

Developing an online service: Customer research into the benefits and likely uptake of Automated Service Delivery (Jobseeker's Allowance)

By Bridget Williams, Chris Holmes, Josh Hunt and Jo Phillips

Background and methods

- Jobcentre Plus are developing Automated Service Delivery (ASD) for Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). The aim of the service is to:
 - maximise the automation of JSA, up to a point where staff intervention with a customer adds real value;
 - maximise self-service online;
 - minimise dependency on paper;
 - develop a platform for wider delivery.

ASD (JSA) will initially be rolled out to customers of JSA, in selected pathfinder Districts, starting in autumn 2011.

- Research was commissioned to understand the reactions of current and potential future benefits to customers of ASD. The research sought to understand the appeal of the new service, estimate likely uptake, and provide guidance on how to increase uptake among key customer groups.
- Qualitative and quantitative research was conducted among current and potential future customers of working age in Britain. The research included current JSA customers, Income Support (IS) customers, Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Incapacity Benefit (IB) customers, and working non-customers.

Key findings

- Customers were generally open to the concept of ASD.
- High levels of internet access, experience and confidence were observed amongst JSA customers, which has positive implications for early take-up of the system.
- Based on the current customer proposition, and existing perceptions and experiences of both ASD and the benefits system, the research indicated that up to 41 per cent of current JSA customers would take up ASD:
 - no one feature of the system was a very strong driver of uptake – instead the focus should be on doing the basics well;
 - the planned integration of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Transforming Labour Market Services (TLMS) project/labour market related features at an early stage would help to drive uptake;
 - levels of potential uptake were higher among younger customers, newer customers and potential future customers. This indicates that use of the system has potential to grow over time;
 - levels of potential uptake of ASD were lower amongst ESA/IB customers (26 per cent) and IS customers (35 per cent): linked to their lower levels of internet confidence and lower frequency of interaction with Jobcentre Plus.

- The main barriers to uptake of ASD were:
 - low levels of confidence using the internet;
 - not having home internet access;
 - attitudinal barriers to using ASD.
- Different combinations of barriers may need different approaches from the DWP to overcome them and facilitate uptake of ASD. A number of key customer groupings have been identified which may need different strategies and communications to help them to overcome their individual barriers.
- The following themes were identified as key to supporting successful implementation of ASD:
 - the need to raise internet confidence, as well as confidence in the process of claiming benefits as a whole;
 - support and encouragement from staff will be key in driving uptake;
 - it will be important to understand the needs and barriers of different customer groups, and which messages and interventions would motivate them to use ASD;
 - customer experience needs to be good from first use, as high expectations need to be met. Ongoing support and encouragement from staff will also be needed to turn the initial trial of ASD to longer term adoption and integration into the customer experience.

© Crown copyright 2011.

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/> or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

The full report of these research findings is published by the Department for Work and Pensions (ISBN 978 1 84712 959 8. Research Report 734. May 2011).

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

Other report summaries in the research series are also available from the website above.

If you would like to subscribe to our email list to receive future summaries and alerts as reports are published please contact:

Kate Callow, Commercial Support and Knowledge Management Team, Upper Ground Floor, Steel City House, West Street, Sheffield S1 2GQ. Email: Kate.Callow1@dwp.gsi.gov.uk.