

Jobcentre Plus Customer Survey 2011

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Background and objectives

These findings are based on the 2011 Jobcentre Plus Customer Survey, which involved a representative quantitative survey of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Income Support (IS), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Incapacity Benefit (IB) customers. Completed between January and March 2011, the main objective of the survey is to monitor satisfaction with the service and identify any particular elements which lead to higher or lower satisfaction. The survey was designed to focus on tracking one particular contact type (e.g. new claim, review meeting, etc.) the customer has had with Jobcentre Plus in the last six months.

The contact type the survey focused on was based on a hierarchy, with those involving more interaction with Jobcentre Plus prioritised over those which typically involved routine contact. For example, a customer who had started a new claim within the last six months, but had also had other more routine types of contact with Jobcentre Plus, such as Fortnightly Jobsearch Reviews (FJR) would be asked to focus on their experience of making a new claim for the purpose of the survey.

Overall performance

The key performance measure in the survey was overall customer satisfaction with the service. Overall, respondent feedback is positive with **88 per cent of respondents saying they were satisfied with the service**. Thirty-four per cent were very satisfied and ten per cent said they were dissatisfied.

Respondents claiming ESA were the least satisfied, with 82 per cent saying they were satisfied. This group was also the most likely to say that the service was worse than expected and that the service needed improvement.

The overall satisfaction measure also reveals some key differences in satisfaction depending on the type of contact customers were focusing on in the survey. **This highlights issues with two contact types in particular: enquiring about eligibility for a benefit and reporting problems with an existing benefit.** Three in ten customers who had enquired about eligibility were dissatisfied with the service (30 per cent) compared with only one in ten (ten per cent) across the survey as a whole. The higher dissatisfaction amongst respondents who have reported a problem with their benefit is perhaps understandable and given that three-quarters (76 per cent) of this group still say they are satisfied with the service overall, this could be seen as a positive reflection of Jobcentre Plus' ability to handle problems. On the other hand dissatisfaction amongst customers checking eligibility is less understandable as this should be a relatively straightforward contact.

Overall performance also varied by customer characteristics. **In particular, women and younger respondents were more satisfied overall and professional respondents and those with disabilities were less satisfied overall.**

Customers were given the chance to make suggestions of how Jobcentre Plus could be improved and to give feedback on the best things about the service at the end of the questionnaire, in two unprompted open ended questions. Interestingly, the findings were mixed, **with staff being the most common aspect of the service mentioned by respondents both as an area for potential improvement and as the best thing about the service.** This shows that customers' experience with staff can differ greatly, but also that the service received from staff is an important and memorable area of the service experience as a whole.

The drivers of satisfaction

The key drivers of both customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with Jobcentre Plus were derived using logistic regression. Analysing these drivers through the framework of the Kano model allows us to identify which are 'performance' factors which drive both satisfaction and dissatisfaction, 'hygiene' factors which can lead to dissatisfaction if missing but which will not contribute to higher satisfaction if done well and 'delight' factors which can lead to higher satisfaction but which will not lead to dissatisfaction if they are not delivered. This analysis highlights some key areas for focus to improve Jobcentre Plus' service delivery.

Firstly, there are two key elements of service delivery (i.e. hygiene factors) that are being done less well for customers contacting Jobcentre Plus to check eligibility or to report a problem; **completing the enquiry in a reasonable amount of time and being told what would happen next**. Additionally, these respondents are less likely to experience helpful and knowledgeable staff, something which drives both satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

Secondly, ESA claimants were less likely to experience two of the hygiene factors: **completing the enquiry in a reasonable time and receiving suitable job suggestions**. ESA claimants were also less likely than other claimants to feel confident that their benefit payment was correct and clearly explained, and less likely to have been given clear timings by Jobcentre Plus on what they would do as a result of their enquiry. These two issues are 'delight' factors which if done well amongst ESA claimants will drive up their satisfaction.

Respondents whose previous or current occupation was professional, managerial or technical were less likely to be satisfied overall. Particular issues which came out in the Kano model for this group of respondents were that they were less likely to say that jobs suggested by their advisers were suitable (a hygiene factor) and less likely to rate the office conditions positively (a performance factor).

In terms of enquiry handling, there are two elements which are vital to do well in order to keep dissatisfaction to a minimum: **completing enquiries in a reasonable time and telling customers what will happen next**. Encouragingly these things are already being done well for four in five customers, however, for particular transactions such as checking eligibility and reporting problems the service is falling down. Interestingly, providing clear timings for what Jobcentre Plus would do during the enquiry was not something that respondents saw as vital, but is something that will drive up satisfaction further if done consistently.

For customers actively looking for work, advisers suggesting different types of work other than the ones customers were interested in was a key driver of satisfaction. This suggests that respondents appreciate advisers being proactive in helping with their jobsearch. However, on the other hand, advisers suggesting jobs that respondents felt were unsuitable for them was a key driver of dissatisfaction, meaning it is vital for advisers to have a clear understanding of what is appropriate for individual customers.

Call handling and next steps communication

The way customer service agents handle and close off calls has a significant impact not only on satisfaction levels but also on contact volumes.

The amount of time customers waited for their call to be answered did not have a large impact on overall satisfaction. Indeed **it was only when respondents reported that they had to wait over five minutes that satisfaction was noticeably lower**. Instead it seemed to be the experience during the call that impacted most significantly on satisfaction, particularly if customers were left with unresolved questions or felt hurried during the call. Customers checking eligibility or reporting problems were significantly more likely to experience either of these two situations.

Feeling hurried during a call or having unresolved questions also impacted on call volumes, with customers experiencing these situations reporting nearly two and a half times as many calls. As a result of this, customers checking eligibility or reporting problems generated significantly more calls than other contact types.

Respondents who were transferred directly to someone else when their first point of contact was unable to help them, were twice as likely as those who were called back to report that they had to repeat all information, and this impacted negatively on satisfaction.

Nearly nine out of ten respondents said that Jobcentre Plus did what they said they would but where service is failing respondents are significantly less satisfied (46 per cent).

Telephone call volumes for transactions are twice as high when respondents are not told what will happen next or kept up to date with progress and are nearly three times as high when they are not given clear timings.

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