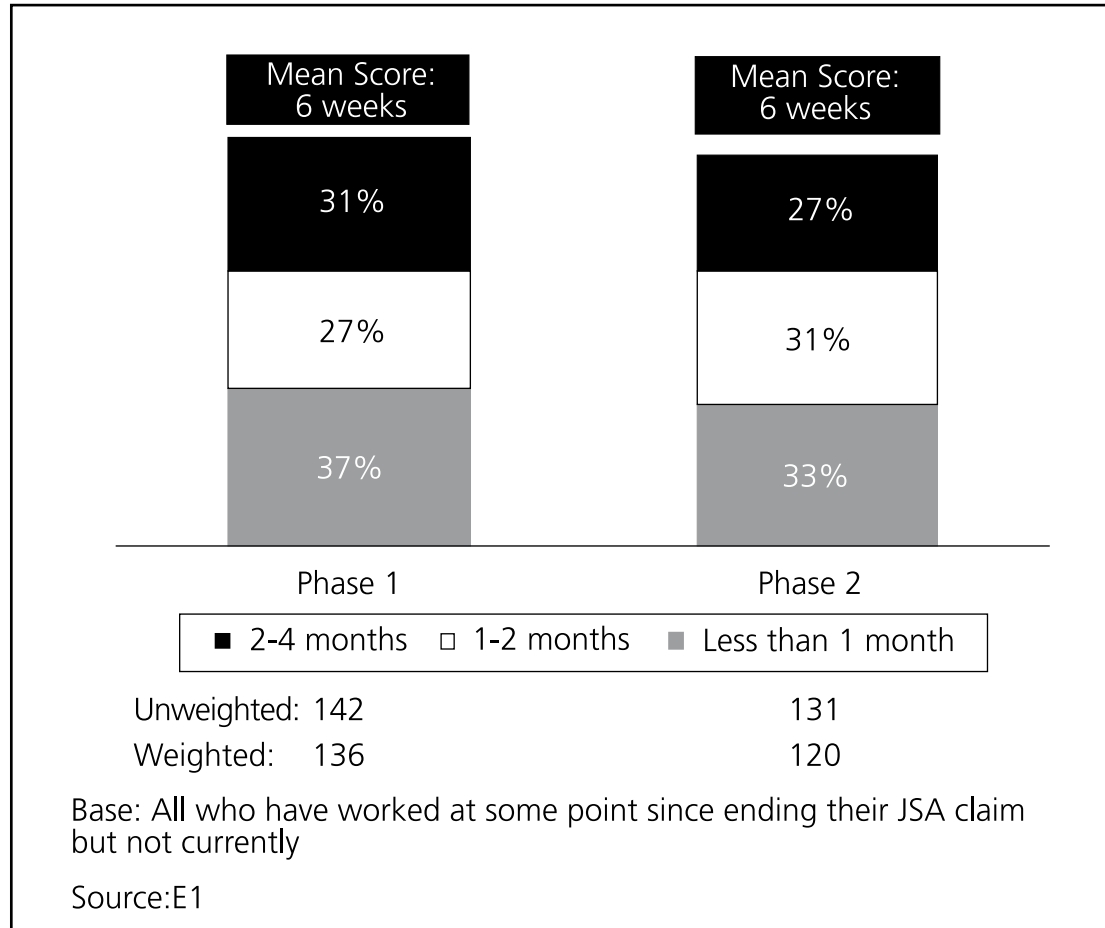
While it is possible that customers held multiple job roles since ending their JSA claim, analysis is based only on the main job held at the time of the interview (as specified by the customer) or their most recent job.

15.2 Time spent in employment before ending or returning to JSA claim

Those customers who were not working at the time of the interview, but had worked at some point since ending their claim, were asked how long this role had lasted for.

Figure 15.1 illustrates how long customers were in employment.

Figure 15.1 Length of employment

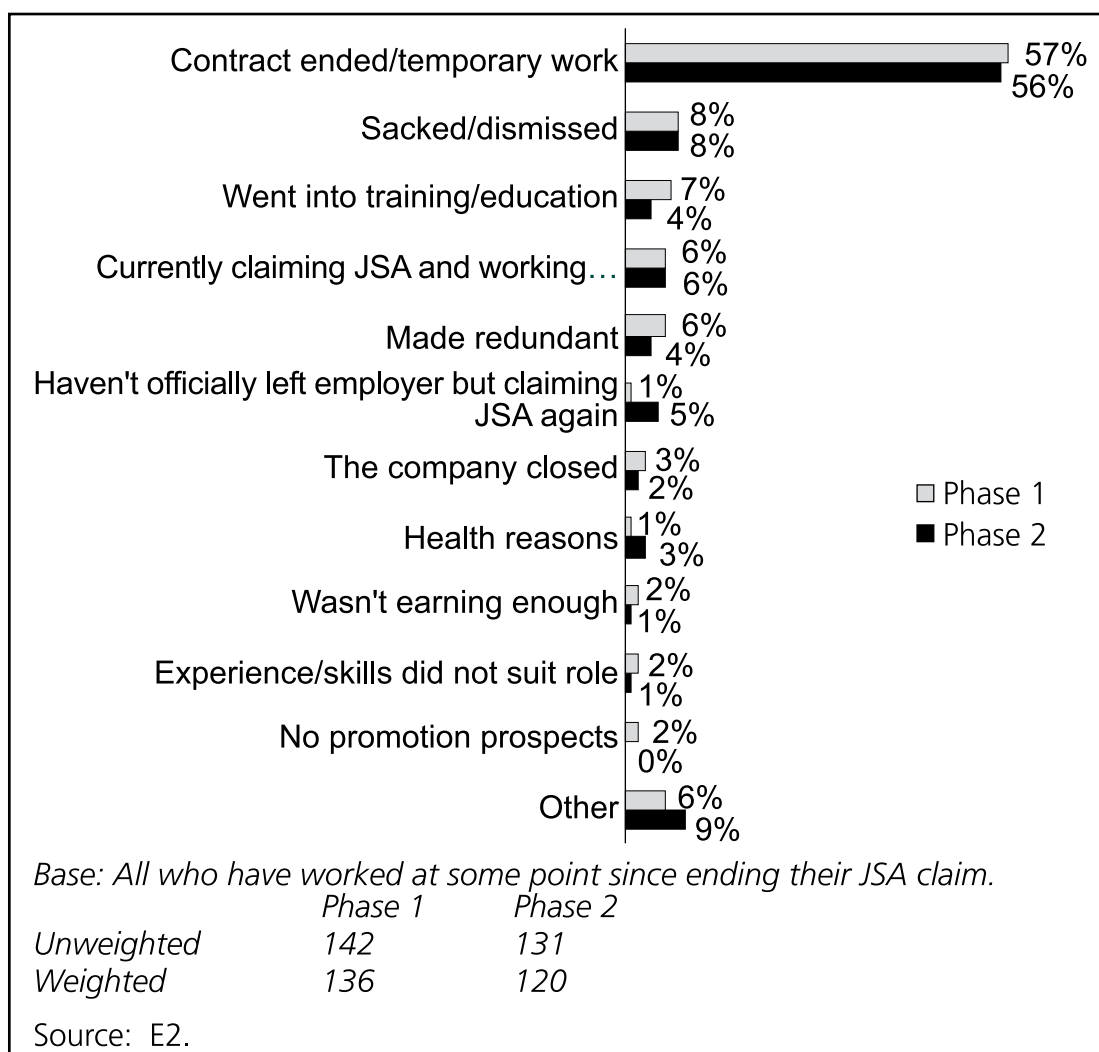


In both Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas jobs had lasted an average of six weeks. There were no significant differences by Phase at the overall level, however, significantly more customers in Phase 1 areas who had previously claimed JSA were in employment for a slightly longer period before the job ended (two to four months) compared with those customers with the same claim history in Phase 2 areas (35% in Phase 1 compared to 20% in Phase 2 areas)

15.3 Reasons for leaving work or returning to JSA claiming

Figure 15.2 illustrates the main reasons given by customers for leaving their employment. By far the most common reason for customers leaving the employment they had gained since ending their JSA claim was the contract ending (57% in Phase 1 and 56% in Phase 2). Although the previous chapter showed that Phase 1 customers were more likely to secure work via an agency, this finding suggests that Phase 1 customers were no more likely – by the time of the interview (a maximum of three months after the employment could have started) – than those in Phase 2 to have left the role because a short-term contract ended.

Figure 15.2 Reasons for customers leaving their job



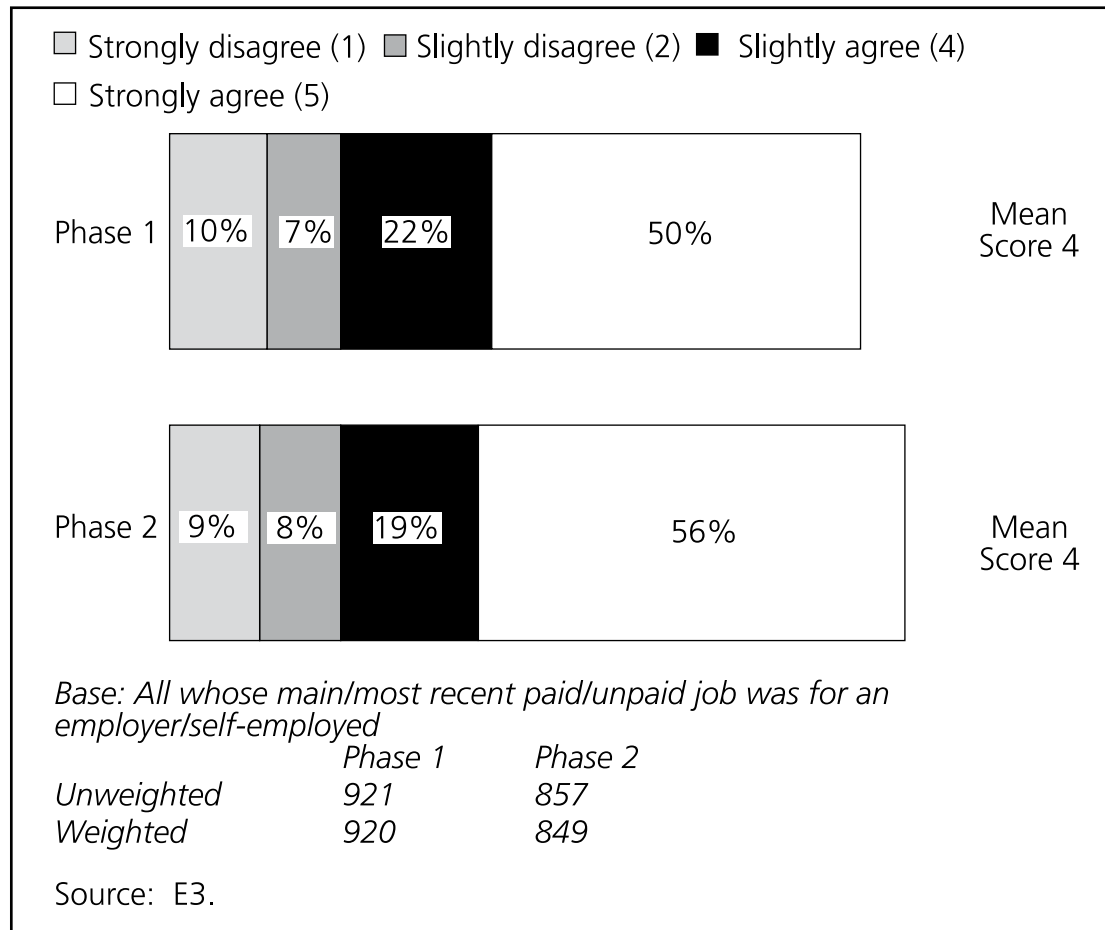
Other reasons for customers leaving their employment included being sacked or dismissed (8% in both Phases) or deciding to go into training (7% in Phase 1 and 4% in Phase 2), with no significant differences by Phase.

Some customers had returned to claiming JSA, but had continued to work (at a number of hours below the threshold for working and claiming), with significantly more customers aged 50+ in Phase 1 areas than in Phase 2 areas (14% of those who entered work but have since returned to JSA in Phase 1 compared with none in Phase 2).

15.4 Suitability of work outcome

Around three-quarters of customers who were either working at the time of research or who had worked at some point since ending their JSA claim felt that their main or most recent job was a good match for their skills and interests (72% in Phase 1 and 75% in Phase 2). This is shown in Figure 15.3. Please note percentages do not total to 100 per cent as those who neither agreed nor disagreed, or were unable to answer the question, have been removed.

Figure 15.3 Whether main or most recent work entered was a good match for customers' skills and interests



Significantly more customers in Phase 2 areas strongly agreed that their main or most recent role was a good match for their skills and interests (56% in Phase 2 compared with 50% in Phase 1). This suggests that customers in Phase 1 areas were more likely to take up 'any' work rather than roles they considered well matched to their skills and needs.

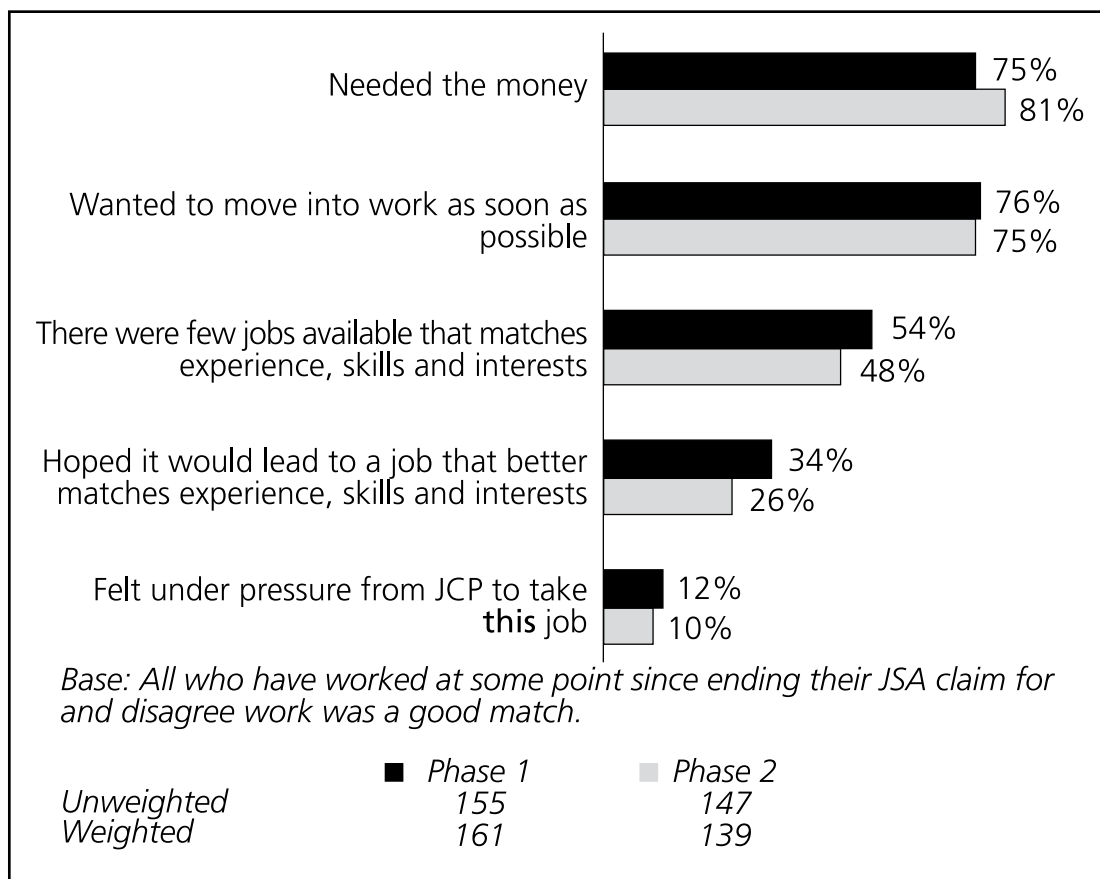
Demographic groups within Phase 2 areas who were significantly more likely to strongly agree that their work was appropriate are:

- Men (56% compared with 50%).
- Customers aged under 25 (50% compared with 40%).
- Customers without children under 16 (54% compared with 48%).
- Customers not facing any PSA 16 barriers (56% compared with 50%).
- Customers renting (58% compared with 49%).
- Customers qualified at lower than Level 2 (71% compared with 49%).
- Customers qualified at Level 4 or 5 (57% compared with 47%).

Perhaps most importantly, those still in work when interviewed in Phase 2 areas were significantly more likely to strongly agree that their work was a good match to their skills and interests compared with those still in work when interviewed in Phase 1 areas (57% compared with 51%). This links with findings in Chapter 13, suggesting that customers in Phase 1 were more likely to have entered paid work, but that this work was not necessarily appropriate.

Less than a fifth of customers disagreed that their main or most recent work was a good match for their skills and interests (18% in Phase 1 and 16% in Phase 2). Disagreement was significantly higher among those with no qualifications in Phase 2 than Phase 1 areas (16% compared to 9% respectively), suggesting that these lower skilled customers were being helped into more appropriate work in Phase 1. Customers were asked why they had taken up work considered 'unsuitable' given their skills and interests (Figure 15.4). The most common reasons for customers taking up 'unsuitable' work were that they needed the money (cited by 75% of Phase 1 customers who disagreed that the work entered was a good match, and 81% of Phase 2 customers) and/or they wanted to move into work as soon as possible (76% in Phase 1 and 75% in Phase 2). Around half (54% in Phase 1 and 48% in Phase 2) felt there were few jobs available that matched their experience, skills or interests.

Figure 15.4 Reasons for taking up 'unsuitable' work



A minority (12% in Phase 1, 10% in Phase 2) felt under strong pressure from Jobcentre Plus to take the particular job; this was significantly higher among white British customers in Phase 1 than Phase 2 customer (14% compared to 5% respectively).

So, in summary, although Phase 1 customers were less likely to strongly agree that work was appropriate they were no more likely than customers in Phase 2 to indicate this was because of any undue pressure from Jobcentre Plus.

15.5 Promotion prospects and training opportunities

Just under two-thirds of customers who were working at the time of interview believed that their role offered opportunities for promotion or for substantially increasing their responsibilities (61% in Phase 1 and 62% in Phase 2).

Phase 2 customers qualified at degree level or above (those who may be considered as more likely to be looking for a longer term career) were significantly more likely than their Phase 1 equivalents to think that their role offered opportunities for career progression (70% compared with 60% respectively). As seen previously, these customers with the highest qualification levels were more likely than their counterparts in Phase 2 to take up sales and customer services roles that they might be considered 'over qualified' for.

Around a third believed that their job role at the time of the research did not offer such opportunities for progression (34% in Phase 1 and 33% in Phase 2) and a small minority were unable to say either way (5% in both Phases).

Around three in five customers in work believed that their employer would offer them training that would help them secure promotion or more responsibilities (59% in Phase 1 and 60% in Phase 2). Around a third felt that their current employer would not offer such training (35% in Phase 1 and 34% in Phase 2) and a small minority were unable to say either way (6% in both Phases). Findings were consistent across Phase and by customer group.

To conclude, there was broad consistency by Phase in how likely customers were to find work that was appropriate to their skills and interests. There is some indication that where higher qualified customers had entered work in Phase 1 they were less likely to consider it a good match for them and less likely to think that it offered progression opportunities. A significant minority of customers in both Phases were taking work that was not necessarily well suited to their skills and interests, and which did not offer sufficient opportunities for career progression. In many cases this is likely to be a result of influences out of their control, such as financial burdens and a lack of suitable jobs brought about by the economic climate, and therefore not necessarily a consequence of any support provided by Jobcentre Plus.

15.6 Summary

While the majority of customers in Phase 1 agreed that the work they entered was a good match for their skills, experience and interests, they were less likely to say this than customers in Phase 2.

However, where customers in Phase 1 felt that the job role was unsuitable for them they were no more likely than customers in Phase 2 to indicate that they took the role under pressure from Jobcentre Plus.

Phase 1 customers aged 25-49 were significantly less likely to strongly agree that their work was well suited to them than 25-49 year olds in Phase 2. Perhaps linked to this, 25-49 year olds in Phase 1 were more likely to have entered lower skilled jobs than their Phase 2 counterparts. Earlier chapters described how customers aged 25-49 were more likely to have entered paid work in Phase 1 compared with Phase 2, and to some extent are driving the overall finding that Phase 1 customers were more likely to move into work. There is some indication that the Phase 1 regime is more successful in getting some groups – perhaps those closer to the labour market – into any work compared with Phase 2, even though this work may not be considered a good match by the customer.

16 Overall discussion and conclusions

This report presents early descriptive findings from the evaluation of the Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND), Support for the Newly Unemployed (SNU) and Six Month Offer (6MO) introduced in April 2009.

JRFND has the dual aims of increasing the support offered to those out of work and increasing jobseekers' obligations. JRFND replaces the existing Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) regime, while the Flexible New Deal (FND) combines the New Deal 25 plus, the New Deal for Young People, Employment Zones, New Deal 50 plus, the New Deal for Musicians and self-employment provision. JRFND is being rolled out in two phases, the first from April 2009 and the second from April 2010. The first three stages are delivered by Jobcentre Plus, and last up to 12 months. If a person is still claiming benefit after 12 months, they are then referred to a FND provider for further work preparation support.

In response to the economic downturn, some additional support services for jobseekers were also rolled out nationally in April 2009 with a planned limited duration: 6MO and SNU. In JRFND Phase 1 districts, these new services were introduced concurrently with the JRFND. Most of the new services are delivered by external providers, but customers access these services via referral from a Jobcentre Plus adviser. SNU offers supplementary job preparation and job search services from day one of a JSA claim for people who have no recent experience of current job search and need a small amount of support with specialist help also available for professionals/executives who have started a JSA claim. In 6MO everyone reaching six months unemployment receives mandatory extra advisory help from Jobcentre Plus advisers. Other services under the 6MO are available to customers at the adviser's discretion, including volunteering, a recruitment subsidy, help to become self-employed and work-focused training. The package is implemented via the Stage 3 of JSA from April 2009 in JRFND Phase 1 areas, with similar adviser support and access in Phase 2 areas. The offer was planned to last for two years with the expectation that 500,000 customers would access support via the offer in this time.

This report is the first product of the evaluation and presents evidence on the early implementation of the initiatives in 18 Jobcentre Plus offices, as well as descriptive survey evidence from customers on the experiences of the Phase 1 JRFND stage 1 and first 13 weeks of signing in both the new JRFND and in the Phase 2 areas. The overall aim of this evaluation is to test the extent to which JRFND/6MO/SNU leads to additional employment outcomes for individuals and the cost effectiveness with which this is done.

This chapter first examines the scope of the research in this report. This is followed by a discussion of the findings of the research in the context of the themes and of the future evaluation aims. The concluding sections summarise the findings of Part 1: the Early Implementation Site research and Part 2: the first Customer Surveys which focus on the experiences of Stage 1 of JRFND (the first 13 weeks) for Phase 1 and Phase 2 areas.

16.1 Scope of this research

It is important that the scope of the two research activities reported jointly here is kept in mind together with the conclusions as it prescribes the limitations of the findings.

Firstly, this report contains early findings from the evaluation: JRFND was introduced in April 2009 (as were the temporary recession measures of 6MO and SNU) and the research took place within the first six months of operation. This report reflects information gathered up to September 2009.

Secondly, the research designs define the boundaries of the research. The qualitative implementation research focused on the three policy initiatives, JRFND (Stages 1 to 3), 6MO and SNU (and the Adviser Flexibilities/CAF). It does not report on comparisons between JRFND practices and those of the former JSA regime, as research in Phase 2 areas focused only on SNU and 6MO services. In contrast, the customer survey research was designed to directly examine the differences between JRFND and the former JSA, by surveying customers within both Phase 1 and the Phase 2 areas where JRFND had not yet been introduced. However, the customer survey covered only Stage 1 of JRFND, the first 13 weeks of the former JSA regime. Hence it reports only on the relative customer experiences of Stage 1 of JRFND contrasted against JSA.

There are some other aspects of the research design to consider. The fieldwork for the qualitative site visits that forms part one of the report was designed to capture the JRFND implementation and delivery through interviews (telephone, one-to-one and group formats) and observations of staff and customer interactions. Hence it mostly reflects staff views and experiences. The customer surveys have been designed to support the impact evaluation by assessing customer experience and outcomes, identifying variation/patterns in delivery according to customer type, and exploring which elements of JRFND are associated with customers' progress into work. Due to the survey sampling data source, it was not possible to include

fast-tracked customers in the survey, although this was part of the original design. The sample otherwise reflects all JSA customers in mid to late June 2009, with key age subgroups part of the design: under 25, 25-49, 50 and over. The scale of the customer surveys (6,001 respondents in total) support a reasonably wide and informative exploration of the associations between subgroups observed in the customer reported information. The survey design was such that the administrative data was to supply the information on what activities customers had participated in during JRFND (and the former JSA in comparison districts). However, at this stage, it has not been possible to link survey results to this information, and so this important participation aspect cannot be reflected. Also, the associations reported so far reflect descriptive cross-tabular level information, but no modelling that controls for more than several factors at once. Importantly then, the survey information on associations reported here cannot yet support causal conclusions about the role of JRFND in customers' progress to work, relative to the former JSA regime. Early impact analyses will be available in forthcoming evaluation reports.

16.2 Overall discussion of the findings and summary conclusion

Reflecting the early nature of these research findings, this early implementation research has identified some delivery issues for JRFND/6MO/SNU. To some extent these can be expected to occur with all new programmes during the first six months. Over the time observed, delivery was seen to improve.

The planned changes to the adviser service culture were seen to be developing but as yet not much adjustment had occurred. Alongside this, the expected changes in customer obligations did not seem to be delivered to the extent planned. In this, the early signs indicate a perceived contradiction between the advisory service giving flexible, personalised delivery through their interactions with customers, and the negative effects of enforcing obligations (via the threat of, or actual sanctioning) on the service relationship. This contradiction might prove complex to overcome. This may be especially true when the reluctance is combined together with the reasonably high administrative burden of enforcing obligations that was also reflected by staff. However, Back to Work Sessions (BtWS) were becoming the focus of sanctioning processes because of their mandatory nature and subsequent Refusal or Failure to Complete actions if customers failed to attend.

It is notable that advisers welcomed SNU as filling a gap in services at the start of a jobseeker's claim. This indicates that the SNU was a timely measure that improved the design of services by increasing the variety of services to new customers at this point. BtWS were mostly felt to be helpful for motivating customers, and serving as an informative reminder, reiterating messages about both available service and customer obligations. Weekly signing received mixed reviews from staff, partly due to the lack of time available to spend with customers in such meetings limiting their value for both participants. Using greater flexibility in Stage

3 of JRFND was quite a difficult change for advisers to master. Mandatory activities were not always prescribed appropriately and more guidance seems to be needed to assist decision making. It also seems to have been difficult for advisers to deliver messages about mandation in a consistent way, and messages were often limited to the jobseeker's current stage, rather than for the next, which may have encouraged more people to find work or leave benefit sooner.

There was also some confusion over juxtaposing voluntary activities alongside mandatory activities, as noted in cases where voluntary 6MO services were mandated to customers. However, overall the 6MO welcomed by staff. The principle of additional advisory support (in Phase 2 districts) was popular, and the voluntary strands of the 6MO were generally well received as they helped foster a positive customer relationship. As intended, the self-marketing voucher for Recruitment Subsidy was systematically presented to all, Work-focused Training was suggested quite often, but Volunteering and Self-Employment support were only rarely presented when felt appropriate to customers. Volunteering and training also suffered from slower introduction of services and variability in local offerings available which affected them, alongside complex and problematic referral processes in practice.

The extra recession measures of SNU and 6MO may have had unintended consequences for the delivery of the JRFND services, which might not have occurred in their absence. In addition, there was some confusion arising from mandatory and voluntary activities occurring alongside one another. This has implications for those who experienced the programmes during this period. Hence, the interaction of the programmes needs to be kept in mind when interpreting the results of the evaluation. 6MO and SNU were planned to be of limited duration, so if they were to end this may affect experiences of JRFND delivery. However, with regard to this caution, it is also generally too early to say with much certainty, because as already pointed out, delivery issues commonly occur during the first six months of a new programme. Also, a much higher than usually accommodated variation in delivery practices complicated the picture reflected by the early implementation research – for example there were many varieties of temporary delivery 'easements' in place that would be expected to end.

The surveys showed that more customers reported more support services delivered to them in the JRFND/6MO/SNU Phase 1 areas than in the Phase 2 areas where 6MO/SNU was added to the pre-existing JSA regime and New Deals. Note that since the survey was conducted about 12 weeks into the claim, this is not likely to reflect the 6MO services. In the JRFND/6MO/SNU Phase 1 areas, support services appeared to be more targeted at lone parents and those with previous JSA claims. An exception was for PSA 16 customer groups for whom certain specialist support was more common in Phase 2 than in JRFND/6MO/SNU areas. A sizable minority of customers in JRFND/6MO/SNU areas said they felt under pressure to take part in activities that they did not feel suited their needs and circumstances. However, the

majority of customers across all areas agreed that the support they received from Jobcentre Plus was tailored to their personal needs and circumstances.

Among services offered, the BtWS and advice on where to look for job vacancies was seen by customers to be the most useful support offered to customers in JRFND/6MO/SNU areas. This accords with the early implementation evidence from staff that these were useful for helping provide motivation for job search. The customer survey showed that BtWS were considered more useful in particular by younger customers, prison leavers and those with lower or no qualifications. These are all groups that might be seen to be 'harder to help', so this evidence is promising. Note that BtWS were also reported in the implementation research to be the growing focus of sanctions for FTA.

In line with the staff welcoming the services in JRFND/6MO/SNU, as found in the early implementation research already mentioned, the customers in these areas were more positive about their Jobcentre Plus services experiences than Phase 2 customers: reporting that provision had improved and that this had led to increased awareness of job vacancies and confidence for these customers. In particular in JRFND/6MO/SNU Phase 1 areas relative to their counterparts in Phase 2: more parents, and specifically lone parents, reported increases in motivation to find work, confidence, job search skills and a awareness of the different ways to look for vacancies; more of those with long-term health conditions or disabilities also reported themselves to be confident as a result of the Jobcentre Plus support. Again, harder to help groups seemed to be benefiting from these services during these first 13 weeks more than in Phase 2 areas.

The customer survey shows that for customers who had ended their claim, more had ended their claim sooner in JRFND/6MO/SNU areas. However, the overall share that had left their claim was equivalent across all areas. The service which seemed to be most closely associated with ending benefit claims sooner was the BtWS.

There are some interesting observations: in JRFND/6MO/SNU Phase 1 areas, customers aged 50 or over and those who owned their home outright were more often reporting ending their claim, but were not reporting entering paid work; in Phase 2 areas, those with a health condition or disability were more often reporting ending their claim, but not reporting entering paid work. The administrative data impact analyses may indicate whether other new benefit claims were involved.

There was a slightly higher entry to paid work recorded for customers in JRFND/6MO/SNU Phase 1 areas. However, it seemed that harder to help groups, in the PSA 16 groups, for example, had similar work entry rates across all areas. It was mostly those aged 25-49 and those with higher skills who were more often found to have moved into work, especially in JRFND/6MO/SNU areas.

Accordingly, there appeared to have been indications of some successes for JRFND Stage 1 in terms of moving job ready customers into work. However, as these descriptive analyses cannot take account of the many factors that might affect

these transitions to work, it is too early to say whether these promising indications can translate into a measurable impact on the work entry for JRFND Stage 1. However, the forthcoming early impact analyses, to be reported in 2010 later in the evaluation, should be able to say with some confidence whether this is the case.

The great majority of customers in all areas felt that the job role that they had entered in work was a good match for them. However, some indications are reported that the work for customers in JRFND/6MO/SNU Phase 1 areas was lower skilled, lower paid or considered less suitable for their skills and interests. On average, working customers in JRFND/6MO/SNU areas were earning around £2,400 less per year than in Phase 2 areas. Also, in JRFND/6MO/SNU Phase 1 areas, older customers aged 50 or over were more likely to have got their job via an agency and receive the lowest reported wage band than these customers in Phase 2. This may indicate implications for the cost-benefit analyses later in the evaluation, however, these analyses reported here cannot account for the important technical selection issues related to measuring impacts on employment earnings, and are for the period to 13 weeks after benefit start, and hence should not be over-interpreted.

In the context of there being relatively few differences between the regimes in the first 13 weeks of claiming, there is evidence that customers are responding differently to the JRFND Stage 1 programme/SNU, with some early successes for shares entering paid work and entering paid work sooner. The customers on the whole were also more positive about the service they received from Jobcentre Plus, and seemed to be offered support in a more targeted manner with greater differentiation by customer group. More intensive additional support was offered for certain groups but as yet, at this stage of claiming this was not translating into employment outcomes or ending of claims for these customers. Those who might be considered more financially secure or closer to the labour market were found to enter work or end their benefit claims. A positive exception to this is lone parents, for whom the provision during the first 13 weeks in JRFND/6MO/SNU Phase 1 areas appears to have been particularly successful in increasing motivation and ability to find work.

16.3 Part I: Implementation

Qualitative fieldwork in 18 Jobcentre Plus offices studied the implementation and delivery of JRFND, 6MO, SNU, and the AF tests. The research took place in two waves, approximately two months and five months following the introduction of the initiatives and covers Stages 1, 2 and 3 of the enhanced Jobseekers Regime, not the FND stage. Data collection focused on the staff perspective of the implementation.

16.4 Emergent themes from the site visits

This section highlights the general themes emerging from the early site visits and proposes recommendations for informing future implementation practices.

16.4.1 New initiatives introduced during recessionary times

The JRFND, together with other initiatives, was introduced in April 2009 when the UK was in an economic recession with lower vacancies and higher customer volumes at Jobcentre Plus. This placed strains on Jobcentre Plus; the extra resource (knowledge, skills, staff time, office space) needed to deliver the new initiatives was in direct competition with the resource required to respond to the increase in customer volumes. The implementation context presented a hard test for the policy and resulted in a delayed and uneven implementation. This was compounded by: the speed of the change, delays to the supply of services, high numbers of inexperienced staff, and official easements to the delivery design. Over time, delivery was seen to improve and most of the extra services were established, yet many of the offices were still experiencing the strain.

16.4.2 Expectations for change in adviser service culture

The research findings suggest that a change to the service culture is still under development. Within the Phase 1 districts, JRFND introduced a change to the adviser role with expectations for providing a flexible, tailored service from the start of a new claim. Compared to the old regime, more emphasis was placed on advisory skills and their awareness of a range of specialist services to address the diverse needs of the claimant population. Two issues surfaced in the field. First, it was felt that the framework of JRFND imposed a rigid structure on the customer journey and, together with existing regulatory systems such as the Jobseekers Agreement, fortnightly signing and Labour Market System (LMS) protocol, placed real restrictions on the extent to which flexibilities could occur. In particular, a lack of flexibility was noted in the requirement that all customers should attend a Back to Work group session, regardless of their work and job search histories. Limitations to training costs and opportunities were also viewed as restrictive. Many of the more experienced staff perceived little change between JRFND and the former JSA. JRFND was still regarded as a process-driven system, particularly during the first 26 weeks. Instead, the main change advisers noted was the additional material they were required to cover in the initial interviews, but within a similar or even a reduced timeframe. The most prominent observation among advisers at all three stages of the JRFND process was the lack of time with customers and this was perceived to have a negative influence on the quality of service.

The JRFND design also placed a great deal of emphasis on the adviser to follow a more personalised, diagnostic approach to lending customer support. For the most part, these skills were not adequately developed. An exception was observed in one of the Adviser Flexibilities districts which had also been an original test site for JRFND, indicating that a reasonable amount of time is needed for the changed

practices to settle. In general, a lack of training and support for the new approach placed advisers at a disadvantage, particularly the new recruits and New Claims advisers. Such advisers often lacked awareness of the range of local provision available to which they could refer or signpost customers. Under time pressures, training was often not completed before new recruits were placed in posts and the electronic format of the training was often considered unsatisfactory. As a consequence, many advisers lacked the experience, confidence and sometimes motivation to exercise their discretion. Development of staff capacity was therefore ongoing at the time of the second wave of site visits.

16.4.3 Expectations for change in customer obligations

The design of JRFND has increased requirements to engage in job-related activities and these escalate with the length of a claim. However, most staff perceived little change to customer obligations during the first six months of a claim (aside from the additions of the BtWS and extra signing requirements). For customers over the age of 24, a more marked change occurred after six months with the introduction of caseloading and mandatory activities.⁴¹ But there was wide variation in advisers' ability and confidence to communicate and enforce the customer obligations. As an unintended consequence of this, any observed variation in customer experiences might be attributed to inconsistencies observed in mandating activities and sanctioning practices. Generally, the findings suggest that these practices were implemented to a lesser extent than may have been intended. Reasons for this relate to the lack of adviser skills and confidence, as above, and to adviser practices. The barriers to implementation included advisers' reluctance to relay full information about the escalating requirements of the regime at the New Jobseeker Interview (NJI); a prevailing view that indiscriminate customer obligations run counter to the notion of a flexible service; the perception that mandating activities and threats of sanctioning can be unconstructive to establishing a good adviser-customer relationship; and the extra administrative burden of the sanctioning procedure. With regard to the latter point, the introduction of mandatory BtWS for all customers in the early part of their claim resulted in considerable resources being dedicated to sanctioning customers for non-attendance, which had begun to dominate sanctioning activity in many offices.

16.4.4 Interactions between the policy initiatives

The simultaneous introduction of a number of policy initiatives was observed to introduce some confusion and unanticipated practices. This was intensified by the recessionary conditions. The speed with which the SNU and 6MO were introduced to staff may have 'complicated' the transfer to JRFND in Phase 1 districts, suggesting that the extra services brought in to mitigate the recessionary effects on the labour market may have brought unintended consequences. It can be speculated that the introduction of JRFND may have been more straightforward if not for these extra services.

⁴¹ The New Deal for Young People (ages 18 to 24) already began six months into a claim and included mandatory extra activities.

In both Phase 1 and 2 districts, the SNU was welcomed as a service perceived to be filling a gap where little support was previously available from the start of a claim. But the SNU did add to the number of procedures a NJI adviser was required to cover and, therefore, time pressures. In Phase 1 districts, the 6MO noticeably changed the conduct of an Initial Stage 3 Review. Initially, the offer of services was perceived to dominate the interview, although this improved over time. There was also some confusion over juxtaposing voluntary activities alongside mandatory activities, as noted in cases where 6MO services were mandated to customers.

The AF entailed an approach to service delivery which reinforced the notion of flexibilities within JRFND, in effect adding an extra layer of flexibility. Some of the adviser practices that emerged in these districts, such as wider availability of the Adviser Discretion Fund (ADF), were eventually adopted into practices in non-AF districts. Hence, any distinction between AF and non-AF districts became increasingly unclear as the implementation progressed. Nonetheless, some innovative practices were developed in AF districts, and three months later by the wave two site visits some districts were planning to re-launch AF and develop a range of further flexibilities.

16.5 Implementation recommendations

The following recommendations stem from the early implementation site visit findings:

- Enhanced customer obligations require additional resources which need to be anticipated. Sufficient time is necessary for preparing delivery staff and ensuring that new services and space requirements are established in advance. Staff skills need to be addressed and ongoing training, guidance and support are necessary to refresh knowledge and instruct new recruits.
- The programme changes were implemented during a period of increasing customer volumes, which is a challenging time for a service delivery regime and can result in unnecessary competition for resources, and planning should try to accommodate this.
- Incremental change may be more effective than a rapid introduction of multiple measures.
- Mapping of local services would help both to enhance awareness, identify gaps in specialist provision and reduce service duplication. If multiple commissioning authorities are involved then partnership working and information sharing is critical for a seamless service delivery. Advisers need to be allocated time to become familiar with the range of local provision available if they are to refer customers to specialist provision in an individually tailored approach.

16.6 Part II: Customer Survey

The specific research objective of the Stage 1 customer survey is comparing the experiences, views and outcomes of customers who had begun a JSA claim in Phase 1 JRFND areas with those equivalent customers in Phase 2 comparison areas who started a JSA claim at the same time, all over the same 0-13 week period.

Customers were eligible for the Stage 1 or comparison survey if they had started a JSA claim in mid to late June 2009. The survey sample was drawn from the population of all eligible JSA customers using a stratified sampling approach (stratified by Phase and age), with customers randomly selected within each stratum. An opt-out exercise was undertaken prior to the survey fieldwork commencing. There were 6,001 interviews collected, split roughly evenly between JRFND Phase 1 and Phase 2.

16.6.1 Observable differentials between JRFND and JSA customers

The customer Stage 1 survey data shows some statistically significant differences between the experiences, views and outcomes of customers in JRFND Stage 1 programme areas (Phase 1) with those of customers undergoing regular JSA signing in Phase 2 areas.

In terms of outcomes, while the proportion of customers that had left the JSA register (and not returned by the time of the interview) was comparable across Phases (36% Phase 1, 35% Phase 2), some small, but significant, differences were observed at an overall level:

- Where customers had ended their claim, they were significantly more likely to have done so sooner in Phase 1 areas (61% of those who had left their claim and not returned to JSA signing when interviewed had ended their claim within eight weeks compared with 56% in Phase 2 – Section 11.3)
- Phase 1 customers were significantly more likely to have entered paid work at some point (30% had done so compared with 27% in Phase 2 areas – Section 12.2).
- The longer customers claim the less likely they are to enter paid work if and when they do end their claim. While this is evident across both Phases it is less marked in Phase 1 areas, i.e. those ending their claim in the third month of consecutive claiming in Phase 1 were significantly more likely to go into paid work than those leaving the register at a similar point in Phase 2 (66% did so compared with 58%). By contrast, those ending a claim around this point in Phase 2 areas were significantly more likely to end their claim to go into education or training (Section 12.5).

Those groups who are more likely to enter paid work or end their claim in Phase 1 (compared with Phase 2) appear to be those who may be considered as facing fewer barriers or who are nearest to the labour market (such as those aged 25-49 and those with a highest qualification of Level 2 and above).

There have been some successes for JRFND Stage 1 in terms of moving job ready customers into work. However, there was some suggestion that this work is more likely to be lower skilled, lower paid, or considered 'unsuitable' to some extent by the customers in the context of their skills and interests. It should be noted that the majority of customers in both phases felt the job role they had entered was a good match for them:

- On average, Phase 1 customers in paid work were earning around £2,400 less a year than their counterparts in Phase 2 (Section 14.5).
- Significantly fewer customers strongly agreed that the job role was a good match for their skills and interests in Phase 1 than in Phase 2 (50% compared with 56% – Section 15.4).
- Higher qualified customers (with a degree or above) were less likely in Phase 1 areas to state that their job role offered them opportunities for career progression (Section 15.5).

Where customers in Phase 1 disagreed that the job role was suitable for them they were no more likely than customers in Phase 2 to indicate that they took the role under pressure from Jobcentre Plus (Section 15.4). There were also no significant differences by Phase in the proportions of customers that were 'JSA returners' – i.e. those who despite ending their claim and entering paid work were claiming JSA again at the time of the interview (3% Phase 1, 2% Phase 2).

Looking at customers' experiences and views of the support they received from Jobcentre Plus during the first three months of claiming we can conclude that customers in Phase 1 areas were more positive about the service they received than those in Phase 2 areas (Sections 10.3 and 10.4). This may be linked to the finding that greater proportions of customers reported being offered a range of support types in Phase 1 areas (Section 9.3). There was also evidence that support was being offered in a more targeted, customer-focused manner in Phase 1 areas with greater differentiation by customer group observed (Section 9.4).

Underlying these overall findings concerning customers' experiences, views and outcomes there were some interesting variations by customer group.

16.6.2 Lone parents

JRFND Stage 1 provision appears to have been well received among lone parents.

Lone parents in Phase 1 were significantly more likely to report that their motivation to find work, confidence, job search skills and awareness of the different ways to look for job vacancies had increased as a result of the support received from Jobcentre Plus compared with their counterparts in Phase 2 areas (Section 10.4).

This appears to be translating into employment outcomes with lone parents in Phase 1 areas being just as likely as Phase 1 customers as a whole to enter paid work. By comparison, in Phase 2 areas lone parents were less likely than other customers to do so (Section 12.4).

16.6.3 Those with no or low qualifications (below Level 2)

Those with lower qualification levels were more likely to be offered a range of support types than those with higher qualification levels in both Phases (Section 9.4)

These customers were no more likely to have ended their claim or entered paid work in Phase 1 areas, nor were they any less likely.

Conversely, those qualified to Level 2 or above (as well as those aged 25-49) were significantly more likely to have entered paid work in Phase 1 areas than in Phase 2 areas (Section 12.4).

16.6.4 PSA 16 groups

Offers of certain forms of specialist support, e.g. a referral to a careers adviser or basic skills provision, were more prevalent for PSA 16 groups in Phase 2 areas than in Phase 1 (Section 9.4); indeed this was the only group for whom this was the case). Correspondingly, PSA 16 groups in Phase 2 were more positive about the service received from Jobcentre Plus than their counterparts in Phase 1 (Section 10.4).

Customers in PSA 16 groups were no more or less likely to have entered paid work in Phase 1 than in Phase 2, nor were they are more or less likely to have ended their claim by the time of the survey interview (Section 12.3).

16.6.5 Younger customers (aged 18-24)

Across both Phases, younger customers were more likely to be offered several forms of support (Section 9.4). BtWS, as well as being more likely to be offered to younger customers (18-24 year olds) were also more likely to be described as useful by younger customers compared with customers as a whole who have been offered this form of provision in Phase 1.

Younger customers were particularly likely to find the offer of basic skills courses and 'other training' useful in Phase 1 compared to younger customers in Phase 2 (Section 9.6). In Phase 1, younger customers were significantly more likely to have ended their claims and entered training or education than Phase 1 customers in general (Section 13.3).

In both Phases young people were significantly less likely to have entered work than customers generally (Section 12.3).

16.6.6 Customers aged 25-49

These customers were the most likely to have entered work, and were significantly more likely to have done so in Phase 1 than in Phase 2 (Section 12.3). However, these customers were significantly less likely to strongly agree that their work was well suited to them than 25-49 year olds in Phase 2 (Section 15.4). Possibly linked to this, 25-49 year olds in Phase 1 are more likely to have entered lower skilled jobs than their Phase 2 counterparts (Section 14.8).

16.6.7 Older customers (aged 50 or over)

The possibility of being offered several forms of support decreases with age with those customers aged 50 or over being significantly less likely to be offered a range of support types across both Phases (Section 9.4).

However, customers aged 50 or over were significantly more likely to have ended their JSA claim in Phase 1 than in Phase 2. However, where they had ended their claim they were significantly less likely to have entered paid work (Section 11.2), and were in fact less likely than average to have entered training or education (Section 13.3).

Where older customers, aged 50 or over, had entered work, in Phase 1 areas they were significantly more likely to have got this job via an agency (Section 14.3).

16.6.8 Those with a disability, illness or health problem

Those customers with a long-term health condition or disability were more likely to find their NJI useful (Section 9.6). They were also more likely to report an increase in confidence as a result of the support received from Jobcentre Plus in Phase 1 areas than in Phase 2 areas (Section 10.4).

Within Phase 1, those who have a health condition or disability were significantly less likely to have entered paid work than customers in general, as was also the case in Phase 2 areas. However, in Phase 2 areas these customers were significantly more likely to have ended a claim but not have moved into paid work than in Phase 1, i.e. were more likely to have ended their JSA claims for other reasons (Section 13.1)

16.6.9 Ethnic minority customers

In both Phases ethnic minority customers were less likely to have entered paid work than white British customers. However, ethnic minority customers were equally likely to have entered paid work in Phase 2 as they were in Phase 1 while white British customers were significantly more likely to have entered paid work in Phase 1 than in Phase 2.

This does not necessarily indicate that ethnic minority customers received less effective support in returning to work under JRFND – in fact, ethnic minority customers in Phase 1 were significantly more likely to be satisfied with Jobcentre Plus service, and to find their NJI ‘very useful’ than those in Phase 2.

Appendix A

Sampling, fieldwork outcomes and weighting

A.1 Sampling

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) drew customer records from those in Phase 1 districts who attended a New Jobseeker Interview (NJI) between 15 June and 30 June and an equal number of records of those customers attending an NJI during the same period in Phase 2. The selection of Phase 1 records was based on data from the meetings database, and Phase 2 on data from the benefits database, both administered by Jobcentre Plus. The timing of data delivery dictated data sources.

60,000 records meeting these criteria were drawn in total, 10,000 records per age band (under 25, 25-49, 50 and over) were drawn at random within each Phase – and contact details were appended to as many records as possible. This resulted in 55,802 customer records being supplied by the DWP. Around ten per cent of records supplied were excluded from the sampling frame as it would not have been possible to contact them (no valid postal address or telephone number), leaving 50,541 usable records.

To ensure the risk of interviewing customers who had moved on to Stage 2 (i.e. had been claiming for more than three months) was minimised, the sampling window was also narrowed to just those with an NJI book date in weeks commencing 15 June or 22 June, so the customers included in the fieldwork all attended an NJI between 15 June and 30 June and had an NJI book date in weeks commencing 15 June or 22 June. This left 41,396 customers, a ratio of around 7:1 for quota targets in each Phase/age cell shown in Table A.1. This drawn sample was then checked to ensure it was distributed evenly across Phase and then again, evenly within Phase by the three age-bands detailed above. Finally the profile in terms of gender, ethnicity, health/disability status, and district was compared to that of the customer population within each Phase to ensure it was an accurate reflection.

A.2 Opt out and fieldwork outcomes

All 41,396 customers drawn by IFF were given the opportunity to opt-out of the study prior to being contacted by telephone. Letters were sent out which gave a dedicated phone number at IFF that they could call if they did not wish to be contacted further. Overall three per cent of those drawn in each Phase informed us they did not want to participate following their receipt of the opt-out letter.

The remaining 40,128 were therefore available to be approached during the fieldwork. Table A.1 shows the final fieldwork outcomes for those with definite outcomes. It excludes those left with no specific outcome (e.g. those called but not answered, those who asked to be called another time or who were not contacted because Phase/age quotas were filled).

Unreachable sample includes those with invalid or out of date telephone numbers, those who would not be available before the end of the fieldwork, had moved abroad, were in prison, or were recently deceased. The 'unable to participate' category includes customers who were unable to take part in the survey due to health or language reasons. The refused category shows customers who did not want to participate or quit during the interview. The overall response rate was 80 per cent (completes as a percentage of completes plus refusals).

Table A.1 Fieldwork outcomes

	All those called with a definite outcome %
Unreachable	27
Unable to participate	1
Refused	14
Screened out	5
Completes	53
<i>Base: All records with definite outcome</i>	<i>11,323</i>

Before commencing an interview, customers were asked to confirm that they had started a claim for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) (or had their NJI) in June 2009. Nine per cent of those who began an interview screened out at this stage as they disagreed with the details held by the Jobcentre Plus (they either reported that they had never received JSA at all, or that they had started claiming JSA at some point but not in June 2009, or that they had started a claim for a different benefit, not JSA in June 2009).

A.3 Completed interviews

6,001 interviews were conducted, split evenly across each Phase/age cell as detailed in Table A.2.

Table A.2 Achieved interviews by Phase and age at start of claim according to DWP records

	Phase 1	Phase 2	All
Under 25	1,000	1,001	2,001
25 – 49	1,000	1,000	2,000
50 and over	1,000	1,000	2,000
All	3,000	3,001	6,001

A.4 Permission to link data and be contacted for longitudinal survey

Ninety-six per cent of customers interviewed agreed IFF could re-contact them in a year's time for the longitudinal study. The vast majority of customers interviewed (96% again) were also happy to have their records linked to administrative records held by the DWP.

A.5 Weighting

There were two stages to the weighting process. The 50 plus age group were over sampled to ensure sufficient sample will be available in each Phase for the longitudinal element, so initially a design weight was applied to correct for this and align the age profile with the age profile of the population in each Phase.

Secondly non-response rates for customer types within each Phase were analysed resulting in a response weight being applied to correct for response bias by ethnicity. Gender and health/disability status were also checked but no weighting was required as the achieved sample closely matched the population on these variables. The weighted profile of customers in each Phase is presented in Appendix B.

Appendix B

Profile of customers in study

The first two columns of Table B.1 shows the profile of those interviewed within Phase 1 and Phase 2, based on demographics reported by customers rather than on information supplied by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on the sample.

This data has been weighted to align the profile of those within each Phase to the overall population within the Phase as discussed above. Profiles are broadly similar between Phase 1 and Phase 2. The only notable differences are a higher percentage of customers from a white British ethnic background in Phase 1 compared to Phase 2 (83% compared with 77% respectively) and a higher proportion of customers in Phase 2 holding Level 4 or 5 qualifications compared to Phase 1 (28% and 23% respectively).

Throughout the report findings have been analysed by these sub-groups within each Phase, and significant differences reported where relevant with both Phase 1 and Phase 2.

As customer profile is based on that reported by customers during the questionnaire, there are some small differences when compared to the demographics supplied by the DWP on the sample. The only notable difference though is in health/disability status, in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 89 per cent of customers gave an answer that matched their sample information (whether agreeing that they had a disability or agreeing they did not). Six per cent of customers in Phase 1 and five per cent in Phase 2 reported during the interview that they were suffering from long-term illness or disability although they were not marked as such on the sample, and five per cent in Phase 1, six per cent in Phase 2 said that they were not suffering from illness or a disability but were marked as such on sample records. So although individual records have a different health/disability status, this leaves the overall profile the same with ten per cent having an illness/disability on the sample and ten per cent reporting this during interviews.

The third column of Table B.1 shows the population figures provided by the DWP for all those starting claims in the same weeks in June as the sample used for this study. The population is broken down by age, gender, ethnicity and disability. Numbers provided were rounded. Following the weighting there are no significant differences between the overall profile of those interviewed and the profile of the entire population starting claims in those weeks in terms of gender, age, ethnicity or disability.

Table B.1 Weighted customer profile within Phase

	Phase 1 Customers – reported %	Phase 2 Customers – reported %	All – DWP population figures %
Age			
Under 25	41	40	40
25-49	45	46	47
50+	13	13	13
Gender			
Male	67	68	69
Female	33	32	31
Ethnicity			
White British	83	77	78
White Irish	1	1	1
White other	3	3	3
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	1	1	1
Mixed White and Black African	*	*	*
Mixed White and Asian	1	1	*
Other mixed background	1	1	*
Black or Black British Caribbean	2	3	2
Black or Black British African	2	3	2
Black or Black British Other	*	*	1
Asian or Asian British Indian	2	2	2
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	2	2	2
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	*	1	1
Asian or Asian British Other	1	1	1
Chinese	*	*	*
Other ethnic background	1	1	2

Continued

Table B.1 Continued

	Phase 1 Customers – reported %	Phase 2 Customers – reported %	All – DWP population figures %
Number of JSA claims in last 3 years (excluding claim started in June 2009)			
No previous claims	22	23	n/a
One previous claim	45	44	n/a
Two previous claims	18	16	n/a
Three or more previous claims	7	9	
Whether living with partner who claims JSA or other out of work benefit			
Partner claims out of work benefit	6	5	n/a
Partner does not claim out of work benefit/no partner	93	94	n/a
Whether currently suffering from long term illness/disability			
Suffering from long-term illness or disability	10	10	10
Not suffering from long-term illness or disability	90	90	90
PSA 16 barriers to claiming			
Recently left prison, on probation, or community service	3	2	n/a
In contact with secondary mental health services	1	1	n/a
Moderate to severe learning difficulties	3	3	n/a
No PSA 16 barriers	93	93	n/a
Housing situation			
Own property outright	5	5	n/a
Paying mortgage	20	19	n/a
Live rent free	37	37	n/a
Rent	27	27	n/a
Rent covered by Housing Benefit	9	8	n/a
Qualifications			
No qualifications	22	22	n/a
Highest qualification – Below Level 2 or unknown level	17	14	n/a
Highest qualification – Level 2 or 3	38	36	n/a
Highest qualification – Level 4 or 5	23	28	n/a

Continued

Table B.1 Continued

	Phase 1 Customers – reported %	Phase 2 Customers – reported %	All – DWP population figures %
Parental status			
No children under 16	78	78	n/a
Parent or guardian of child under 16	21	21	n/a
Parent or guardian of child under 5	10	11	n/a
Lone parent of child under 16	3	3	n/a
<i>Base: *all respondents in study (weighted)</i>	3,000*	3,001*	^112,370

^all customers starting a claim 15-30 June 2009.

Table B.2 Jobcentre Plus Districts in Phase 1 and Phase 2 of JRFND

Phase 1	Phase 2
Ayrshire, Dumfries, Galloway and Inverclyde	Essex
Edinburgh, Lothian and Borders	Hampshire
Lanarkshire and Dumbarton	North and North East London
Tees Valley	City and East London
North and East Yorkshire and The Humber	South London
Greater Manchester East and West	West London
Greater Manchester Central	South Tyne and Wear Valley
Derbyshire	Cumbria
South Yorkshire	Cheshire and Warrington
South East Wales	Lancashire
North and Mid Wales	West of England
Coventry and Warwickshire	West Yorkshire
Staffordshire	Forth Valley, Fife and Tayside
The Marches	Glasgow
Leicestershire and Northamptonshire	Highlands, Islands, Clyde Coast and Grampian
Nottinghamshire	Greater Merseyside
Lincolnshire and Rutland	Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire
Suffolk and Cambridgeshire	Liverpool and Wirral
Norfolk	Northumbria
Birmingham and Solihull	Berks, Bucks and Oxfordshire
Black Country	Gloucestershire and Wiltshire
South West Wales	Somerset and Dorset
South Wales Valleys	
Central London	
Lambeth, Southwark and Wandsworth	
Kent	
Surrey and Sussex	
Cornwall and Devon	

Appendix C

Qualitative fieldwork

Site visit research methods

Site visits took place during May-June 2009 (Wave 1) and August-September 2009 (Wave 2). The majority of the fieldwork during each wave was conducted during a three week time period. The focus of the data collection in Jobseekers Regime and Flexible New Deal (JRFND) districts differed slightly by wave and prescribed which staff interviews and meeting observations were conducted. The research focus for Support for Newly Unemployed (SNU) and Six Month Offer (6MO) data collection remained similar over both waves of fieldwork. The Tables below outline the typical fieldwork activity for Wave 1 and Wave 2, separately for JRFND Phase 1 and 2 districts.

Table C.1 Wave 1 fieldwork activity per office

Stakeholder	Number of observations	
	JRFND Phase 1 (May-Jun 2009)	JRFND Phase 2 (Aug-Sept 2009)
District Manager telephone interview*	1	1
ASM interviews	1-2	1-2
Customer Engagement Team Leader or Diary Admin Support Officer interviews	1-2	1-2
NJI Adviser interviews	3	3
26 wk Review/Stage 3 Adviser interviews	3	3
BtWS facilitator interview	1	-
NJI observations	3	3
26 wk Review/Stage 3 observations	3	3
BtWS observations	2	-
Informal customers chats	Varied according to permission	

* District level only.

Table C.2 Wave 2 fieldwork activity per office

Stakeholder	Number of observations	
	JRFND Phase 1 (May-Jun09)	JRFND Phase 2 (Aug-Sept 2009)
District Manager telephone interview*	1	1
Third Party Provision Manager telephone interview*	1	1
ASM telephone interviews	2-3	1-2
Customer Engagement Team Leader telephone interviews	1-2	1-2
NJI Adviser interviews	-	3
Stage 2 Adviser interviews	3	-
26 wk Review/Stage 3 Adviser interviews	3	3
SNU group facilitator interview	1	1
NJI observations	-	3
26 wk Review/Stage 3 observations	3	3
SNU group observations	1	1
Informal customers chats	Varied according to permission	

* District level only.

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