

Jobcentre Plus Employer Satisfaction and Experience Survey (2012)

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Key findings

The main finding of the research is that overall satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus services is, and remains, high. Nearly nine in ten employers are satisfied (87 per cent satisfied, 13 per cent dissatisfied) and a quarter are extremely satisfied with Jobcentre Plus services. Most employers (82 per cent) thought the level of service provided by Jobcentre Plus had stayed the same over the previous six months and 14 per cent said services had improved. Drawing direct comparisons with previous surveys is challenging but the evidence suggests that employers' satisfaction levels with Jobcentre Plus services are increasing.

Employers were generally satisfied with the 18 separate elements of the Jobcentre Plus Vacancy Advertising Service measured – covering aspects such as dealing with queries, meeting expectations, availability of Jobcentre Plus staff, and staff responsiveness. Satisfaction with the speed at which vacancies were displayed and the professional nature of Jobcentre Plus staff scored the highest (with an average score of 8.8 and 8.9 out of ten) while the quality of candidates attracted the lowest levels of satisfaction (6.6 out of ten).

Around one in five (21 per cent) of employers in the survey said that they were given and made use of a named contact for further advice or queries when they first got in touch with Jobcentre Plus. The contact would work with them to fill the vacancy, provide general recruitment advice, follow up and check on progress, and help close the vacancy. Direct contact with Jobcentre Plus staff helped facilitate

a positive experience for employers when using Jobcentre Plus in placing and filling vacancies, as those with a direct contact had higher satisfaction scores than those who did not. Overall, the survey evidence suggests an employer preference for personal support.

Around a quarter (24 per cent) of all employers thought that there was nothing in particular that needed to be improved in Jobcentre Plus services, reflecting their overall high satisfaction level. However, most employers did give suggestions for improvement: the most commonly cited areas for improvement included candidate quality and suitability for the advertised vacancy, communication from Jobcentre Plus staff, user friendliness of online services, and the (accurate) handling of vacancy details.

Detailed statistical modelling of the survey results suggests there is room for Jobcentre Plus to improve and to increase satisfaction ratings even further in the future, and identifies key areas where Jobcentre Plus can make the most positive difference. Firstly, improving candidate quality to ensure suitable experience, attitude and qualifications for the post. Secondly, to improve the accessibility of services for employers and the relationships between employers and Jobcentre Plus staff by ensuring the system for registering vacancies is easy to use and efficient, staff are available to handle queries and understand business and skill needs, and employers can find out what services they can access. Lastly, to recognise that different types of employers have different needs from and experiences of the services provided, and in particular large employers may warrant separate treatment.

Introduction

As set out in its business plan, Jobcentre Plus is modernising the services it provides to employers. To help inform this process, the Department for Work Pensions (DWP) commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies (IES), in partnership with Ipsos MORI, to conduct a telephone survey with a representative sample of 3,000 employers who had placed a vacancy with Jobcentre Plus between 1 September and 30 November 2011. The survey aimed to examine employers' experience of the services provided, measure (and benchmark) their satisfaction, and explore their appetite for using online facilities.

Methodology

A computer-assisted telephone interviewing questionnaire (CATI) questionnaire, building on previous surveys, was designed to:

- Measure and explore the overall satisfaction and use of Jobcentre Plus services; identifying differences in satisfaction by employer type and differences in services used; and determine what aspects are driving satisfaction.
- Examine employer awareness of, use of and appetite for online channels, identifying employers' suggestions for improvement of the existing Employer Direct online (EDon) service, prior to roll-out of new services through the 'Transforming Labour Market Services' project.
- Explore in detail what types of vacancy employers place with Jobcentre Plus and their satisfaction with the current Vacancy Advertising Service (including satisfaction with the outcomes achieved, such as quality of Jobcentre Plus candidates).

The population for the survey was defined as employers who had had contact with Jobcentre Plus within six months of the survey date, this was a) to ensure sufficient recall of contact experience and therefore yield reliable information; and b) to ensure that all employers sampled would be eligible (in that they had had some form of contact with Jobcentre Plus and were therefore able to provide feedback on this experience). The sample was drawn from Jobcentre Plus' Labour Market System (LMS).

The survey took place between 13 March and 2 May 2012. The average interview length was 20 minutes, and the effective response rate was 58 per cent. Survey results were weighted to ensure they were representative of the original survey population and were therefore considered to be a reliable reflection of the views of employers who use Jobcentre Plus' Vacancy Advertising Service.

Report findings

What drives satisfaction with Jobcentre Plus services?

To identify which aspects of existing service delivery are most strongly associated with overall satisfaction, detailed modelling of survey data has found:

- The **quality of the candidates** put forward to employers is the area where there is most opportunity for Jobcentre Plus to drive up satisfaction further. Satisfaction levels with candidate quality are well below average but this factor has an important influence on overall satisfaction. In the survey, the key concerns among employers about candidate quality centred on their suitability for the post and in particular their lack of experience, their lack of a positive attitude or lack of relevant qualifications.
- The second area which offers most scope for improvement is **accessibility and business relationships**. It is an important driver of satisfaction and although satisfaction scores are fairly high, there is further scope for improving performance. Therefore, Jobcentre Plus should ensure that its system for registering vacancies is as easy to use and efficient as possible, Jobcentre Plus staff are available if required to handle queries, and information about other Jobcentre Plus services is readily available and staff understand business and skills needs. An increase in the satisfaction with these measures will positively increase overall satisfaction.

- Ensuring the service lives up to employers' expectations and **queries are resolved** efficiently is also important but is already an area of strong performance and so Jobcentre Plus should focus on ensuring it continues to deliver the currently high level of service in this regard.
- Employers are already very satisfied with the **timeliness** with which vacancies are displayed and Jobcentre Plus just needs to maintain its level of service here.
- The final driver covers the **treatment and communication** aspects of the service and although satisfaction with this element of the service is relatively low, the model indicates that it is not particularly influential and so Jobcentre Plus is unlikely to get a good return on significant investment in this area.

What vacancies do employers place with Jobcentre Plus?

Employers generally use Jobcentre Plus to fill elementary, sales and skilled vacancies but most would consider using Jobcentre Plus to recruit to wider roles indicating the potential scope for Jobcentre Plus to extend its reach.

Two-thirds (66 per cent) of those employers who place a vacancy with Jobcentre Plus offer some form of flexible working conditions, mainly part-time working (this was generally for between 16 and 30 hours a week). The key reasons for offering part-time work were to meet customer needs, to help the company recruit the quantity of staff they need, to meet the requirements of the job, to maximise the use of company premises, or for financial reasons.

Four in five employers (83 per cent) filled their vacancies; two-thirds (69 per cent) of them did so through Jobcentre Plus. Employers offering flexible working terms or using wider recruitment methods (beyond Jobcentre Plus) were no more successful in filling their vacancies than those who did not.

What appetite do employers have for online recruitment services?

Two in three employers who placed a vacancy with Jobcentre Plus use the internet for recruitment. Only one-third (31 per cent) use the current Employer Direct online (EDon) service. Use of EDon is most common among large employers, those in the financial and business services sectors, and those located in the South of England. Employers who do not use EDon said they preferred a personal service or were not aware that EDon existed.

Generally, employers' preferred method for contacting Jobcentre Plus was by telephone and this can act as a barrier to persuading more employers to place vacancies using Jobcentre Plus's online service.

Online recruiters thought the internet provided a better way of accessing and processing applications. They expect the system to be easy for them to use, in particular to be able to upload vacancies and to be able to sift online applications easily and match applicants to job specifications. They also expect an online recruitment service to be easy for applicants to use.

To increase employers' use of future online services, the results suggest that Jobcentre Plus needs to:

- Focus its attention on those employers who already use the internet for recruitment (65 per cent of employers).
- Increase awareness of the online option for vacancy advertising and the features it offers (as 20 per cent of employers not using EDon are unaware of this service).
- Improve the quality, accessibility and functionality of the EDon service to meet increasingly sophisticated expectations.

If, in moving over to a more online service, Jobcentre Plus can ensure employers receive the support, accuracy and speed of service that they currently feel they get from personal contact with Jobcentre Plus staff and that, crucially, the applicants they get through are suitable for the advertised job then overall satisfaction levels should not be detrimentally affected.

Do employers make use of Jobcentre Plus's wider services?

Employers using the Vacancy Advertising Service had relatively low levels of awareness of other Jobcentre Plus services, including:

- Work Trials: 48 per cent of employers were aware of the service, nine per cent had used it.
- Advice about employing people who may need special support: 40 per cent were aware of the service, eight per cent had used it.
- Support for recruitment beyond the Vacancy Advertising Service (for example, Recruitment Advisory Service, European Employment Service, Small Business Recruitment Service): 35 per cent were aware of these services, 14 per cent had used them.
- Support for improving workforce skills: 31 per cent were aware of the service, six per cent had used it.
- Support when making redundancies: 14 per cent were aware of the service, three per cent had used it.

Generally, satisfaction levels were high among those that did use these wider services, they were used by employers because they are free and perceived to give access to better candidates. There is, therefore, scope for promoting wider use of these services.

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You can download the full report free from: <http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/rrs-index.asp>

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