



Skills Funding
Agency

National Careers Service Customer Satisfaction and Progression Annual Report (April 2014 - April 2015 fieldwork)

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Executive Summary

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Skills Funding Agency.

Background

The National Careers Service ("the service") is delivered via a multi-channel approach: face-to-face, telephone, and online, both through its website and via social media. Adults aged 19 or older (or 18 or older, who have been referred by Jobcentre Plus or are in custody) are eligible for face-to-face advice. Young people aged between 13 and 18 may also use the National Careers Service, through its website or digital channels, or through a dedicated young people's telephone service. Schools and colleges are responsible for the delivery of careers advice (either directly or through their own contracted provision) and the National Careers Service does not deliver face-to-face advice to young people who are still in full-time education. It does promote its online and telephone services via schools, colleges and other training providers, as well as providing labour market information and supporting materials to their careers services. Furthermore, as part of its "inspiration" agenda, the National Careers Service is also actively engaged in building partnerships between schools, colleges and employers.

The services provided by the National Careers Service are contracted to a number of area-based Prime Contractors and a national contact centre. From October 2014, the service was re-configured under a new contract which meant that some area-based contractors were replaced, either by new providers or by providers who were already delivering the service in other regions. A range of other changes was introduced from October 2014, the principal one being that area-based contractors moved away from purely delivering face-to-face advice and became responsible for the provision of advice by telephone, as well as diversifying into online and digital methods.

Overview of methodology

This report presents the findings from three strands of research. The first two, the National Careers Service customer satisfaction and progression surveys, are based on regular monthly surveys undertaken by telephone or online, among customers aged 18-plus (using the face-to-face or telephone service) or aged 16-plus (using the website). It is the fourth year of research on telephone and face-to-face customers, and the third year that research evidence has been collected of customers' experience of using the National Careers Service website. This fieldwork was undertaken from April 2014 to April 2015.

Satisfaction among National Careers Service customers

The overall quality of the service continued to be rated highly by telephone and face-to-face customers, with the vast majority (93%) agreeing that it was good. It is encouraging to see that customers' perceptions of service quality have been maintained during a period of change for the service, with the introduction of new contracts from October 2014 onwards.

The vast majority of face-to-face and telephone customers (83%) were satisfied with the National Careers Service overall, consistent with previous years. Customers who were more satisfied than average were those aged 18-19 (89%), in particular young people who were NEET (86%), and people with below Level 2 or no qualifications (85%). This is positive given that 18-24 year old NEETs and people with qualifications below Level 2 are priority groups for the service.

Overall satisfaction with the National Careers Service website remains high (at 80%). This represents a gradual climb since the online survey first began. In particular, there has been a significant increase on the proportion of very satisfied website visitors over time, rising from 35% in Year 2 to 39% in Year 4.

Reflecting the high levels of customer satisfaction and positive views of service quality, almost nine-in-ten (90%) face-to-face or telephone customers either had already recommended or would recommend the National Careers Service. Similarly, four-in-five (84%) online customers said they would recommend the National Careers Service website to friends, family or colleagues.

Suggestions for improvement were consistent between face-to-face, telephone and online customers and focused on more tailored help and more follow-up. These suggestions are in line with the most common reasons customers were dissatisfied with the service.

Progression among National Careers Service customers

Almost all face-to-face and telephone customers (96%) experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months since their call or meeting. Year 4 has seen particular increases in learning and employment progression, compared with previous years: the latter is likely to be heavily influenced by improving economic conditions.

The proportion of customers who achieved any employment progression increased over the course of the year, from 52% in Quarter 1 (April 2014 – June 2014) to 60% in Quarter 4, and averaged 55% across the year. This is an increase from 50% in Year 3. Face-to-face and telephone advice customers were much more likely to have progressed into new employment (42% and 38% respectively, compared with 31% of telephone information customers). To a large extent this reflects the differences in their employment status at the time they first had contact with the service.

Learning progression increased to 70% in Year 4, up from 65% in Year 3. It was higher among telephone than among face-to-face customers, related to differences in the reasons why telephone customers contact the National Careers Service in the first place (they tend to be seeking information about learning or training, rather than work).

Overall 93% of face-to-face or telephone customers indicated that they had gained some form of Personal Added Value since their contact with the National Careers Service. The most common additions were improvements in CV writing or interview skills (61%), increased self-confidence (61%) and developing skills related to a current or future job (53%). As a whole, young people aged 18-24 were consistently more likely than older people to report any personal development outcomes, in particular young people who were NEET.

Almost all website visitors (91%) who completed the online progression survey had achieved some form of progression three months after their visit. This was most commonly learning progression (70%) although almost half (47%) had made progress in employment, either getting or improving a job.

Nine-in-ten (90%) face-to-face or telephone customers reported developing career management skills during the six months since their contact with the National Careers Service. This was consistent across most key demographics.

Implications

Overall, the results of the research suggest that the changes made by the National Careers Service from October 2014 are yet to fully impact on customer satisfaction indicators, which have remained remarkably consistent over time. What is encouraging is that satisfaction levels have largely been maintained at high levels, or improved in some cases, in the face of major changes to the service.

Progression has improved since last year although it is not possible to determine the extent to which this is attributable to the National Careers Service rather than to other factors such as improving economic conditions. Progression across all measures is highest among young people aged 18-24, and in particular young people who have been “not in education, employment or training” (NEET) – one of the service’s priority customer groups.

Less encouraging is the continuation of the trend for over-50s and people with a disability to be less satisfied on a range of measures and to exhibit more frustration at issues such as lack of sufficiently tailored advice. These groups also report lower levels of progression. It will be important for the service to continue to maintain and enhance its provision for these groups in the year ahead if it wants to improve its ratings overall.

1. Introduction and methodology

1.1 Background

The Skills Funding Agency is responsible for the commissioning, contracting and performance management of the National Careers Service (before April 2012, known as Next Step) which provides information, advice and guidance to help individuals make decisions on learning, training and work. The service offers confidential and impartial advice, provided by qualified careers advisers.

The National Careers Service is delivered via a multi-channel approach: face-to-face, telephone, and online, both through its website and via social media. Adults aged 19 or older (or 18 or older, who have been referred by Jobcentre Plus or are in custody) are eligible for face-to-face advice. Young people aged between 13 and 18 may also use the National Careers Service, through its website or digital channels, or through a dedicated young people's telephone service. Schools and colleges are responsible for the delivery of careers advice (either directly or through their own contracted provision) and the National Careers Service does not deliver face-to-face advice to young people who are still in full-time education. It does promote its online and telephone services via schools, colleges and other training providers, as well as providing labour market information and supporting materials to their careers services. Furthermore, in line with the government's "Inspiration Vision Statement"¹ the National Careers Service is also actively engaged in building partnerships between schools, colleges and employers.

The National Careers Service is delivered by 7 area-based Prime Contractors and one national contact centre. To ensure and assure the quality of the National Careers Service all National Careers Service prime contractors and subcontractors must achieve and retain the matrix Standard. This is a government-endorsed, national, independent quality standard for any organisation that provides information and advice as part of its service offer. To achieve and retain accreditation, organisations must undergo a comprehensive assessment and commit to annual reviews that explores how well the organisation is performing in the areas of leadership and management, deployment of resources, service delivery and continuous quality improvement.

From October 2014, the service was re-configured under a new contract which meant that some area-based contractors were replaced, either by new providers or by providers who were already delivering the service in other regions. A range of other changes was introduced from October 2014, the principal ones being the introduction of an outcome-based funding model and the requirement that area-based contractors move away from purely delivering face-to-face advice and assume responsibility for the provision of advice by telephone, as well as diversifying into online and digital methods.

¹ BIS Inspiration Vision Statement: Careers, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/careers-inspiration-vision-statement> [Last accessed 7/1/2016]

1.2 Research aims

An extensive programme of research has been developed to understand customer views of the National Careers Service and to help inform its development and continuous improvement. This involves continuous monthly research to:

- Measure customer satisfaction, with face-to-face and telephone customers interviewed in the month after their session, and website visitors asked about their views of the site at the time they access it (via an overlay survey).
- Assess customer progression, with face-to-face and telephone customers interviewed six months after their last adviser session, and website visitors assessed three months after they completed the online satisfaction survey.

This report is based on fieldwork conducted between April 2014 and April 2015. For face-to-face and telephone customers this means the satisfaction survey covers sessions with an adviser between March 2014 and March 2015. It should be noted that this period covers 13 months, whereas previous annual surveys have covered 12 months. This is due to the new service configuration contracted from 1 October 2014 onwards: it was decided to revise the quarterly reporting from this point, in order to align with the beginning of the new service. Thus, in the remainder of this report, where customer satisfaction results are reported quarterly this includes a 'break month' in September 2014, before the new Quarter 3 (covering customers who contacted the service from October to December 2014, which formerly would have covered the period from September to November) and Quarter 4 (January to March 2014, formerly December to February). For face-to-face and telephone customers, the progression survey continues to cover the period six months beforehand (ie. from October 2013 to September 2014).

The research among web visitors covers those accessing the National Careers Service website between April 2014 and March 2015 (for the online satisfaction survey) and between January 2014 and December 2014 (for the progression survey).

The overall aims of this research are to:

- Provide full analysis of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the National Careers Service, which incorporate specific measures on customer satisfaction and progression following their contact with an adviser. It should be noted that the progression measures reported here are not designed to provide an impact evaluation of the National Careers Service as they are self-reported outcomes with no counterfactual (ie. there is no way of knowing whether that impact would have occurred anyway, without the intervention of the National Careers Service).
- Understand customer views of the service at different points in their journey, to provide actionable feedback to help the National Careers Service to identify areas for improvement and to inform its service development.
- Measure variations in performance among the Prime Contractors delivering the service. The research also allows a comparison of customers receiving the face-to-face service at Jobcentre Plus locations with those receiving it elsewhere.

- Monitor changes over time.

1.3 Methodology

This report presents the results from Year 4 of the customer satisfaction and progression study, covering fieldwork between April 2014 and April 2015.

Telephone surveys

For face-to-face and telephone customers this involved a total of 9,576 interviews for the satisfaction survey and 5,066 interviews for the progression survey. The fieldwork pattern is shown in the Table 1.1 which also shows comparative sample sizes and fieldwork dates for the previous three years of the survey.

In order to clearly demarcate satisfaction results under the new National Careers Service contracts which started in October 2014, it was agreed to adjust the quarterly coverage of the satisfaction survey so that it aligned with the start of the new contract. This means that the October 2014 fieldwork (with customers who first had contact with the service in September 2014, the last month under the old contracts) is treated as a stand-alone month, with adjusted quarters then running from November 2014 fieldwork (with customers whose first contact with the service was in October 2014, under the new contract).

Table 1.1: Achieved interviews by quarter (face-to-face and telephone customers)

	Satisfaction survey			Progression survey	
	Fieldwork dates	Month of adviser session	No. of interviews	Month of adviser session	No. of interviews
Quarter 1	Sept 11	Aug 11	2,217	Mar 2011	1,601
Quarter 2	Oct-Dec 11	Sept-Nov 11	2,195	Apr-Jun 11	1,599
Quarter 3	Jan-Mar 12	Dec 11-Feb 12	2,198	Jul-Sept 11	1,638
Year 1			6,610		4,398
Quarter 4	Apr-Jun 12	March-May 12	2,211	Oct-Dec 11	1,599
Quarter 5	Jul-Sept 12	Jun-Aug 12	2,199	Jan-Mar 12	1,599
Quarter 6	Oct-Dec 12	Sept-Nov 12	2,199	Apr-Jun 12	1,599
Quarter 7	Jan-Mar 13	Dec 12-Feb 13	2,199	Jul-Sept 12	1,599
Year 2			8,808		6,395
Quarter 1	Apr-Jun 13	Mar-May 13	2,199	Oct-Dec 12	1,598
Quarter 2	Jul-Sept 13	Jun-Aug 13	2,199	Jan-Mar 13	1,599
Quarter 3	Oct-Dec 13	Sep-Nov 13	2,198	Apr-Jun 13	1,598

	Fieldwork dates	Satisfaction survey		Progression survey	
		Month of adviser session	No. of interviews	Month of adviser session	No. of interviews
Quarter 4	Jan-Mar 14	Dec 13-Feb 14	2,199	Jul-Sept 13	1,597
Year 3			8,795		6,392
Quarter 1	Apr-Jun 14	Mar-May 14	2,100	Oct-Dec 13	1,603
Quarter 2	Jul-Sept 14	Jun-Aug 14	2,210	Jan-Mar 14	1,602
	Oct 14	Sept 14	747		
Quarter 3	Nov 14-Jan 15 (sat) Oct-Dec 14 (prog)	Oct-Dec 14	2,222	Apr-Jun 14	1,064
Quarter 4	Feb-Apr 15 (sat) Jan-Mar 15 (prog)	Jan-Mar 15	2,197	Jul-Sept 14	797
Year 4			9,576		5,066

Source: Ipsos MORI

All survey interviews among face-to-face or telephone customers were conducted by telephone using Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI). Targets were set each month based on the type of service they received, namely:

- Face-to-face National Careers Service customers;
- Telephone customers who received the information service from the national contact centre – referred to as ‘telephone information’ customers; and
- Telephone customers who received the advice service (typically for customers who have more complex needs or require skills assessment) either through the national contact centre or, from October 2014 onwards, directly from Prime Contractors alongside their face-to-face service provision – these are referred to as ‘telephone advice’ customers.

The service was re-contracted and re-configured from October 2014 onwards. A number of area-based contracts changed provider, and area-based contractors were able to deliver advice across telephone and digital channels, rather than solely face-to-face, as the service moved to a more multi-channel, integrated approach. The survey identifies whether customers have accessed the service via different means, while continuing to assign them to a ‘primary’ channel based on their first substantive interaction with the service. As in previous years, the targets on service channel involved oversampling telephone customers in order to ensure sufficient numbers for robust analysis each quarter.

In addition to these overall targets, quotas for each month of fieldwork were set on age, gender and employment status at the time of the call (within service type), in proportion to the profile of those having contact with advisers in the corresponding month.

At the analysis stage, the data was weighted by the substantive type of service received to match the customer profile. As the same number of interviews was conducted each month regardless of changes in the volume of customers, the annual data was also weighted to the profile of customer contacts by quarter.

Online surveys

In total 9,843 website users took part in the website satisfaction survey. Use of cookies means that someone accessing the site from the same computer will only be asked to participate once. As in previous years, no weighting has been applied to the web satisfaction survey because the demographic profile of the population of website users is unknown.

The progression survey for website users is entirely longitudinal and conducted online, with respondents sent an email with a link to the online questionnaire. The email is only sent to individuals (rather than employers or careers advisers) who accessed the site seeking information on their own behalf, were willing to be re-contacted, and supplied a valid email address for this purpose. Data for the online progression survey is weighted to reflect the age, gender and employment profile of people who participated in the online satisfaction survey.

1.4 The structure of this report

The rest of this report presents the results of Year 4 of the National Careers Service customer satisfaction and progression surveys, and the Young People's Omnibus Survey, as follows:

- Chapter 2 details the profile of customers accessing the National Careers Service;
- Chapter 3 explores customers' reasons for contacting the service, how they found out about it, and what they wanted from it;
- Chapter 4 examines the customer journey in detail, looking at their experiences of using specific aspects of the service across all of its main channels;
- Chapter 5 assesses customer satisfaction with the service, and willingness to recommend it to other people, including relevant National Careers Service Key Performance Indicators (KPIs);
- Chapter 6 explores customer progression six months on from their interaction with the service, including relevant National Careers Service Key Performance Indicators (KPIs);
- Chapter 7 looks at face-to-face customers' experiences across the different contracting regions, identifying any variations in performance; and

Wherever differences are discussed between respondent sub-groups, or over time, they are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. This means that we can be 95% confident (ie. 19 times out of 20) that the difference is a 'real' difference rather than one resulting from having spoken to a sample of customers.

2. Customer profile

Key findings

On a range of key variables, the customer profile is very similar to previous years, with many of the same variations by service channel. Key points to note are:

- face-to-face customers continue to be more likely to be unemployed, aged 50 plus, to have a disability or long-term health problem, and have lower qualifications. By contrast, people accessing the service by phone were more likely to be in work or learning, younger, and more highly qualified.
- the profile of telephone advice customers appears to be moving closer to that of face-to-face customers, compared with Year 3. This may be linked to the change in service provision after October 2014, which saw area-based contractors take on responsibility for telephone advice services rather than the national contact centre, which continues to handle calls requesting information.
- the profile of website users is the most diverse in terms of demographics such as age and ethnicity. This creates a challenge for the National Careers Service in terms of presenting a website that is engaging and informative for a broad range of audiences.
- a substantial minority of National Careers Service customers have not worked for more than three years, or have never had a paid job. This emphasises the challenges faced by the service in terms of supporting learning and employment outcomes.

This chapter examines the profile of Year 4 customers accessing the service from March 2014 to March 2015, and those accessing the National Careers Service website from April 2014 to March 2015. It looks at demographic characteristics such as gender, age and ethnicity; work status; and highest qualification at the time of accessing the service.

2.1 The demographic profile of customers

Table 2.1 shows the age, gender and ethnicity profiles of National Careers Service face-to-face and telephone customers surveyed from March 2014 to March 2015 as well as the profile of website users surveyed between April 2014 and March 2015. The figures for face-to-face and telephone customers are based on weighted data whereas those for website visitors are unweighted. It should be noted that, for the online survey, young people aged 16 and 17 were screened out of the survey until October 2014.

Table 2.1: Demographic profile of National Careers Service customers

Base:	Channel used as main way of accessing the service				
	Face-to-face (6,521)	Telephone (3,055)	Telephone advice (1,126)	Telephone information (1,929)	Online (9,843)
	%	%	%	%	%
Gender					
Male	54	46	48	44	35
Female	46	54	52	56	63
Age group					
19 or younger ²	8	4	4	3	18
20-24	16	25	18	30	10
25-49	53	57	57	57	48
50 or older	24	14	21	9	23
Ethnicity					
White British	74	62	66	59	66
White other	7	9	8	10	11
Black/ Black British	9	12	10	16	6
Asian/ Asian British	6	11	11	10	7
Mixed/ other	4	4	5	4	9
Prefer not to say	*	1	1	1	3
English not first language	12	19	19	18	16
Long term illness/ disability*	23	14	19	11	16

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer satisfaction surveys

*The bases for disability are lower than for the other demographics as this information was not available for some of the sample. They are: 2,751 (face-to-face); 271 (telephone); 92 (face-to-face advice); and 179 (telephone information).

The demographic mix of customers is very similar to that found in previous years and continues to vary by service channel.

² The age ranges are 18-19 for face-to-face and telephone customers, 16-19 for website customers.

Age and gender

The majority of face-to-face customers were men (54%) while the majority of telephone customers were women (54%, rising to 56% of telephone information customers).

Most face-to-face (53%) and telephone customers (57%) were aged 25-49 although there was a greater spread of ages accessing the face-to-face and telephone advice channels. For example, more face-to-face customers were aged under-20 (8% compared with 4% of telephone customers) and more were aged 50 plus (24% compared with 14%). By comparison, telephone customers were more concentrated in the 20-24 and 25-49 age groups.

Web users who completed the survey were predominantly women (63%) and aged 25-49 (48%). The age profile of website users is notably more diverse than the other channels, with one-in-five (18%) aged 16-19 and one-in-four (23%) aged 50 plus. This creates a challenge for the National Careers Service in terms of designing a website that is equally appealing and informative across all age ranges. The National Careers Service does not collect any management information on the demographic profile of its website users so it is not possible to ascertain how representative the survey profile is (and the data is therefore unweighted). However, the demographic characteristics have been consistent year on year.

Ethnicity and English as a first language

While three-in-four face-to-face customers were white British (74%), the profile of telephone users was more ethnically diverse (at 62% white British). The largest ethnic minority was Black/Black British who comprised around one-in-six telephone information customers (16%).

Among website users, two-thirds were white British (66%) and there was a higher proportion of white non-British (11%) than among face-to-face or telephone customers. The proportion of Black/Black British and Asian/Asian British people using the website was lower than telephone but in line with face-to-face customers.

One-in-eight (12%) face-to-face customers reported that English was not their first language but this rose to almost one-in-five telephone customers (19%), reflecting their greater ethnic diversity. The proportion of online customers for whom English was not the first language was lower, but still a substantial minority of 16%. Analysis of those who did not have English as their first language shows that two-in-five were white non-British (39%) – likely to be European migrants - with a further one-in-five who were Black or Black British, of African heritage (19%).

Disability

Around one-quarter (23%) of face-to-face customers had a disability or long-term limiting health condition compared to 14% of telephone customers and 16% of those who used the website.

This partly reflects the older age profile among face-to-face customers, who were more likely to be aged 50 plus. Part of the reason for this difference may also be the high proportion of customers who are referred for face-to-face advice by Jobcentre Plus, which

includes people who are claiming the work-related component of Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). For example, over two-thirds (68%) of disabled customers first heard about the National Careers Service from Jobcentre Plus compared with 58% overall, and disabled customers were also more likely to say they had to contact the National Careers Service to avoid their benefits being cut (32% compared with 23% overall).

2.2 Employment status

Table 2.2 provides an overview of customers' employment status at the time of their first adviser session or visit to the website. Like previous years, face-to-face customers have a very different employment profile to other channels, with the majority being unemployed and looking for work (69%) compared with just over one-quarter of online customers (27%) and one-third of telephone customers (34%).

Table 2.2: Economic activity of National Careers Service customers at the time of the call, meeting or website visit

Base	Channel used as main way of accessing the service				
	Face-to-face (6,521)	Telephone (3,055)	Telephone advice (1,126)	Telephone information (1,929)	Online (9,843)
	%	%	%	%	%
In work	15	46	36	54	41
Full-time employee	8	29	20	35	27
Part-time employee	6	14	12	15	10
Self-employed	1	4	3	4	4
In learning	5	11	5	16	18
Full-time learning	2	9	3	14	16
Part-time learning	2	2	2	2	1
Other not working	81	42	59	28	40
Unemployed and looking for work	69	34	50	22	27
Unable to work due to health	7	3	4	3	3
Looking after home/family	4	4	4	4	4
Retired	*	*	*	*	1
Other	1	1	1	1	5

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer satisfaction surveys

The internal mix of telephone customers has changed somewhat compared with previous years, in that fewer of those seeking information were unemployed (22%, compared with 28% last year) and more were in work (54% compared with 51%) or in learning (16% compared with 13%). The profile of customers seeking advice by telephone has changed even more, with a substantial decrease in the proportion in work (36% compared with 53% last year) and a corresponding increase in the proportion unemployed (50% compared with 29% last year). This is likely to be a reflection of the change in service provision after the service was reconfigured in October 2014, with telephone advice now being delivered by the same area-based contractors who deliver the face-to-face service.

The employment profile of website users has also changed, although this is primarily due to the inclusion of 16-17 year olds in the survey for the first time, from Quarter 3 onwards. As a result, more website users were still in learning at the time of their visit (18%, compared with 11% last year) including eight per cent who were still at school. There has been a decline in the proportion of website users who were unemployed, from 34% to 27%, although the proportion in work has remained stable at 41%. Similar to the demographics, the employment profile of website users is the most diverse of all the channels and this has implications for National Careers Service in terms of the design and content of its website, which consequently has to appeal to a very broad range of customers.

In total, two-thirds of face-to-face or telephone customers were unemployed and looking for work (64%), a reduction on Year 3 (68%). These were more likely to be:

- Under-20s (77%) and over-50s (68%)
- Men (71% compared versus 57% among women)
- People whose highest qualification was below Level 2 (70% compared with 62% among those with higher qualifications); and
- White British (66% versus 60% among other ethnic groups).

Among face-to-face and telephone customers who were not working at the time of their call/meeting, 16% last worked within a month before their contact with the National Careers Service and 40% (cumulatively) had worked within the past six months. A similar proportion (38%) had not worked for more than a year, including 22% who had not worked for more than three years.

Having not worked for more than three years prior to their contact with the service was more common among people with a highest qualification below Level 2 (32%), aged 25-49 (28%) or 50 plus (29%), with a disability (42%), or who had been mandated to the National Careers Service by Jobcentre Plus (31%). Women were also more likely than men to have not worked for over three years (27% compared with 19%) – a number of these are likely to be women returning to the labour market after taking time out for children or other family commitments.

In addition to this, one in ten customers (10%) had never had paid work, the same proportion as in Year 3. This includes two-in-five 18-19 year olds using the face-to-face or telephone service (42%) and one-in-five 20-24 year olds (20%). Altogether, one-quarter

(26%) of 18-24 year old customers who were Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) had never had a paid job.

On a similar theme, 15% of all face-to-face or telephone customers had recently been made redundant and a further four per cent reported they were facing redundancy at the time of their initial contact with the service, similar to Year 3. Among National Careers Service customers, dealing with redundancy was more likely than average among people aged 50 plus, men, and those with Level 4 or higher qualifications.

These figures illustrate the continuing challenge faced by the National Careers Service in terms of its diverse customer base. People who have never worked or who have been out of work for several years will have very different advice and information needs to those who are in work and seeking to progress or change career, or to those who have recently been made redundant and may be looking to re-train or get a new job.

2.3 Highest qualification

A key client group for the National Careers Service is those with low qualifications, defined as people whose highest qualification is below Level 2 (i.e. equivalent to five GCSEs at grade A* to C). The majority of customers already had qualifications at or above this level, regardless of which channel they used to access the service (Table 2.3). This was particularly the case for telephone (especially telephone information) and website visitors. The proportion of face-to-face customers with Level 2 or higher qualifications has been increasing year-on-year, and has increased sharply this year to 67%.

Table 2.3: Highest qualification and NEET status among National Careers Service customers

Base	Channel used as main way of accessing the service				
	Face-to-face (6,521)	Telephone (3,055)	Telephone advice (1,126)	Telephone information (1,929)	Online (9,843)
	%	%	%	%	%
Highest qualification					
Level 4 or higher (eg. degree or equivalent)	24	48	38	56	37
Level 3 (eg. A-levels)	19	19	18	19	16
Level 2 (5 GCSEs A*-C)	22	12	16	10	19
Level 1/ entry level	12	8	11	6	13
No qualifications	15	8	9	6	7
Level unclear	7	5	4	4	9

Channel used as main way of accessing the service					
<i>Base</i>	Face-to-face (6,521)	Telephone (3,055)	Telephone advice (1,126)	Telephone information (1,929)	Online (9,843)
Below Level 2	27	16	20	12	20
Level 2 or higher	66	79	72	85	72
NEET					
18-24 NEET	19	10	14	8	5
18-24 claiming benefit	12	6	11	3	n/a

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer satisfaction surveys

Customers who were more likely than average (26%) to be qualified below Level 2 were those aged 50 plus (36%); those with a disability (34%); and people who had been mandated to the National Careers Service by Jobcentre Plus (38%). All these groups are likely to require more intensive support in order to help them progress in learning or work.

Around one-in-five face-to-face customers (19%) were aged 18-24 and Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) at the time of their meeting, with just over half of these claiming some form of benefit. Young people who were NEET predominantly used the face-to-face or telephone advice service and were comparatively less likely to use the telephone information line or the website. This may be because they are more likely to be referred to the service by Jobcentre Plus (70%, compared with 58% overall). Somewhat counter to expectation, National Careers Service customers who were NEET did not tend to have lower qualifications; in fact they were more likely than average to be qualified at Level 2 or above (77%, compared with 66% overall).

3. How and why do customers contact the National Careers Service?

Key findings

- Although the majority of customers first heard about the National Careers Service from Jobcentre Plus, this was much more common among customers of area-based contractors accessing face-to-face or telephone advice. Customers seeking information from the national contact centre were more likely to have first heard about the service through the internet, or – less commonly – through their college or training provider, or after it was recommended to them by a friend or relative.
- Web users most commonly found out about the site from an internet search, or were signposted to it by Jobcentre Plus, or a National Careers Service adviser.
- Looking at reasons why people contacted the service, there was greater similarity between those using the face-to-face and telephone advice channels (who were more employment and careers focused) than those using the telephone information service (who were more focused on learning and in particular, wanting information about studying for qualifications and about sources of funding for learning or training).
- The majority of website visitors were seeking out information or advice on jobs or careers, but sizeable minorities were looking for information on courses/learning or using the website to access their Lifelong Learning Account.

This chapter explores how customers first found out about the National Careers Service and their reasons for contacting it, including what sort of information or advice they wanted. It is important to look at these factors because customers' reasons for contacting the service and whether their expectations of it were met will influence subsequent views on satisfaction. It is also important for the National Careers Service to know what motivates people to access its services and what they want from these, so that it can tailor provision more closely to customer needs.

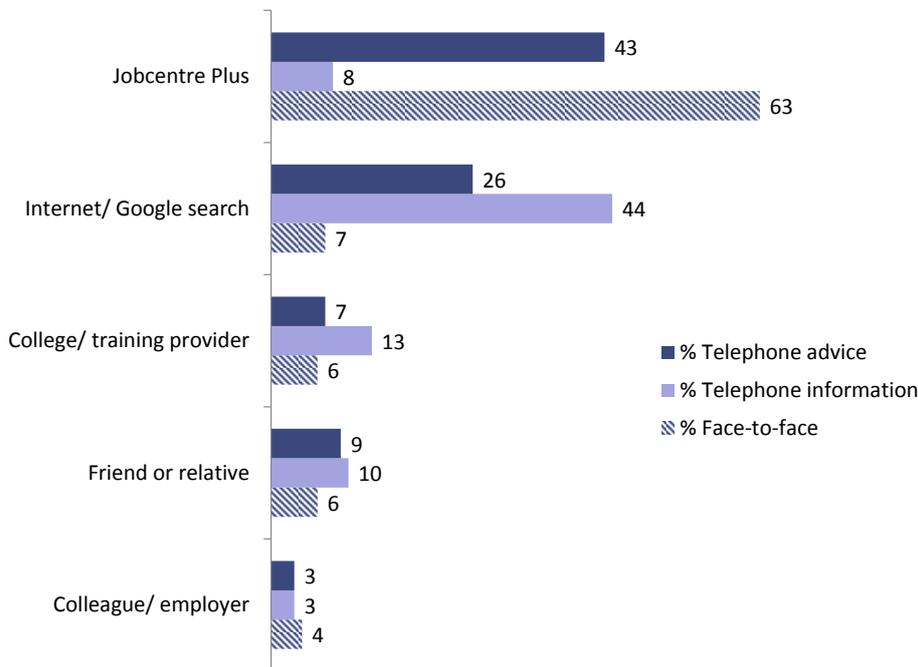
3.1 How did customers first find out about the National Careers Service?

Face-to-face and telephone channels

The majority of customers first heard about the National Careers Service from Jobcentre Plus (58%). Figure 3.1 shows this was much more common among customers using the face-to-face service and those who sought telephone advice. This is because of longstanding referral and co-location arrangements between Jobcentre Plus and the National Careers Service (formerly Next Step) as part of a more integrated approach to the provision of employment and skills advice to unemployed people.

Customers who called the national contact centre were much more likely to have first heard about the service through the internet, or – less commonly – through their college or training provider, or after it was recommended to them by a friend or relative. Similar proportions of face-to-face and telephone customers had first heard about the service through their employer. To some extent this is surprising given that telephone customers were far more likely to be in work. Less common ways that people first heard about the National Careers Service (not shown in the figure below) were through the direct.gov.uk website, from recruitment agencies or charities, or in the national/local press.

Figure 3.1: Where face-to-face and telephone customers first found out about the National Careers Service



Base: All face-to-face and telephone customers (9,576)

Demographic differences in how people first heard about the National Careers Service follow the same pattern as channel-related ones. For example, customers most likely to have first heard about the service from Jobcentre Plus were more likely to be aged 50 plus (67%) or 18-24 NEET (70%), to be men (61%), white British (62%), or have a disability

(68%). These are all groups who were more likely to have used the face-to-face service, and to be unemployed.

The results do suggest that while it has clearly forged strong links with the Jobcentre Plus network, the National Careers Service has more work to do when it comes to liaising with training providers/colleges to promote its telephone and face-to-face services. Customers who accessed the service while in learning were more likely to have first heard about it from Jobcentre Plus (31%) than from their training provider or college (20%).

The website

The three most common ways for website users to have first heard about the National Careers Service were through an internet search (41%), via Jobcentre Plus (18%), or from a National Careers Service adviser (10%). These were also the top three most common ways to hear about the website in Year 3.

While there was little demographic variation in the proportion first accessing the website via an internet search, people who were unemployed and looking for work were far more likely to have been signposted to it by Jobcentre Plus (40%) or a National Careers Service adviser (18%). In line with this, customers aged 50 plus, 18-24 NEETs, and people with a disability (who were all more likely to be unemployed) were also more likely to have been signposted to the website by a Jobcentre Plus or National Careers Service adviser.

Younger people aged under-19 (14%) or 20-24 (11%) were more likely than average to have found the website through recommendation from a friend or relative.

The other key point to note in terms of how young people first heard about the National Careers Service website is that just over one-quarter (27%) cited 'other'. This predominantly relates to finding out about the site from their school, college or training provider.

Like previous years, the majority of customers were at home when they accessed the website (76%). One-in-ten accessed it from work (rising to 24% of those who were employed), 9% from school, college or university (rising to 31% of those still in education and 33% of young people aged under-19), and 5% from a library or other public place. This was more common among 18-24 year-old NEETs (10%) and people who were unemployed (9%).

Laptops (56%) and desktops (40%) remain the favoured means of accessing the website but there is increasing use of tablets (17%, up from 12% in Year 3 and 6% in Year 2) and smartphones (15%, up from 10% in Year 3 and 6% in Year 2). As in previous years, young people aged 20-24 were most likely to use laptops (64% compared with 52% among those aged 50 plus), or smartphones (25% of 16-19s, and 20% of those aged 20-24, compared with just six per cent of those aged 50 plus). Those aged 50 plus (48%) and 16-19 (46%) were the most likely to have used a desktop.

3.2 To what extent have customers used the National Careers Service before?

All customers were asked whether they had previously had any contact with the National Careers Service or another organisation providing advice about learning and skills or careers. As the service aims to move to a more multi-channel and integrated approach, it will become more important to monitor cross-referrals between the face-to-face, telephone and web services.

Around one-in-ten (14%) had previously met with a National Careers Service adviser face-to-face, or had spoken to one via the telephone helpline (10%). Potentially reflecting the reconfiguration of the service from October 2014, customers who received telephone advice were much more likely to have had prior contact with an adviser beforehand, either face-to-face (24%) or by phone (22%), as were those who did not speak English as their first language (20% and 18% respectively). It is conceivable that some of these customers have an initial contact with the service before being followed up by someone who is able to speak their first language.

One-quarter (26%) of National Careers Service face-to-face or telephone customers had used the website before they contacted the face-to-face or telephone service. This was consistently higher among telephone customers than among face-to-face customers (43-44% versus 24%) suggesting that the website is a particularly key vehicle for signposting people to using the telephone service. People who did not have English as their first language were again more likely have used the website before accessing the face-to-face or telephone service (38%).

A similar proportion (27%) of customers had obtained advice about careers, improving their skills, or doing some learning from a different organisation prior to their contact with the National Careers Service telephone or face-to-face service. These were more likely to be aged 18-24 (30%), to have been in learning at the time of their contact with the service (31%) or to have been NEET (30%).

The majority of web customers were 'new' service users who had no previous dealings with the National Careers Service prior to using its website (74%) – up from 69% in Year 3. Those who did have some prior contact were more likely to have seen an adviser face-to-face (21%) than spoken to one by telephone (8%). Consistent with Year 3 and previous years, web customers who were unemployed and looking for work at the time they used the website were much more likely to have had prior dealings with an adviser (47% versus the average of 29%), particularly face-face contact (39%), as were NEET young people aged 18-24 (38% of whom had any previous contact with an adviser) and those aged 50 plus (36%).

3.3 Reasons for contacting the National Careers Service

Face-to-face and telephone channels

Before asking customers about their detailed reasons for contacting the National Careers Service, they were asked if they mainly wanted to discuss career options, learning options, or both. More wanted to explore career options (78%) than learning options (63%): these

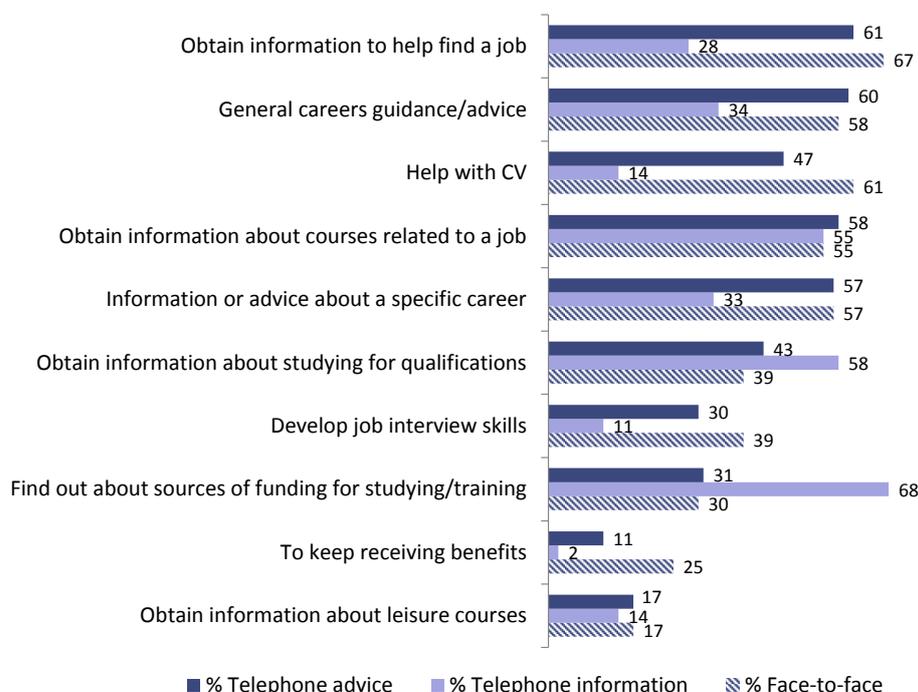
are similar proportions to Year 3. The proportion seeking to explore learning options has steadily declined since Year 1, when it was 67%.

Telephone advice customers were particularly likely to have been exploring career options (84%) compared with 78% of face-to-face customers, but this proportion is a reduction since Year 3 (92%). This is likely to be due to changes in the nature of telephone advice customers under the new National Careers Service contract. Others more likely than average to want to explore career options were 18-19 year-olds (84%), people already in work (85%), and people with higher qualifications at Level 4 or above (84%).

Telephone information customers were particularly likely to have been considering doing a course or some learning (87%, compared with 65% of telephone advice and 61% of face-to-face customers). The proportion of telephone information customers thinking about doing some learning has increased since Year 3, while it has declined among other customers. Customers who did not have English as their first language (71%), those in work (70%) and those aged 25-49 were more likely than average to be considering their learning options. Notably, NEET young people and those mandated to the National Careers Service were more likely to say they were *not* considering doing any learning (42% and 51% respectively) – these groups may actually be more in need of improving their skills and qualifications.

When asked why they had contacted the National Careers Service, the majority of customers gave multiple reasons but the most common was to get information to help them find a job (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Reasons for telephone and face-to-face customers contacting the National Careers Service



Base: All face-to-face and telephone customers (9,576)

Overall there was a wide variety of reasons covering both careers/jobs and learning, and ranging from general information and advice to more specific queries. What is also

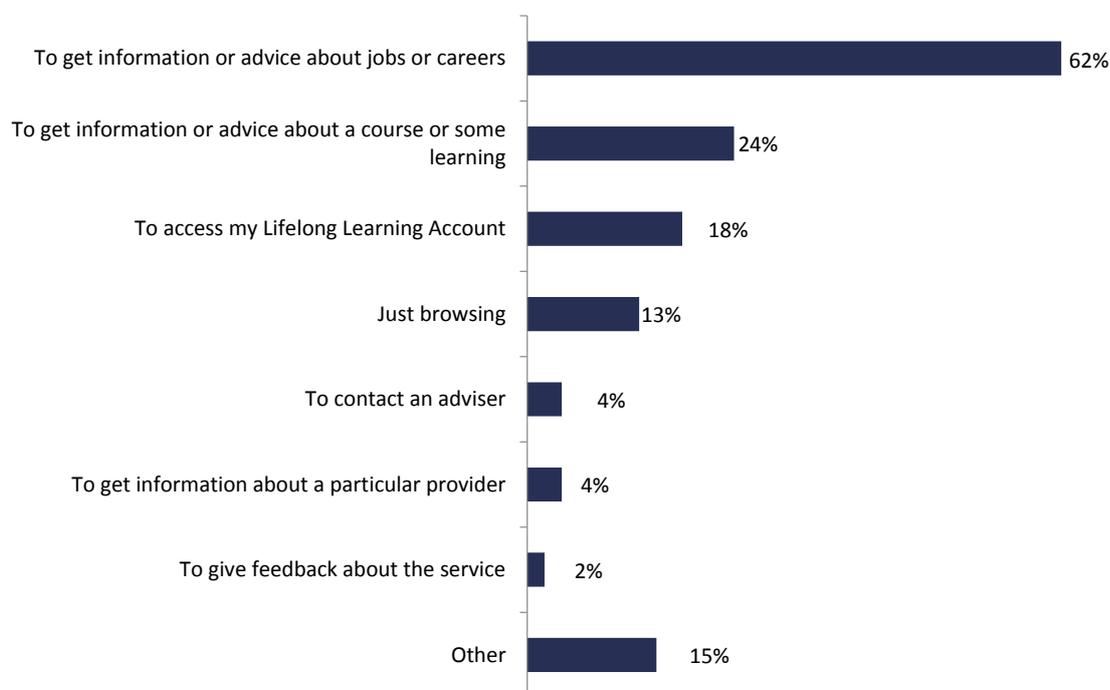
evident is that there was greater similarity between those using the face-to-face and telephone advice channels (who were more employment and careers focused) than those using the telephone information service (who were more focused on learning and in particular, wanting information about studying for qualifications and about sources of funding for learning or training).

When asked for their single main reason for contacting the service, the difference in focus between face-to-face and telephone customers is also apparent. The main reason for face-to-face customers was to get help with their CV (28%), followed by to get information to help them find a job (16%) and general careers advice (14%). These are similar reasons to Year 3, with only minor changes. Telephone information customers were mainly ringing to get information on funding options for learning or training (38%) or information on courses to do with a current or future job (15%). Again, these main reasons were very similar to Year 3.

Website users

Figure 3.3 shows that the majority of website visitors were looking for information or advice on jobs or careers (62% - an increase on Year 3 (59%) and Year 2 (56%)). This rose to 73% of website visitors who were currently in-learning. Sizeable minorities were looking for information on courses/learning (again, more so among those in learning already, at 29% compared with 24% overall) or to access their Lifelong Learning Account (more so among people who were unemployed and looking for work, at 28% compared with 18% overall).

Figure 3.3: Reasons for customers visiting the National Careers Service website



Base: All online satisfaction survey customers (9,843)

Similar demographic differences existed this year compared with previous years. Women remained more likely than men to be looking for information on jobs or careers (65%

versus 59% of men) while men were more likely to be using the website to access their Lifelong Learning Account (22% versus 16%).

Under-19s (28%), people with a disability (28%) and those who did not speak English as their first language (30%) were all more likely than average to be looking for information on doing a course or some learning. Under-19s were also the most likely to be just browsing (17% compared with 13% overall).

People using the website for job/careers advice or for information on learning were asked what sort of information they wanted (Table 3.1). On the whole, the findings are highly consistent with previous years with the exception that fewer customers were looking for specific information/ advice on their CV.

Table 3.1: Specific job-related information sought by website visitors

	Year 4	Year 3	Year 2
<i>Base: All those looking for information/advice about jobs and careers on the National Careers Service website</i>	(6,129)	(5,606)	(3,649)
	%	%	%
Information about different careers	61	61	61
Applying for jobs	36	37	37
CVs	34	37	39
Information about progressing in a career	29	28	29
Information about the jobs market	25	27	26
Interview skills	21	21	20
How to get back into work	20	26	26
Voluntary work	11	11	11
Issues around redundancy	4	5	5
Other	7	5	5

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service online satisfaction survey

The most common form of employment-related information that people were looking for was information about different careers, followed by practical support with applying for jobs and with CVs. Web visitors who were unemployed and seeking work were more likely than average to be looking for information or advice on CVs (48%), applying for jobs (52%), how to get back into work (44%) and interview skills (29%). There were also strong age-related differences:

- Those aged under-19 were more likely to be looking for information on different careers (68%)
- People aged 20-24 were more likely than average to want information about progressing within a career (37%)
- Those aged 50 plus were more likely than average to want advice on developing their CVs (41%), support with how to get back into work (33%) or information on the job market (29%).

Table 3.2 shows the most sought-after types of information on learning. Information about a specific course was most common, followed by information on different ways of learning and on how to get back into learning. Again these were the top three mentions in Year 3, although the proportion looking for information about a specific course has increased (from 43% in Year 3 to 47% now) and the proportion seeking advice on how to get back into learning has decreased (from 35% in Year 3 to 29% now).

Table 3.2: Specific course-related information sought by website visitors

	Year 4	Year 3	Year 2
<i>Base: All those looking for information/advice about courses and learning on the National Careers Service website</i>	(2,406)	(2,459)	(1,754)
	%	%	%
A specific course	47	43	43
Different ways of learning	39	41	38
How to get back into learning	29	35	35
Paying for a course	25	29	28
Apprenticeships	19	20	15
Childcare	7	8	7
Other caring responsibilities	9	8	7
Other	12	10	10

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service online satisfaction survey

The proportion seeking information about apprenticeships has remained stable compared with Year 3, at 19% – but given the government target to expand apprenticeship numbers we might have expected this to increase. Among those seeking learning-related information, looking for information specifically about apprenticeships was more common

among those aged 20-24 (35%) or under-19 (32%) and especially among young people who were NEET (55%).

4. Experiences of using the National Careers Service

Key findings

- Most telephone customers had their enquiry handled in one call (66%): more commonly among telephone information customers (76%) than among telephone advice ones (55%). In part this relates to the reasons for contact.
- One-third (34%) of face-to-face customers had two or more meetings with the National Careers Service adviser and two-thirds (64%) had one meeting; lower than previous years. Customers aged 50-plus were more likely to have multiple meetings (42%). Seven-in-ten (71%) customers who had more than one meeting saw the same adviser each time.
- Three-in-five website visitors (59%) got all or most of the information they wanted on their first visit to the website. Over time, most website users found all or most of the information they were looking for. People aged 50-plus and those with a disability were more likely than average to only find some or none of the information they wanted.
- The National Careers Service provides three key tools to support its customers across multiple platforms: the Skills Action Plan; the Skills Health Check; and the Lifelong Learning Account. Among face-to-face and telephone customers, the most commonly used of these tools was the Skills Action Plan (59% recalled having one of these) whereas among website customers it was the Skills Health Check (32%). Around four-in-five customers who had used them found each of these tools useful.
- One-quarter (24%) of face-to-face and telephone customers reported that they had been followed-up by the National Careers Service since their initial contact. This was more common among telephone advice users, and young people. Follow-up increased during the latter half of the year, which may have been influenced by the change in contracts from October 2014 onwards.

This chapter examines customer experience of contacting the National Careers Service over the phone and face-to-face, and of using the website. It also looks at the specific tools and features that customers across all channels used, including the Skills Health Check, the Action Plan and Lifelong Learning Accounts.

4.1 Telephone contact

Approaching nine-in-ten telephone customers were satisfied with the time it took for someone to answer their call (86%, the same proportion as Year 3), and only three per cent were dissatisfied. While these figures are positive, it should be remembered that the customer survey only covers people who got through to the service: it does not include those who tried to get through but could not get an appointment or speak directly with an adviser.

Overall, two-thirds (66%) of telephone customers had their query handled in a single call to the helpline. These were more likely to be telephone information customers (76% versus 55% of telephone advice customers) who called for specific information about a course or type of work (63% versus 39% of telephone advice customers). A further three-in-ten (30%) customers had their enquiries handled over a number of calls and these were more likely to be telephone advice customers seeking wider reaching, more general advice (56% versus 33% of telephone information customers).

During the phone call with the National Careers Service, three-in-five (60%) customers were told that their adviser would send them further information. Of these, nine-in-ten (89%) received this information; with telephone advice customers more likely than telephone information customers to have been offered further information (66% compared with 55%).

The vast majority of telephone customers (93%) found the information they received useful, and most (73%) found it *very* useful. Five per cent of customers found the information not very or not at all useful, mainly because they found the information they got to be too general or not relevant to their situation.

Compared with the past three years, fewer telephone-based customers had their enquiry dealt with in one call this year (66% compared with 71%-73% previously). The decrease is noticeable after the change in service from October 2014 (Table 4.1) and relates predominantly to customers who were seeking advice by telephone (55% of whom were handled in one call), rather than seeking information (76% of whom were handled in one call).

Table 4.1: Total calls taken to handle a customer query (telephone customers)

	Q1	Q2	September customers	Q3	Q4
<i>Base</i>	(802)	(803)	(273)	(624)	(553)
One call	68%	76%	68%	60%	61%
Multiple calls	31%	23%	29%	35%	34%

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer satisfaction surveys

This difference may relate to differences in the nature of the calls – for example we have seen in Chapter 3 that telephone information customers tended to be looking for more specific information about learning or funding for learning, while those seeking advice by telephone had more general, careers-related reasons for contacting the service. It may

also relate to changes in National Careers Service contract from October 2014 onwards, which placed responsibility for providing telephone advice with the same area-based contractors delivering the face-to-face service. Customers seeking advice by telephone may still call the national helpline, but if they do they will be signposted through to the relevant area-based contractor providing telephone advice, and this may require more than one call (for example an initial call to the national helpline to make the enquiry, followed by a callback from the area-based contractor to get the advice, if there is no adviser available there when the initial call comes through).

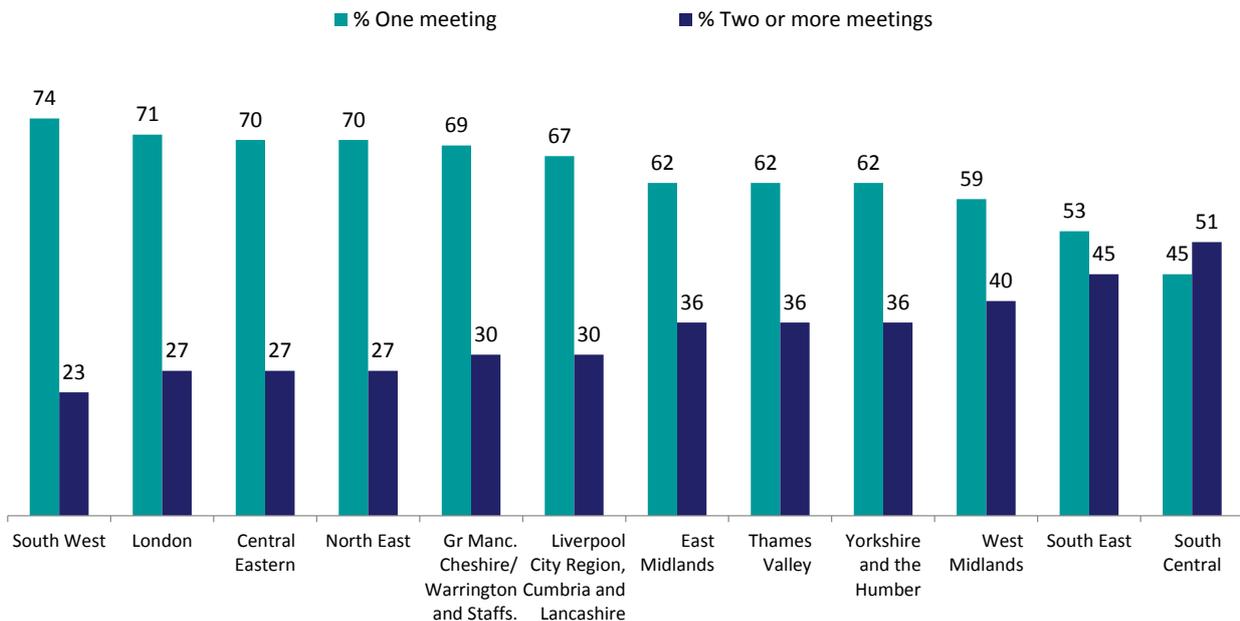
Of the customers who had their enquiry handled in more than one call, 45 per cent dealt with *one* adviser while just over half (53%) dealt with *two or more* advisers. Telephone advice customers who had more than one call were more likely to have dealt consistently with one adviser, whereas telephone information customers who had more than one call were more likely to have two or more different advisers. This is because people calling the national helpline will come through to any adviser who is available, rather than to the adviser they spoke to originally.

4.2 Face-to-face contact

One-third (34%) of face-to-face customers had two or more meetings with the National Careers Service adviser and two-thirds (64%) had just one meeting; a reduction from previous years (66% in Year 3). Customers aged 50 plus were more likely to have multiple meetings with their adviser (42%, compared with 34% of 25-49 year olds and 27% of 18-24 year olds).

The number of meetings customers had with advisers varied between contracting regions (Figure 4.1). Customers in the South West, London, North East and Central Eastern regions were significantly more likely to have just one meeting and customers in South Central, South East and the West Midlands were more likely to have multiple meetings.

Figure 4.1: Number of face-to-face meetings with adviser by contracting region



Base: All face-to-face customers (6,521)

The four main reasons for attending more than one meeting were that: the adviser was reviewing or amending their CV (41%); the adviser recommended they come back (21%); they ran out of time during their first meeting (18%); or because the adviser could not answer all the questions during the first meeting and needed to provide more information (15%). Customers in South Central and Yorkshire and Humber were most likely to visit the adviser again to have their CV reviewed or amended (52% and 49%). Customers in Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Warrington and Staffordshire (25%), Liverpool City Region, Cumbria and Lancashire (24%) and the North East (24%) were more likely to have multiple meetings because the adviser needed to provide more information.

Seven-in-ten (71%) customers who had more than one meeting saw the same adviser each time (the same proportion as in Year 3). A further three-in-ten (29%) saw different advisers, although the vast majority (75%) did not mind this. Customers who did not speak English as their first language were more likely to prefer to see the same adviser for each of their meetings (36% versus 24% overall). This may be because the adviser would already know their situation from the first session, reducing the need to repeat information.

Over the course of the year, face-to-face customers increasingly reported that their meetings took place in a Jobcentre Plus office (Table 4.2). This is particularly noticeable after the change in service from October 2014 onwards.

Table 4.2: Whether meetings took place in a Jobcentre Plus office

	Q1	Q2	September customers	Q3	Q4
<i>Base</i>	(1,398)	(1,407)	(474)	(1,598)	(1,644)
Yes, took place in a JCP office	56%	56%	55%	62%	67%
No, did not take place in a JCP office	43%	43%	43%	36%	32%

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer satisfaction surveys

NEETs aged 18 to 24 and those mandated to the National Careers Service by Jobcentre Plus were significantly more likely to have had their meetings in the Jobcentre Plus office (69% and 70% respectively versus 60% overall).

By region, customers in South Central (77%), Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Warrington and Staffordshire (71%), Liverpool City Region, Cumbria and Lancashire (69%), South East (66%) and London (64%) were all more likely than average to have their meetings in a Jobcentre Plus office.

4.3 Online contact

Customers who used the National Careers Service website were asked which tools or features they had accessed (Figure 4.2). The most commonly utilised feature was Job Profiles (used by 32%). Careers advisers were significantly more likely to use this feature compared with the general public (70% versus 30%). Figure 4.2 shows that those in

learning, and younger people under the age of 25, were significantly more likely to use this feature too.

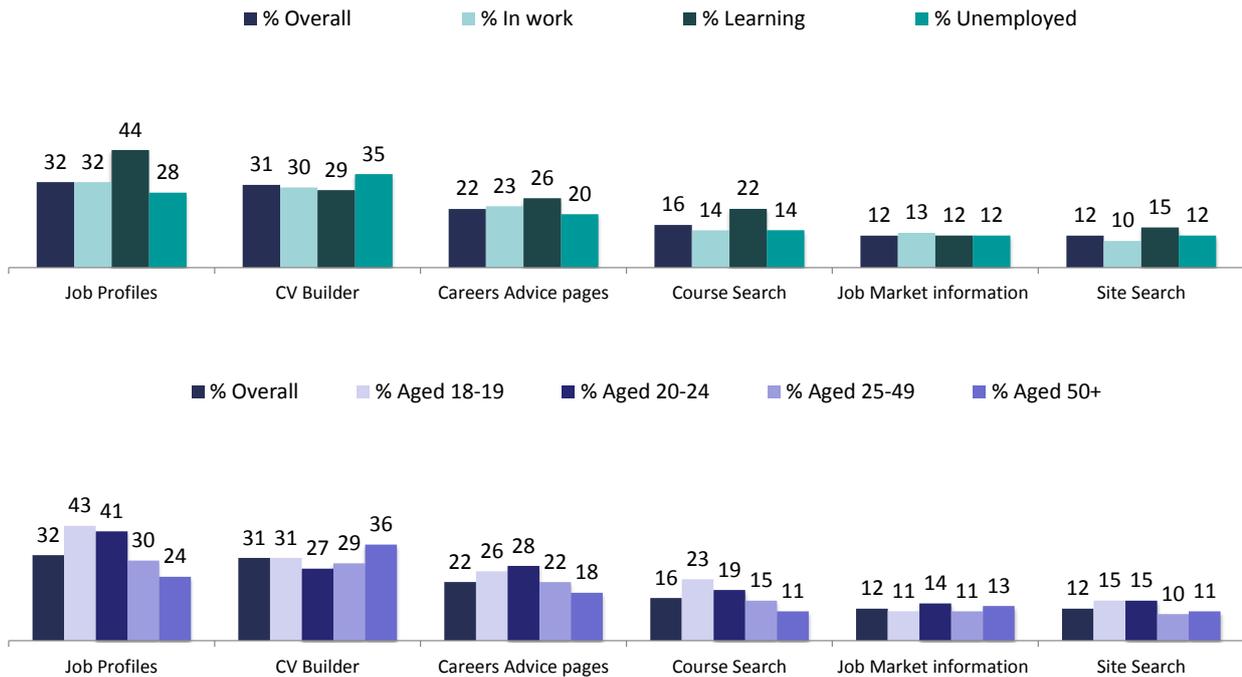
The CV builder tool was used by three-in-ten (31%) customers and was more likely to be used by unemployed customers (35%) or older customers aged 50 or over (36%).

Careers Advice Pages were another feature more commonly used by careers advisers than the general public (42% versus 22%). As shown in Figure 4.2, customers in learning, and those aged under 25 were also more likely to use this feature.

Sixteen per cent used Course Search; younger people and those in learning were significantly more likely than average to use this tool (Figure 4.2) reflecting that they were more likely to be seeking information about further learning or training.

One-in-eight (12%) website visitors used the Job Market information or Site Search, these tools were especially popular among career advisers (39% and 16%). Also, as shown in Figure 4.2 these features were mainly used by young people.

Figure 4.2: Most common tools and features used by age and employment status



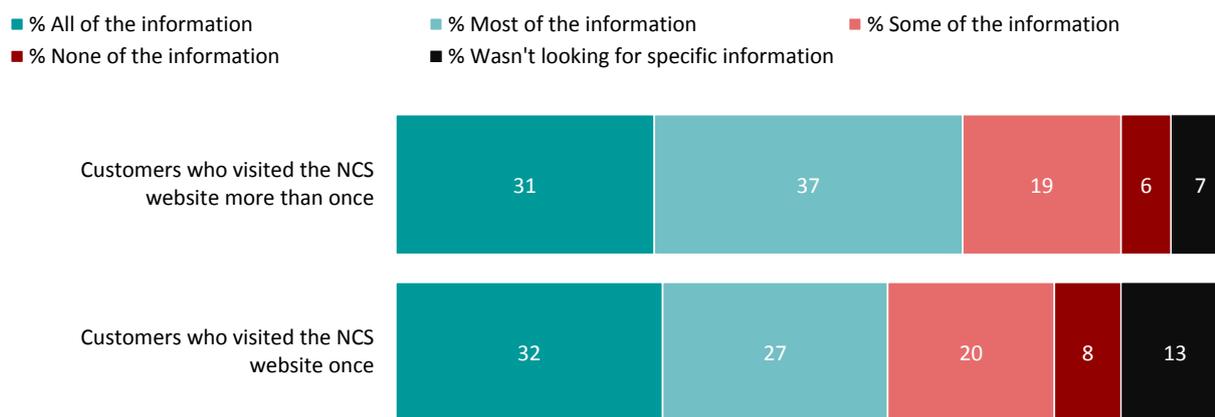
Base: All online satisfaction survey customers (9,843)

The vast majority (92%) of customers who used them found the Jobs Profiles useful. Over four in five of those who used them found the CV Builder (84%), Careers Advice pages (88%), Job Market information (86%), and Site Search (87%) useful, and four in five (79%) found the Course Search useful.

Only three per cent of website visitors had used webchat and two per cent had requested a callback from the adviser. Customers found these tools to be the least helpful, with one-in-five (20%) stating they were not very or not at all useful.

Three-in-five website visitors (59%) got all or most of the information they wanted on their first visit to the website, while one-in-five (20%) got some of the information and eight per cent got none of the information they wanted. The remaining 13% were just browsing. These figures were similar for customers who visited the website multiple times, the main difference being that customers who visited more than once were more likely to be looking for specific information rather than browsing the website, and a higher proportion of them eventually found most of the information they wanted (Figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3: Information obtained from single and multiple visits to the National Careers Service website



Base: All customers who visited the National Careers Service website once (4,740) or multiple times (5,103)

Through either single or multiple visits to the website, younger customers aged 16-19 or 20-24, 18-24 year old NEET customers, and those in learning, were all more likely than customers overall to eventually get most of the information they wanted. By contrast, customers aged 50 plus, who were disabled, or whose first language was not English, were all less likely than average to get all or most of the information they wanted from their first visit.

While those with a first language other than English appeared to find what they were looking for after subsequent visits, customers aged 50-plus and those with a disability continued to be more likely than average to only find some or none of the information they were looking for (30% and 31% respectively, compared with 25% overall). Some examples of the types of things they were looking for, but could not find, are below:

"Support for managing my mental health and learning difficulties in the work environment."

"More information on the health impact of working in different careers or a link to where this information can be found."

"There needs to be more for people that need a little more assistance, say people with autism and other disabilities to gain access to apprenticeships and other opportunities more suited to their needs, easy to follow pathways so they can understand the choices on offer."

"Specific information about career change in later life as opposed to job seeking after redundancy."

"More information (if any exists) about people like me wanting/needing to find other work in their late forties - where to get information, realistic advice on the choices left for me at 47 years old, how necessary are certain careers, ie. after any training needed, how likely am I, at my age, to get a job."

4.4 Use and usefulness of common National Careers Service tools

Skills Health Check

The Skills Health Check (SHC) is a diagnostic computer programme that assesses your skills, interests, personal working style and motivations. Two-in-five (39%) face-to-face customers used this tool (an increase from 34% in Year 3), while over half did not (53%) and the remaining eight per cent could not remember. Notably there were no significant demographic differences in terms of whether the SHC was used or not – what was more important was the nature of the service the customer received, with use of the SHC being more prominent among those who had more than one face-to-face meeting (46% compared with 35% of those who only had one session), and who also recalled having an action plan (47% compared with 24% of customers who did not recall an action plan). Customers in South Central or in Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Warrington and Staffordshire were more likely than average to have used the SHC (48% and 45% respectively).

The majority of face-to-face customers who used this tool found it useful (88%) and this was exactly the same proportion as the preceding two years. Among these, slightly more customers found it very useful (45%) than quite useful (43%). Only ten per cent did not find it useful; these were more likely to be customers who were mandated to the National Careers Service (20%) or held Level 4 or higher qualifications (14%). The main reason why telephone and face-to-face customers did not find the Skills Health Check useful was because they thought it told them things they already knew (39%). This was a particular issue among people with Level 2-Level 3 (41%) or Level 4 or higher (47%) qualifications compared with those who had no or below Level 2 qualifications.

One-third (32%) of online customers also used the Skills Health Check (SHC), in particular older customers aged 25-49 or 50 plus (36% each), those who were unemployed and seeking work (43%), people with a disability or long-term health problem (42%) and 18-24 year old NEETs (37%).

The majority of website users found the SHC useful (83%), although this was lower than among telephone and face-to-face customers. There were no major demographic differences other than those with below Level 2 or no qualifications were more likely than average to rate it as *very* useful (49% compared with 45% overall).

Skills Action Plan

As part of their interaction with National Careers Service, face-to-face and telephone advice customers were asked if an action plan had been drawn up for achieving their goals and targets. The expectation is that the majority of these customers should participate in the creation of a Skills Action Plan which sets out their agreed next steps.

Overall, three-in-five (59%) customers recall a Skills Action Plan (in line with previous years). Younger customers aged 18-19 and 20-24 years old (64% each), 18-24 year old

NEETs (65%) and face-to-face customers who had multiple meetings with the same adviser (67%) were most likely to recall a Skills Action Plan. Furthermore, those who also recall using the Skills Health Check were also more likely to recall a Skills Action Plan being drawn up (73%) suggesting these customers have a more intensive level of interaction with the service.

Around half (54%) of customers had a great deal of involvement in drawing up their Skills Action Plan – these were more likely to be customers qualified to Level 2 – Level 3 (56%) or Level 4 or higher (59%) compared with customers who had no qualifications or qualifications below Level 2 (46%). Customers who had the same adviser across multiple meetings were also more likely to have a great deal of involvement (59% versus 51% who had different advisers). A further 36% of customers reported that they had some involvement.

The majority (88%) of telephone and face-to-face customers who recall having a Skills Action Plan found it useful. This is a similar proportion as Year 3 (89%). Only one-in-ten (10%) found the action plan not very or not at all useful: the main reasons being they did not think it was relevant to their situation, it did not contain any new information, or it was too general/ insufficiently tailored.

For website users, the National Careers Service offers a self-completed online action plan as an initial step. Nine per cent of online customers recall completing an action plan on the website. In particular, 18-24 NEET customers were much more likely to recall an action plan compared with other customers overall (14% versus 9%).

Around three-quarters (77%) of online customers who completed an action plan on the website found it useful, similar to Year 3 (76%). Online customers in learning were more likely to find their action plan useful than online customers overall (85% versus 77%).

Lifelong Learning Accounts

A Lifelong Learning Account allows customers to access a range of tools, such as updating and storing their CV, actions plans, qualifications and other information into an account which they could return to as their career develops.

Overall, around one-in-five customers had a Lifelong Learning Account (22%) and two-thirds (66%) did not. Although the majority of customers who had contact with an adviser did not have an account, the figures suggest it is increasingly becoming a part of the discussion. For instance, in Year 1, 70 per cent of customers stated that it was not discussed as part of their session with the adviser, but since then this has fallen to 55 per cent (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Use of Lifelong Learning Accounts

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
<i>Base</i>	(6,610)	(8,808)	(8,795)	(9,576)
Already had an account	2%	3%	4%	6%
Opened an account during the session	6%	7%	8%	8%
Opened an account after the session	4%	6%	8%	8%
Was offered during session but not interested	8%	11%	11%	10%
It was not discussed	70%	64%	58%	55%
Can't remember	8%	8%	10%	10%

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer satisfaction surveys

By channel, telephone information customers were significantly less likely to have a Lifelong Learning Account compared with face-to-face and telephone advice customers (14% versus 22% and 23%). Customers who were more likely to have opened an account had Level 2 or higher qualifications, or were dealing with redundancy or the threat of it (23% and 26%, versus 22% overall).

The vast majority of customers who had opened a Lifelong Learning Account had progressed as far as activating it (69%): a significant increase on Year 3 (63%). Telephone information customers and those whose first language was not English were less likely to have activated their account (59% and 56%).

Around one-in-five (18%) online customers used their Lifelong Learning Account in Year 4 (a reduction from 21% in Year 3). Online customers who were most likely to use the Lifelong Learning Account when they visited the website were more likely to be unemployed (24%), 18-24 NEETs (24%), aged 25-49 (20%), or have qualifications at Level 4 or higher (20%).

Four-in-five (81%) online customers who had one found the Lifelong Learning Account useful, more so among young people aged under-19 (88%).

4.5 Follow-up actions

Reported follow-up by the National Careers Service

One-quarter (24%) of face-to-face or telephone customers stated that the National Careers Service had been in touch with them again after their initial contact. Email (10%) and telephone (9%) were the most common communication channels used for follow-up, followed by meeting face-to-face (5%), letter (3%) or text (1%). Levels of follow-up were

higher in Quarter 3 (29%) and Quarter 4 (27%) compared with Quarter 1 (24%) and Quarter 2 (19%). It is possible that follow-up declined preceding the new National Careers Service contracts which started from October 2014, if some area-based contractors “wound down” services where their contracts were not being renewed. On the other hand, it is also possible that follow-up is simply more encouraged under the new service.

Reporting follow-up was more common among customers aged 18-19 (26%), people with Level 4 or higher qualifications (27%) and people who did not speak English as their first language (32%). It was also substantially more common among telephone advice customers (43%) than among those accessing the service for telephone information (9%) or face-to-face (24%).

Table 4.4 shows there are variations between area-based contractors in terms of whether customers report having any follow-up. Customers of CfBT and Adviza reported significantly more follow-up than elsewhere. There are also variations in the channel type used for follow-up, with CfBT, Adviza and Futures Advice the most likely to use email to get back in touch with the customer, and CfBT more likely than others to follow-up by telephone (statistically significant differences are highlighted in bold).

Table 4.4: Customer follow-up by area-based contractor

	Base	No	Yes	Yes – Email*	Yes – Phone*	Yes – face-to-face*
CfBT	(773)	62%	36%	17%	18%	5%
Adviza	(285)	64%	34%	20%	10%	7%
Economic Solutions	(547)	70%	28%	10%	11%	8%
Futures Advice	(657)	72%	27%	15%	8%	5%
Careers Yorkshire & Humber	(797)	74%	25%	10%	9%	5%
Prospects	(927)	72%	25%	12%	8%	6%
Babcock	(472)	76%	23%	10%	6%	5%
National Telephone	(1,929)	89%	9%	2%	5%	2%

*Multiple responses were possible at channel type, and only the three most common channels for follow-up are shown.

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer satisfaction surveys

Follow-up actions carried out by customers

Encouragingly, with the month following the first meeting or call with the National Careers Service adviser four-in-five (80%) face-to-face customers who recalled having a Skills Action Plan had carried out at least one of the actions agreed in it. This was more common among customers who were unemployed and looking for work (82%), 18-24 year old NEETs (83%) and people with Level 4 or higher qualifications (84%). It was less common among customers who were in work or learning (25% of whom had not carried out any of the actions in their Skills Action Plan within the first month of their contact), potentially due to more limited time. It was also less common among customers who had been mandated by Jobcentre Plus (24% of whom had not carried out any of their agreed actions) and those who did not have English as their first language (25%). In the former case there may be a complex range of reasons why actions may not have been carried out yet (for example relating to motivation or self-confidence) whereas in the latter, there may be more limited understanding about what to do or how to go about doing it.

Around two-thirds (69%) of telephone customers who had been sent any information by their adviser had acted upon this in the month following their session. There were few significant differences other than 18-24 year old NEETs were far more likely than average to have done so (87%).

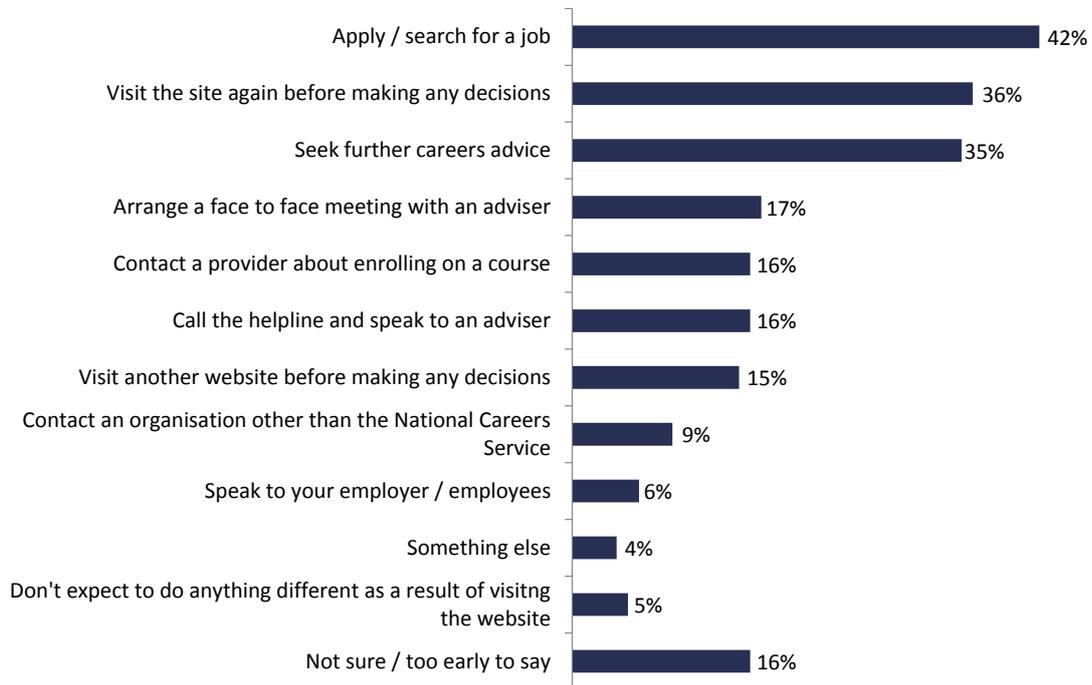
Approaching three-in-five (56%) of the remaining telephone and face-to-face customers (who did not recall an Action Plan or who had not been sent any follow-up information) had acted on something they discussed with their adviser within the first month. This was more common among people with Level 4 or higher qualifications (61%) and less common among those who did not speak English as their first language (47%).

Following their first contact over two-in-five (43%) telephone and face-to-face customers visited the National Careers Service website. Customers significantly more likely to have done this were telephone advice customers (48%), aged 20-24 (47%), 18-24 NEETs (48%), or qualified at Level 2 or higher (46%). People who were less likely than average to visit the website following their initial session were those mandated to the National Careers Service (36%) with Level 1 or no qualifications (36%) or who had used the telephone information line (33%).

One-in-five telephone or face-to-face customers (20%) had started a new course since their initial session. This was more common among people who had contacted the telephone information line (24%), who had no or low qualifications at Level 1 or below (23%) and who recalled having an Action Plan (22%, compared with 17% of those who did not recall having one). Of the remaining customers, a further 28% reported they had decided to start a new learning or training course. This rose to half (48%) of those using the telephone information line, which reflects that they were already more interested in finding out about learning/training when they used the service.

Online customers were asked what they were likely to do as a result of visiting the National Careers Service website (Figure 4.4 overleaf). They were most likely to apply or search for a job following their visit (42%), visit the site again (36%) or seek further careers advice before making any decisions (35%). Customers who planned to apply or search for a job following their visit to the website were more likely to be aged 20-24 (50%), or unemployed (53%).

Figure 4.4: Online customers' planned next steps after visiting the National Careers Service website



Base: All online satisfaction survey customers looking for advice (8,901)

5. Customer satisfaction

Key findings

- The overall quality of the service continued to be rated highly by telephone and face-to-face customers, with the vast majority (93%) agreeing that it was good. It is encouraging to see that customers' perceptions of service quality have been maintained during a period of change for the service, with the introduction of new contracts from October 2014 onwards.
- The vast majority of face-to-face and telephone customers (83%) were satisfied with the National Careers Service overall, consistent with previous years. Customers who were more satisfied than average were those aged 18-19 (89%), in particular young people who were NEET (86%), and people with below Level 2 or no qualifications (85%). This is positive given that 18-24 year old NEETs and people with qualifications below Level 2 are priority groups for the service.
- Overall satisfaction with the National Careers Service website remains high (at 80%). This represents a gradual climb since the online survey first began. In particular, there has been a significant increase on the proportion of very satisfied website visitors, from 35% in Year 2 to 39% in Year 4.
- Reflecting the high levels of customer satisfaction and positive views of service quality, almost nine-in-ten (89%) face-to-face or telephone customers either had already recommended or would recommend the National Careers Service. Similarly, four-in-five (84%) online customers said they would recommend the National Careers Service website to friends, family or colleagues.
- Suggestions for improvement were consistent between face-to-face, telephone and online customers and focused on more tailored help and more follow-up. These suggestions are in line with the most common reasons customers were dissatisfied with the service.

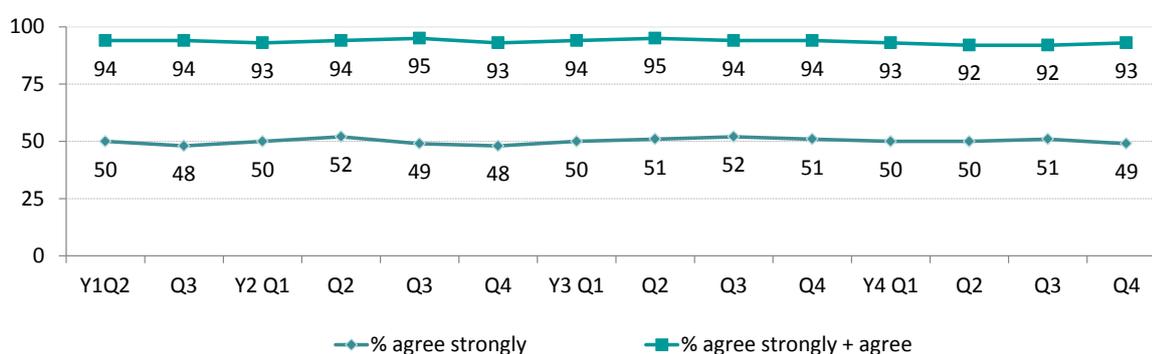
This chapter examines customer satisfaction with the National Careers Service across all channels. As well as overall satisfaction, it explores satisfaction with more specific aspects of the service ranging from logistical issues, such as the timing of appointments, to views on the quality of the advice received and on the helpfulness and professionalism of the adviser. It also details satisfaction with specific aspects of the National Careers Service website.

5.1 Overall perceptions about the quality of the service

Face-to-face and telephone customers

The overall quality of the service was rated highly by telephone and face-to-face customers, with the vast majority (93%) agreeing that it was good, and a small minority who disagreed (6%). This has been consistently high over the last three years (Figure 5.1) and it is encouraging to see that customers' perceptions of service quality have been maintained during a period of change for the service, with the introduction of new contracts from October 2014 onwards (i.e. starting in Quarter 3 of Year 4).

Figure 5.1 Agreement that the overall quality was good, by survey quarter



Base: All telephone satisfaction respondents (see Table 1.1 for base sizes per quarter)

Very high proportions of face-to-face (93%), telephone advice (92%) and telephone information (89%) customers rated the overall quality of the service as good. Although it was rated slightly lower than the other channels overall, telephone information had the highest proportion of customers who rated the service as *very good* (54%, compared with 49% of face-to-face and 52% of telephone advice customers). This pattern was also found in Year 2, although there was no difference by service type on this measure in Year 3.

A number of customer groups were more likely than average to agree that the overall quality of the service was good, including:

- young people aged 18-19 (98%) and 20-24 (96%), including 18-24 year old NEETs (97%) who are a priority group for the National Careers Service.
- customers who had more than one face-to-face session compared with those who had just one (96% compared with 92%) – and among these, people who saw the same adviser (97%). Consistency of contact appears to be important in this regard.
- customers who had a deeper level of engagement with the service overall, so for example – those who visited the website after their discussion with the adviser (95%), or who recalled agreeing an Action Plan or using the Skills Health Check (96% each).

Around one-in-twenty customers disagreed that the quality of the service was good (6%), and this was higher among customers aged 50 plus (9%) and those who had been

mandated to use the service by Jobcentre Plus (12%). The main reasons why customers disagreed the service was good were that they did not receive any relevant information they were looking for (38%), they did not consider they had received any help (29%) and that staff lacked knowledge/ could not answer their questions (18%). In addition, 15% reported they did not receive a promised callback.

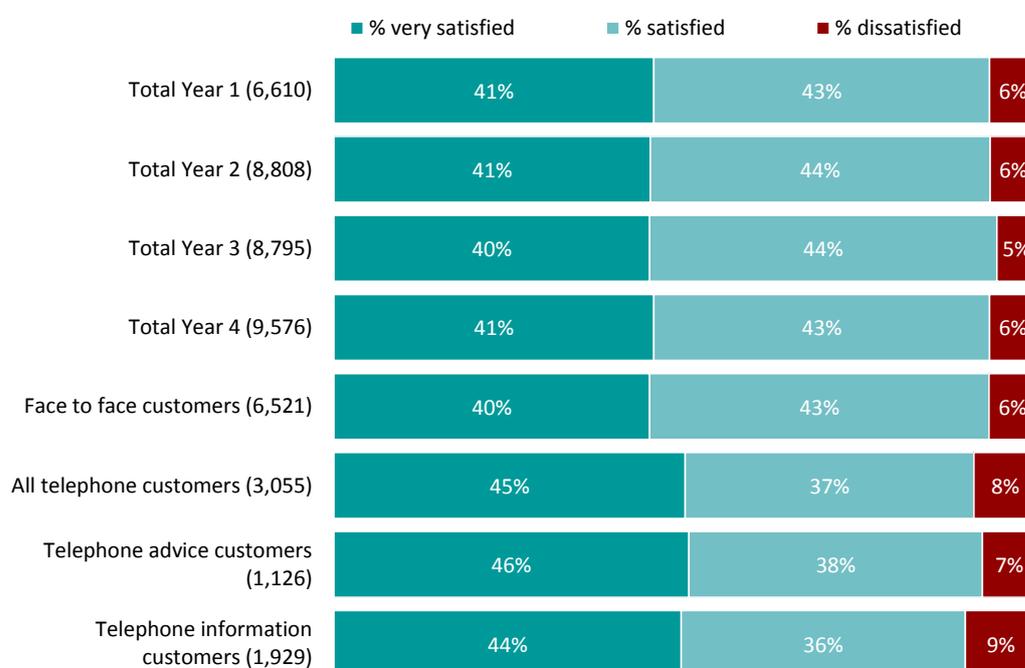
Looking at the results by quarter finds that not receiving the information they requested and not received a callback both become more prominent reasons (among those who disagreed the service was good), from Quarter 3 onwards, when the new service started. For example, the proportion who reported not receiving a callback increased to 22% in Quarter 3 and 20% in Quarter 4, compared with just seven per cent in Quarter 1. The main issues appear to lie in newly-distinct telephone information and telephone advice streams of the service, suggesting that there are some operational issues which could be addressed to ensure that customers receive the callbacks they expect and are sent the information they have requested.

5.2 Overall satisfaction with the National Careers Service

Face-to-face and telephone customers

The vast majority of face-to-face and telephone customers (83%) were satisfied with the National Careers Service overall, largely unchanged from previous findings (Figure 5.2).

Figure 5.2: Overall satisfaction with the National Careers Service among face-to-face and telephone customers



Base: All telephone satisfaction survey respondents (see chart for base sizes)

Mirroring the overall service quality rating, face-to-face customers were more satisfied than their telephone counterparts. Again, despite more telephone customers being dissatisfied

with the service overall (8% versus 6% of face-to-face customers), among those who were satisfied a high proportion of telephone customers said they were *very satisfied* (45% versus 40% of face-to-face customers).

Customers who were more satisfied than average were those aged 18-19 (89%), in particular young people who were NEET (86%), and those with below Level 2 or no qualifications (85%). This is positive given that 18-24 year old NEETs and people with qualifications below Level 2 are priority groups for the service. Similar patterns were found in Year 3.

Historically, telephone customers whose enquiry was dealt with over more than one call have always felt less satisfied and results this year suggest the same. Just over three-quarters of those who had more than one call were satisfied with the service overall (77%), compared with 84% of those whose enquiry was handled in one call. As for those who had more than one call and remained satisfied overall, 65% of them liked the service because they thought the adviser was knowledgeable and provided good advice (versus 61% of telephone customers overall). This suggests that while customers who had more than one call may have had more complex enquiries, they still appreciated the help and advice provided.

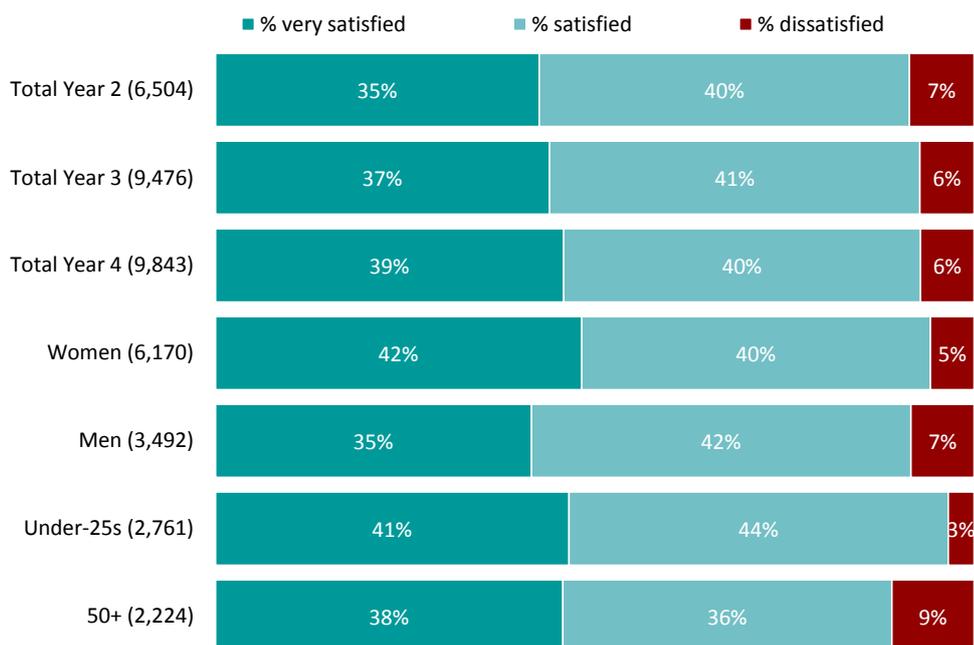
In contrast, face-to-face customers who had more than one meeting were more likely to be satisfied overall than those who only had one session (89% versus 81%), and in particular, those who saw the same adviser across multiple sessions (90% satisfied, including 51% of them who were *very satisfied* compared with 42% of those who did not see the same adviser).

The proportion of dissatisfied customers has remained consistently low throughout the years, and remains at just six per cent in Year 4. Customers who were more likely than average to be dissatisfied with their overall experience of the National Careers Service were telephone information customers (9%); people aged 50 plus (9%); and people who had Level 4 or higher qualifications (8%). It is likely that the latter two groups require more tailored advice and/or have higher expectations about what the service may offer.

The main reason for dissatisfaction among customers was not receiving help or information they wanted and/or needed (54%), followed by lack of follow-up (18%). Both are similar reasons why people disagreed that the quality of the service was good, and underline the importance of getting these things right. Again, the data show that there was an increase in the proportion of people who cited lack of follow-up in Quarters 3 and 4, compared with Quarters 1 and 2, suggesting this should be a focus area for improvement under the new service.

Online customers

Overall satisfaction with the National Careers Service website remains high (at 80%), with most online customers either satisfied (40%) or very satisfied (39%). This represents a gradual climb since the online survey first began. In particular, there has been a significant increase on the proportion of very satisfied customers, from 35% in Year 2 to 39% in Year 4 (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: Overall satisfaction with the National Careers Service website

Base: All online satisfaction survey respondents (see chart for base sizes)

Website visitors who were more satisfied overall than average were:

- women (83% satisfied compared with 76% of men)
- young people aged 19 or under (87% satisfied) or aged 20-24 (83%) compared with 73% of those aged 50+
- those in learning (86%) or in work (81%) compared with people who were unemployed (78%)
- those with Level 2 or higher qualifications (81%) compared with those who had below Level 1 or no qualifications (78%).

Just one-in-twenty (6%) were dissatisfied with the website, the same proportion as Year 3, and the same groupings – typically those aged 50 plus (9%), who were disabled (9%) or who had Level 4 or higher qualifications (7%).

The main reasons people were dissatisfied with the website related to similar issues raised last year, which suggests that these have not yet been fully resolved. These were:

- The site being too slow or crashing, or inability to save information that has been compiled or produced already. This was a particular issue with the CV Builder.

"Because I completed a skills check, generated the recommendation and then when I went back to do more skills check activities, my responses had been lost so I had to start all over again."

"Just wondering where my CV vanished to once I pressed save my CV!!!"

- Not being able to find specific-enough information.

"Couldn't find what I wanted, information specific to my circumstances wasn't clear and the entire website feels like a series of poorly designed rabbit holes."

- Log-in issues.

"Spent a great deal of time trying to register an account. No joy. Tried to re-register and the site did not even validate my date of birth. As a first encounter, I am not encouraged."

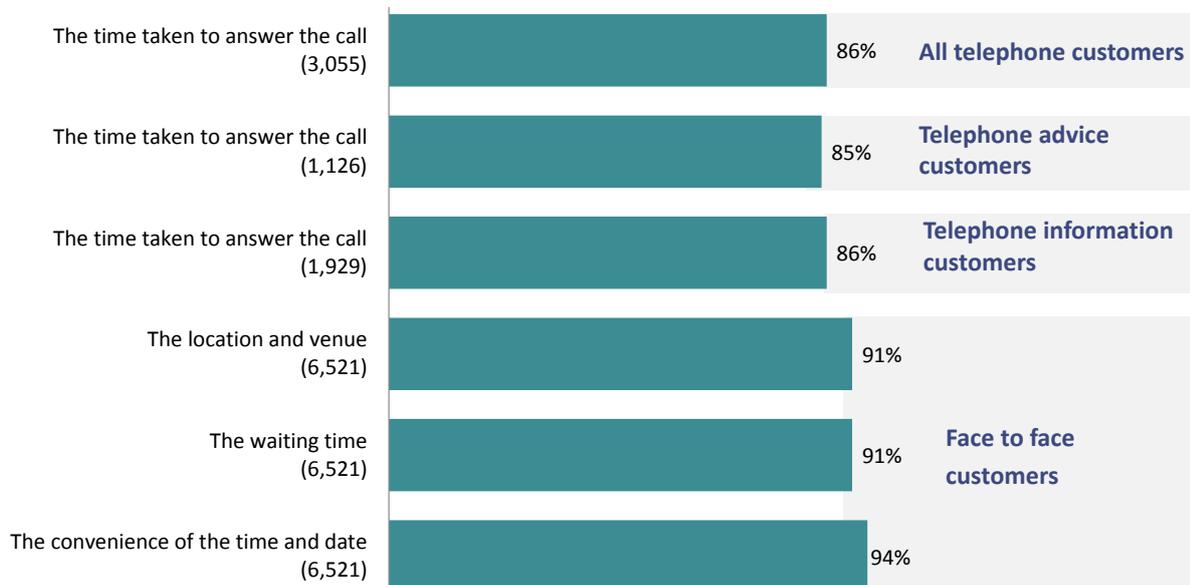
"Because I've had trouble accessing and making an account with you a number of times. I'm stuck at moment. Very disheartening."

5.3 Satisfaction with different aspects of the adviser sessions

National Careers Service face-to-face and telephone customers were asked for their views on a range of specific aspects of their session(s). The logistical aspects of the services scored highly on satisfaction, carrying on the trend we have seen in previous years (Figure 5.4). Almost nine-in-ten (86%) of the telephone customers were satisfied with the time it took for someone to answer their calls, regardless of the types of their telephone session. However, the customers whose enquiry was dealt with in a single call were significantly more satisfied with the overall service than those having multiple calls (88% versus 83%, or 45% versus 38% when comparing the *very satisfied*).

Face-to-face customers scored even higher on satisfaction levels, on the three situational and logistical aspects of their meetings. The dissatisfaction levels were all low as well, ranging from 2% to 4%. On the operational front, customers who had a Skills Action Plan and those who used Skills Health Check, were the most satisfied ones regardless of the other logistical aspects.

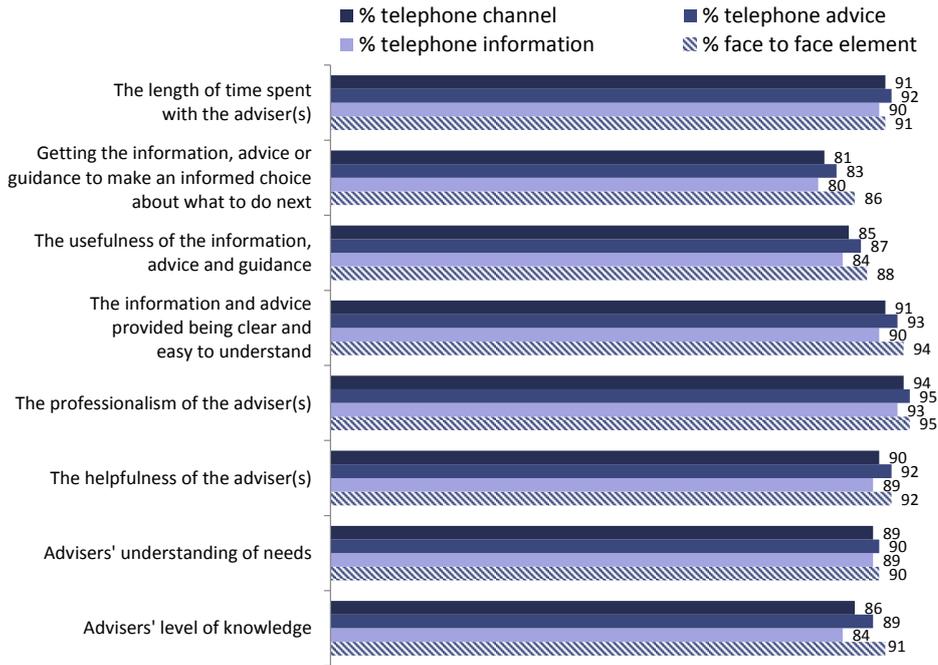
Figure 5.4: Face-to-face and telephone customer satisfaction with logistical arrangements of their contact with the National Careers Service



Base: All telephone satisfaction survey respondents (see chart for base sizes)

Customers were predominantly happy with both the assistance of their advisers and with the content and outcome of the National Careers Service intervention, as demonstrated by Figure 5.5. On each measure, close to 90% of customers from all streams were satisfied, with typically over two-fifths very satisfied. The three areas that customers were particularly satisfied with continue to be the professionalism of the advisers, the clarity of the information and advice they offered, and how helpful they were.

Figure 5.5: Face-to-face and telephone customer satisfaction with the information and advice they got from the National Careers Service



Base: All telephone satisfaction survey respondents (see chart for base sizes)

Face-to-face customers were inclined to be more satisfied than the telephone customers. That was especially true in regards to satisfaction with the adviser’s level of knowledge (91% versus 86% of telephone customers) and whether or not customers got information, advice and guidance to make an informed decision (86% versus 81% of telephone customers). Those who had multiple meetings were more likely to be very satisfied in several aspects, including helpfulness of the adviser (64% versus 55% of those having one meeting), the adviser’s level of knowledge (60% versus 51%), and the usefulness of the information, advice and guidance they received (50% versus 41%).

There was no major difference in satisfaction levels between the two types of telephone customers on most of the aspects, apart from adviser’s knowledge, where 84% of telephone information customers were satisfied, compared with 89% of those who got telephone advice. Telephone customers whose enquiry was dealt with in one call were more likely to be very satisfied in the following aspects: the professionalism of the adviser (64% versus 55% who had multiple calls), the helpfulness of the adviser (62% versus 51%), and that customers got the information, advice or guidance to make an informed choice about what to do next (46% versus 36%).

Although levels of general satisfaction for both telephone and face-to-face customers have remained consistently high between Year 3 and Year 4, there has been a slip in the proportion of *very satisfied* customers in all but one aspect for telephone customers this year. The proportion of customers who were *very satisfied* on each measure (except on adviser's level of knowledge, among telephone customers) has decreased by 1% to 6% when compared with Year 3, which had also declined compared with Year 2 (by 1% to 4%). Prior to that, the 'very satisfied' level had increased by 2% to 5% between Year 1 and Year 2. Moving forward, as well as maintaining the high general satisfaction levels that the National Careers Service currently provides, there is therefore potential to target improvements in the proportion of customers who are *very satisfied*.

5.4 Satisfaction with the different aspects of the website

Visitors to the National Careers Service website were also asked to rate an array of different features of the website, on a scale from very good to very poor. Encouragingly, the website appears to serve its purpose well, with over four-fifths of the customers rating each individual aspect of the website as good or very good. The two outstanding categories are information being clear and easy to understand (which 85% of customers rated good or very good), and the website being easy to use (which 82% rated good or very good). There was a very similar pattern to previous years.

Young people aged 19 or under were particularly more positive than average about all aspects of the site, while those aged 50+ and disabled people were less so. For example, when rating the quality of the information, 85% of the younger people rated it as good or very good, compared with 71% of people aged 50+.

Similar to overall satisfaction with the website, women and people in learning were more positive than average on all measures. People whose first language was not English were also more positive. The 18-24 NEET group rated each informational aspect of the website more highly than average, although they were no more likely than average to rate its design or ease of use as good.

5.5 Would customers recommend the National Careers Service?

Face-to-face and telephone customers

In Year 4, almost nine-in-ten (89%) face-to-face or telephone customers either had already recommended or would recommend the National Careers Service (27% and 61% respectively). This is in line with previous years.

Having recommended the National Careers Service was more common among telephone advice customers than among face-to-face or telephone information customers (39% compared with 27% and 28% respectively). Over two-fifths of customers (41%) whose first language was not English had also recommended it.

As we might expect, the inclination to recommend the service was stronger among customers who rated the service as good quality, and among those who were satisfied overall. This was particularly the case among people aged 18-24 (89% would recommend versus 85% overall), face-to-face customers who had multiple face-to-face meetings with the same adviser (90% versus 84% who had only one meeting), and those who had

engaged most with common National Careers Service tools including the Action Plan (89%) and the Skills Health Check (90%).

Online customers

Four-in-five (84%) online customers said they would recommend the National Careers Service website to friends, family or colleagues. Among the rest, more people said they were unsure (12%) rather than said they would not recommend it (5%). These results are in line with the previous two years.

The likelihood of recommending the website was higher among women (87%), younger people (aged 19 or under), people in learning, and people whose first language was not English (all at 88%).

5.6 How do customers think the National Careers Service could improve?

Face-to-face and telephone customers

Almost three-fifths (59%) of face-to-face and telephone customers thought that the National Careers Service did not require any improvement. Suggestions for improvement were consistent between face-to-face and telephone customers and focused on more tailored help and more follow-up (Table 5.1). These suggestions are in line with the most common reasons customers were dissatisfied with the service.

Table 5.1: Suggested improvements to the face-to-face and telephone service (top five mentions)

	Face-to-face	Telephone	Overall
<i>Base</i>	(6,521)	(3,055)	(9,576)
No improvement/fine as it is	60%	53%	59%
More tailored help	7%	9%	7%
More follow-up	6%	8%	7%
Publicise it more	4%	6%	5%
Offer more assistance/ information on training	4%	6%	4%

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer satisfaction surveys

Consistent with previous patterns on customer satisfaction, young people aged 18-19 (75%) and 20-24 (64%) were the most likely to think that the National Careers Service was fine as it was and could not suggest any improvements – this compares with 56% of customers aged 50 plus. NEET young people (69%) were also more positive in this regard. The range of suggested improvements was consistent among different types of customers.

Website users

Website visitors were asked an open-ended question about how the site could be improved. The main issues raised related to:

- Improving the design/ layout by making the site easier to navigate:

"The website could be more intuitive for non-computing people. Most people do not search like computing users (with search bars) they would browse through the website. To act on this I would make the whole process easy to use. Ask questions to the user and point them to the right places."

- Improving specific aspects of the website 'tools', such as the Skills Health Check and in particular the CV Builder:

"A detailed explanation about how to save data would be useful. I did not realise that I had to click on "save record" in conjunction with "save your CV".

"Having built a CV I would like to view and print that CV but cannot find a way to do that, so the time I have spent seems to have been wasted."

- Improving the functionality of the site:

"When getting the skills health check report, links to click through to the types of jobs that suit you so you can read more about them, rather than having to go out of the report to search for them in the website. Better connectivity between these tools and the actual jobs and information about them on the website."

"Ability to 'save' certain job profiles as favourites in your account, so that you can flag a number of job profiles to review/compare at a later date. Typically you browse through quite a few different job profiles when searching, and you quite quickly forget which you've looked at etc. Otherwise great website, thank you."

"I wish I could save my searches and the selected bits I wanted to return to next time I visit to have another read so I didn't have fresh search results returned to me each time I visit."

Overall, most people were positive about the website and did not recommend any improvements:

"This seems to be a good resource and point of reference. Thank you."

"There is so much information to consider... however the quality of the information is excellent and should be maintained."

"This has to be the first government website that is both intuitive and easy to use."

6. Customer progression

Key findings

- Almost all face-to-face and telephone customers (97%) experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months since their call/meeting. Year 4 has seen particular increases in learning and employment progression, compared with previous years: the latter is likely to be heavily influenced by improving economic conditions.
- The proportion of customers who achieved any employment progression increased over the course of the year, from 52% in Quarter 1 to 60% in Quarter 4, and averaged 55% across the year. This is an increase from 50% in Year 3. Face-to-face and telephone advice customers were much more likely to have progressed into new employment (42% and 38% respectively, compared with 31% of telephone information customers). To a large extent this reflects the differences in their employment status at the time they first had contact with the service.
- Learning progression increased to 70% in Year 4, up from 65% in Year 3. It was higher among telephone than among face-to-face customers, related to the reasons why telephone customers contact the National Careers Service in the first place.
- Overall 93% of face-to-face or telephone customers indicated that they had gained some form of Personal Added Value since their contact with the National Careers Service. The most common additions were improvements in CV writing or interview skills (61%), increased self-confidence (61%) and developing skills related to a current or future job (53%). As a whole, young people aged 18-24 were consistently more likely than older people to report any personal development outcomes, in particular young people who were NEET.
- Almost all website visitors (91%) who completed the online progression survey had achieved some form of progression three months after their visit. This was most commonly learning progression (70%) although almost half (47%) had made progress in employment, either getting or improving a job.
- Nine-in-ten (90%) face-to-face or telephone customers reported developing career management skills during the six months since their contact with the National Careers Service. This was consistent across most key demographics.

This chapter examines the extent to which National Careers Service customers progressed in the six months since their call or meeting with the adviser, or in the three

months since their visit to the website. The chapter considers the three main areas of progression which form part of the National Careers Service's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): employment progression, learning progression, and a measure of Personal Added Value incorporating the development of a range of different skills since their interaction with the National Careers Service, including job-related skills and 'soft' skills such as team working and social skills. The chapter also examines the extent to which customers attribute any of their progression outcomes to their interaction with the National Careers Service.

When interpreting the following results it is important to understand that these provide information on changes over time in employment and learning status and do not imply that these were *caused by* interaction with the National Careers Service. On a similar note, as the results only provide a snapshot of the progression of National Careers Service customers six months after their interaction with the service, it is important to bear in mind that some customers might not be seeking learning or employment progression at that point in time, or indeed may achieve this over a longer timeframe.

6.1 Overview of the extent of progression

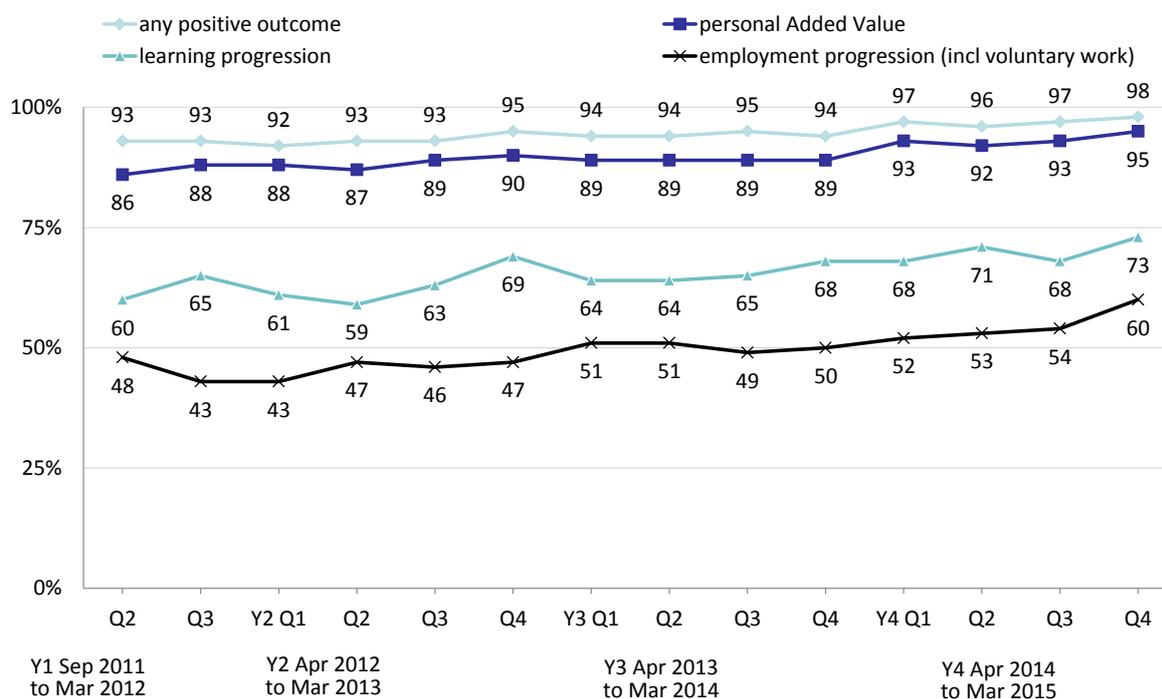
Defining progression

Three core Key Performance Indicators are used to determine progression levels of National Careers Service customers six months after their intervention with the service:

- 1. Learning progression** – whether customers have undertaken formal or informal learning or training in the six months since the call/meeting.
- 2. Employment progression** – examining whether customers have entered new employment, changed career, were promoted or improved their salary, and/or have taken up voluntary work.
- 3. Personal added value** – whether customers have achieved one or more of a range of 'softer' outcomes such as improved work-related or more personal skills (IT skills, team working skills etc.), improved their self-confidence, increased ability to make decisions for the future regarding work or learning, increased job satisfaction, or achieving a new and/or higher level qualification.

While these measures track progression since the adviser session, they do not imply that any resulting changes necessarily came about as a consequence of the contact with National Careers Service. However, customers who report any of the three types of progression are asked about the extent to which advice from the National Careers Service played a role in it.

Almost all face-to-face and telephone customers (97%) experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months since their call/meeting. The various different measures are shown in Figure 6.1, which shows rising progression levels on all indicators, over time. Year 4 has seen particular increases in learning and employment progression, compared with previous years: the latter is likely to be heavily influenced by economic conditions.

Figure 6.1: Trends in progression among face-to-face and telephone customers, by survey quarter

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer progression surveys (see Table 1.1 for base sizes)

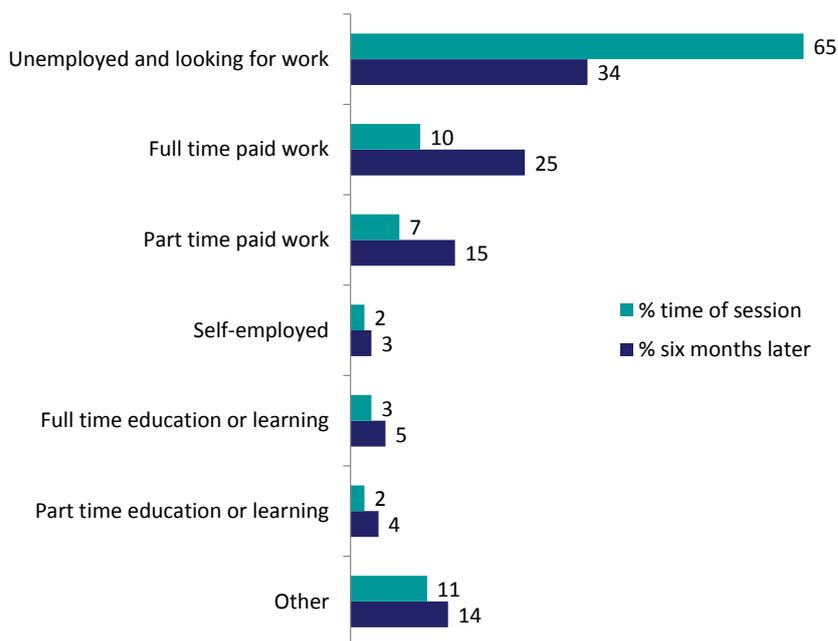
6.2 Employment progression among face-to-face and telephone customers

Change in employment status

The majority of customers interviewed for the progression survey had been unemployed and looking for work at the time of their adviser session six months previously (65%) although this has declined since Year 3 when 70% were unemployed at the time of their initial contact. One-in-five (19%) were in work – up from 16% in Year 3, with the remainder in learning (5%) or doing something else (11%) including those unable to work due to ill health, with home or family responsibilities, or retired.

Figure 6.2 shows that, six months on, there was a large fall in the proportion of customers who were unemployed and seeking work (down 31 percentage points) and a large increase in the proportion who were in any form of work (up by 24 percentage points including full-time, part-time and self-employment). These changes are similar to Year 3, with a slightly bigger drop in unemployment this year (down by 31 percentage points compared with 29 percentage points over the same period in Year 3).

Figure 6.2: Employment status at the time of the call/meeting and six months later, among face-to-face and telephone customers



Base: All progression survey customers (5,066)

As discussed in Chapter 2, the work status of face-to-face and telephone customers at the time of their initial interaction with the National Careers Service was quite different, with face-to-face customers far more likely to be unemployed and seeking work. Nevertheless both groups show significant movements into employment and learning over the six months since their contact. The key changes are:

- Among face-to-face customers, the proportion who were unemployed and seeking work almost halved over the six month period, from 70% to 37% (down by 33 percentage points). There was a corresponding increase in the proportion in work (including self-employment), up from 15% at the time of their session to 42% six months later. There was a slight increase in the proportion in full-time or part-time education, up from four per cent to seven per cent.
- Telephone customers were more likely to be in work (53%) or learning (12%) at the time of their first interaction with the National Careers Service, and less likely to be unemployed (24%). Six months on, similar proportions were in work (55%) with more in full-time (up four percentage points) and fewer in part-time work (down three percentage points). The proportion who were unemployed had reduced, to 13% (a similar reduction to Year 3), but the biggest change was a large increase in the proportion moving into education or learning (up by ten percentage points), in particular full-time education, which increased from 11% to 17% across the six-month period.

The largest increases in employment were seen among young people (Table 6.1) in particular those aged 20-24 years old. Although there was a positive move into work among those aged 50 plus (increasing by 20 percentage points over the six-month period) this was much lower than the increase among young people. The same was true among

disabled customers. These customers may need more intensive support or face more deep-seated barriers in the labour market.

Table 6.1: Changes in employment status among key customer groups

Customer group		Status at point of contact with National Careers Service	Status 6 months after contact	Change (ppts)
18-19 year olds (264)	Unemployed	76%	39%	-37
	In work	10%	38%	+28
	In education	12%	16%	+4
20-24 year olds (918)	Unemployed	66%	27%	-39
	In work	19%	49%	+30
	In education	10%	15%	+5
Aged 50 plus (1,079)	Unemployed	71%	41%	-30
	In work	14%	34%	+20
	In education	1%	5%	+4
Disabled (827)	Unemployed	59%	38%	-21
	In work	10%	26%	+16
	In education	5%	7%	+2

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer progression surveys

There were also positive moves into employment (44%) and education (8%) among 18-24 year olds who were NEET at the time of their initial interaction with the service. There is a similar, albeit smaller, increase in employment for people who were mandated to the service by Jobcentre Plus (with 30% in work and 6% in education). Among the latter group, one-in-five (21%) have now been categorised as unable to work due to ill-health or disability.

Changing job role or employer

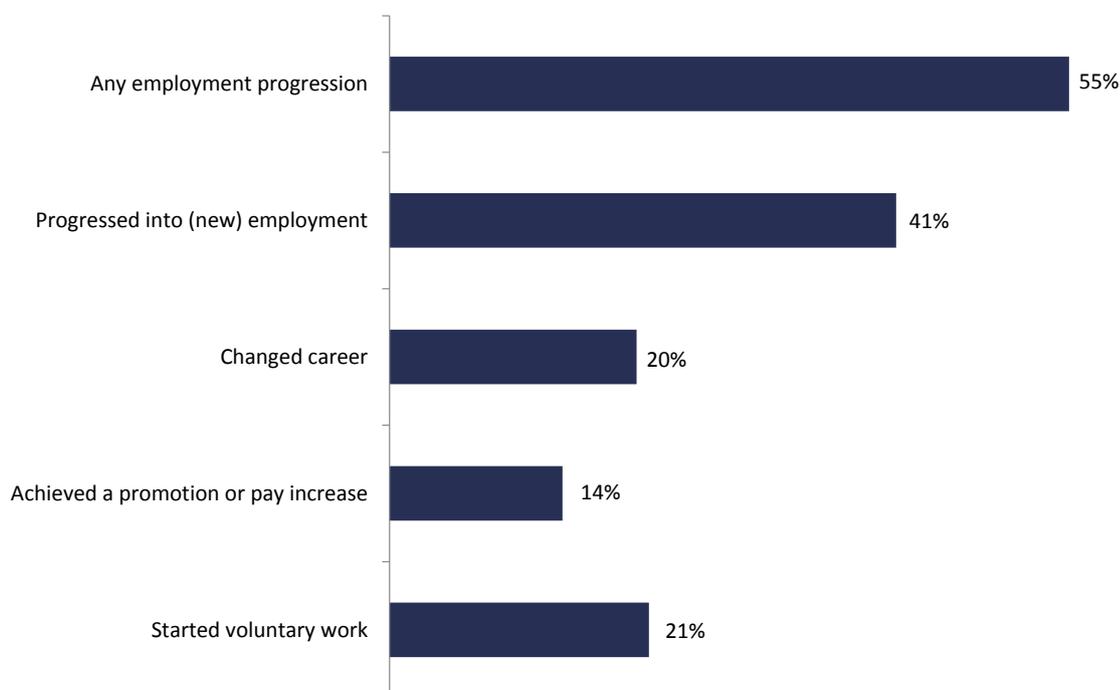
Customers who were in work at both points (ie. at the time of the meeting/call and at the time of their progression interview six months later) were asked whether they were still in the same job at the same organisation. Just over half (54%) were, whereas one-in-four

(27%) were doing a different job in a new organisation, higher than in Year 3 (22%). Similar, lower proportions were doing the same type of job with a new employer (10%) or working for the same organisation in a different job (7%).

Employment progression among face-to-face and telephone customers

The proportion of customers who achieved some form of employment progression increased over the course of the year, from 52% in Quarter 1 to 60% in Quarter 4. Figure 6.3 shows the types of employment progression achieved. It is important to note that this includes those who got a job and then left it within the six month period since their interaction with the service. Two-in-five (41%) of all face-to-face or telephone customers had progressed into new employment in those six months, either from having been out of work, or moving into a new job. This is significantly higher than Year 3 (37%). One-in-five (20%) had achieved a career change, or taken up voluntary work (21%), while one-in-seven (14%) had achieved a promotion or pay increase.

Figure 6.3: Employment progression among face-to-face and telephone customers



Base: All progression survey customers (5,066)

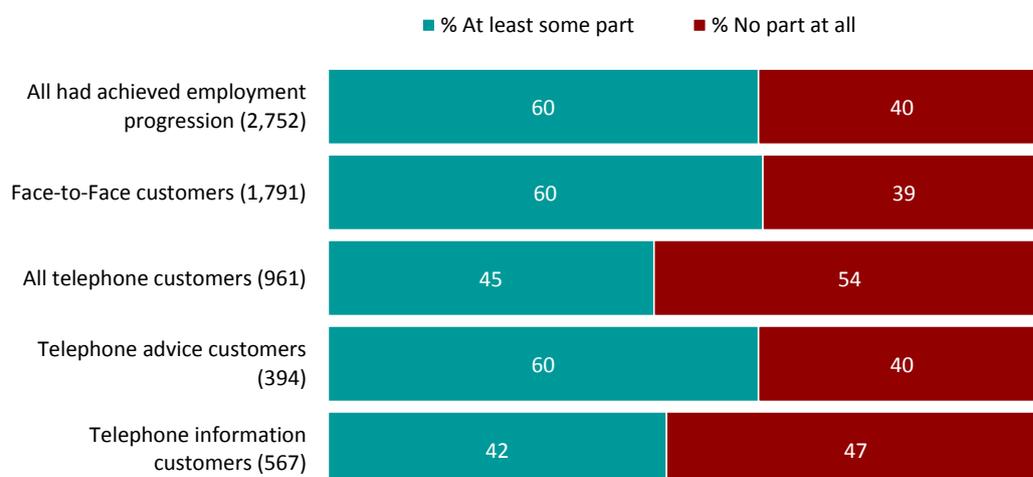
Face-to-face and telephone advice customers were much more likely to have progressed into new employment than telephone information customers (42% and 38% respectively, compared with 31%). To a large extent this reflects the differences in their employment status at the time they first had contact with the service, six months previously, when telephone information customers in particular were more likely to already be in work. Other groups more likely to have moved into new employment were those with Level 4 or higher qualifications (49%), young people aged 18-24 (49%) and in particular those who were NEET (53%), and people who were unemployed at the point they first had contact with the service (47%) or who had been made redundant or were facing redundancy (57%).

On the other hand, reflecting that telephone customers were more likely to be in work at the time of their session, they were also more likely to have achieved a promotion or pay rise (18% compared with 13% of face-to-face customers). Again this was particularly the case for people with Level 4 or higher qualifications (17% compared with 8% of those with qualifications below Level 2), younger people aged 20-24 (18%), and those dealing with redundancy (19%).

The perceived role of the National Careers Service in supporting employment progression

Customers who had achieved any employment progression were asked to what extent their interaction with the National Careers Service adviser had contributed to this. Three-in-five of them agreed (60%) it had, higher than in Year 3 (57%). The proportion who said the adviser played a big part in their employment progression remained stable at 19%. Face-to-face (60%) and telephone advice customers (60%) were more likely to say their adviser played some role than telephone information customers (42%), which clearly reflects different levels of adviser input. What is notable this year is the large increase in telephone advice customers who attribute at least some of their progression to their interaction with the service – 60%, up from 50% in Year 3, and now in line with the face-to-face service.

Figure 6.4: Whether the National Careers Service adviser played a part in employment progression reported by customers



Base: All face-to-face and telephone customers who had achieved employment progression (2,752)

Those aged 18-19 (70%) and 18-24 year old NEETs (65%) were particularly likely to consider their adviser had played at least some role in their employment progression. Notably too, people with below Level 2 qualifications (24%) and who had recently been made redundant or were facing redundancy (23%) were all more likely than average to regard their adviser's support as playing a large role in their employment progression.

Of those who did not achieve any employment progression, the majority of them (80%) thought the adviser could *not* have done anything more to help. However, 16% thought the adviser could have done more, higher than in Year 3 (13%). There was no difference by

service channel, and findings by sub-group were similar to Year 3 in that those most likely to think their adviser could have done more were: qualified at Level 4 or above (21%); in learning at the time of their first session (21%); non-white British (25%); or did not speak English as their first language (30%). Customers in London were also particularly likely to think their adviser could have done more to help (29%).

The top five mentions that customers felt the adviser could have done more of to help them progress in work are shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: What more the adviser could have done to support employment progression among face-to-face and telephone customers (top five mentions)

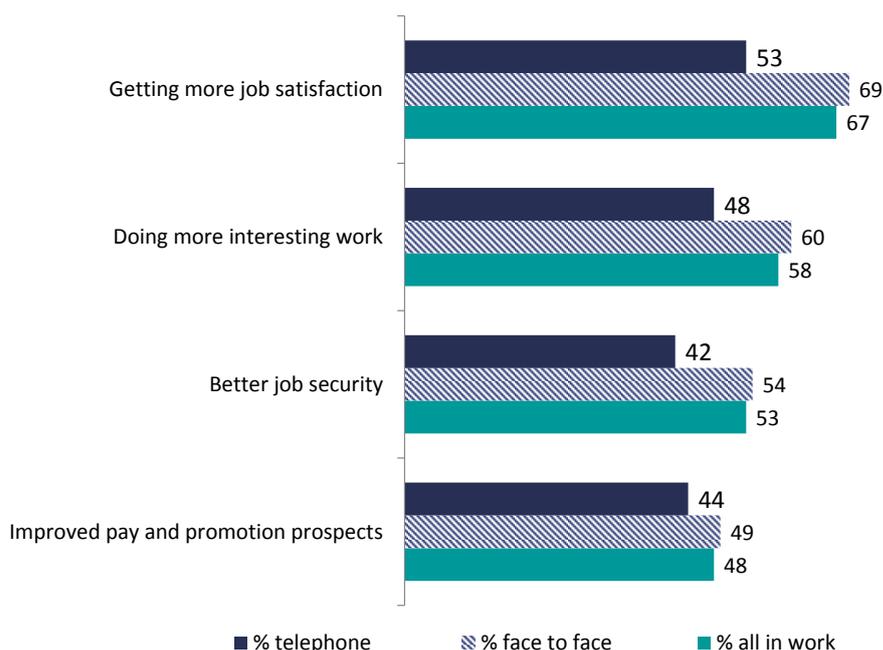
What more could the adviser have done	%
<i>Base</i>	(383)
More advice/ information on jobs	24%
More advice/ information on courses	18%
Be more attentive/ give me more time	18%
Give me more options	14%
Followed up or called back	13%

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer progression surveys

There were few significant differences here other than disabled customers were more likely than others to want more information on courses (29% versus 16%) and people who did not speak English as their first language were more likely than those who did to want more information on jobs (34% versus 21%). In addition, people who were working at the time of their interaction with the service were more likely than average to suggest their adviser could have been more attentive and given them more time (27%, compared with 18% overall).

Positive changes at work

Customers who were in work when interviewed were asked about a range of other benefits they may have experienced in their job or career in the six months following their interaction with the National Careers Service. The results (shown in Figure 6.4) were almost identical to Year 3. As previously, face-to-face customers were more likely than telephone ones to consider they had gained any of the benefits over the past six months.

Figure 6.4: Positive changes at work

Base: All customers in work at time of the progression survey (2,435)

The other key point to note here is that young people were consistently more likely to cite any of these positive changes at work, in particular those aged 18-19. For example, 82% of 18-19 year olds now said they had more job security, as did 69% of 20-24 year olds, compared with 53% overall. Similarly, 70% of 18-19 year olds and 63% of 20-24 year olds considered their pay and promotion prospects had improved, compared with 48% overall.

Approaching three-in-five (58%) customers who had benefitted from positive changes at work attributed these at least in part to the information, advice or support they received from the National Careers Service. This was more common among face-to-face customers (60%) than among telephone ones (45%). Young people aged 18-19 who experienced positive changes at work were more likely than average to say that the adviser played a part (65%).

Moving into work

Just over one-quarter (26%) of all customers had been unemployed at the time of their interaction with the service but were in work six months later, in line with Year 3 (27%). Just over half (54%) considered that the information, advice or support from their adviser, and any actions taken directly as a result of their discussion, had played a part in them getting their job, with 19% who felt it had played a big part (up from 16% in Year 3). This was similar across face-to-face and telephone advice customers (54% and 53% respectively) and lower among telephone information ones (37%).

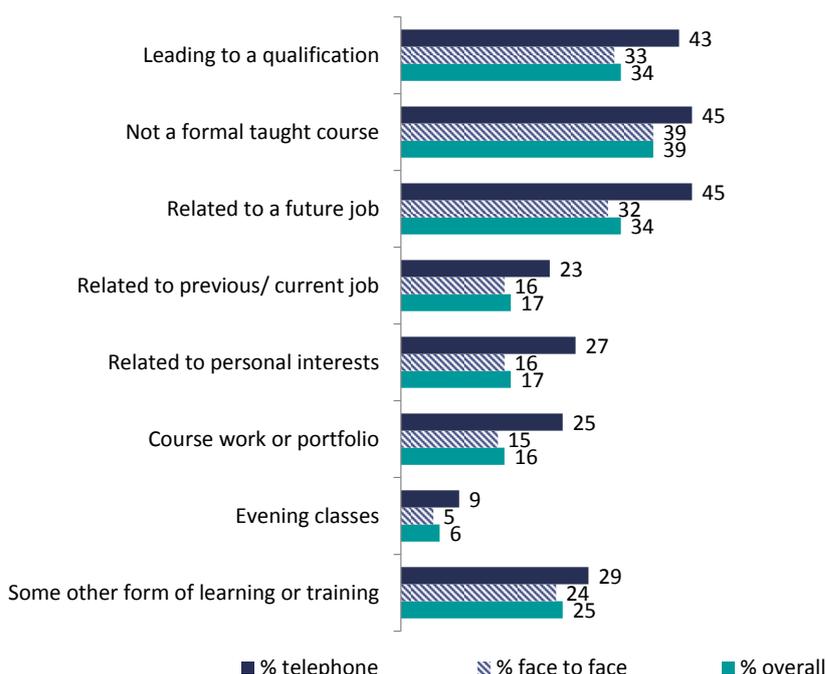
6.3 Learning progression among face-to-face and telephone customers

Learning progression increased to 70% in Year 4, up from 65% in Year 3 and 63% in Year 2. It was higher among telephone than among face-to-face customers, related to the

reasons why telephone customers contact the National Careers Service in the first place (as discussed in Chapter 3).

Figure 6.5 shows the various types of learning which comprise the progression measure. Telephone customers were much more likely to have undertaken each form of learning than face-to-face ones, in particular learning related to a future job. Note that around half (53%) of the people who had identified more than one type of learning at this question reported these were all part of the same course or training.

Figure 6.5: Forms of learning/ training undertaken since the call/meeting with National Careers Service



Base: All progression survey customers (5,066)

Table 6.3 shows the different types of learning undertaken by key customer groups.

Table 6.3: Forms of learning/ training undertaken since the call/meeting with National Careers Service, among key customer groups

Customer Group	Base	Leading to a qualification	Related to previous/ current job	Related to a future job	Related to personal interests	Course work or portfolio	Evening class	Not a formal taught course	Some other form of learning or training
18-24 NEET	711	29%	15%	28%	15%	14%	5%	38%	30%
18-19 year olds	264	34%	17%	32%	21%	21%	6%	33%	28%
20-24 year olds	918	36%	16%	34%	19%	15%	6%	42%	30%

Customer Group	Base	Leading to a qualification	Related to previous/current job	Related to a future job	Related to personal interests	Course work or portfolio	Evening class	Not a formal taught course	Some other form of learning or training
25-49 year olds	2,805	34%	18%	36%	17%	17%	6%	39%	25%
Aged 50 plus	1,079	31%	15%	29%	15%	14%	5%	39%	20%
Disabled	827	33%	14%	30%	17%	15%	5%	37%	21%

The main motivation for doing further learning or training was to obtain a qualification, and this was more common among telephone information customers (78%) than among face-to-face (69%) or telephone advice ones (64%). People doing learning who had no or low qualifications below Level 2 (78%), aged 18-19 years old (74%), were disabled (74%) or whose first language was not English (78%) were all more likely than average to be motivated by getting a qualification, and of these the vast majority (90%) were looking to raise their qualification level.

Among customers who had done any learning or training in the intervening six months, half (47%) have completed it, while 7% left the course early and 48% were still doing it at the time they were surveyed. The majority (86%) were satisfied with the course they were doing. Compared with Years 2 and 3, exactly the same proportion of Year 4 customers now have a higher qualification than the one they started out with, when they last had contact with the National Careers Service (9%).

In Year 4, a similar proportion of customers to Years 2 and 3 considered that their National Careers Service adviser had contributed to their decision to do the learning or training (61%), with one-in-four saying that the adviser played a big part (26%). Face-to-face and telephone advice customers who had achieved any learning progression were more likely to attribute this at least in part to contact with their adviser (62% and 60% respectively, compared with 53% of telephone information customers). People with a disability (66% versus 59% without) and those with no or low qualifications (71% versus 58% of those with Level 2 or higher qualifications) were also more likely to consider the adviser played a part in their learning progression. Around one in seven (15%) of customers who had not progressed in learning within the past six months thought their adviser could have done more to help them to start a course, and there was no significant difference by channel (unlike Year 3, when telephone customers were more likely to think so). The main ways that customers felt their adviser could have done more to help were:

- Giving the customer more information about courses (33%)
- Providing the customer with more general information about learning (22%)
- Giving the customer more specific careers advice (13%)
- Following up or calling back (12%)

- Offering the customer a wider range of options (12%).

Clearly National Careers Service advisers may be limited in what specific learning options they can advise, depending on the availability of appropriate courses in the customers' vicinity – but the areas where they could do more to encourage learning are in terms of following up, providing more specific careers advice, and giving customers more information about courses, generally.

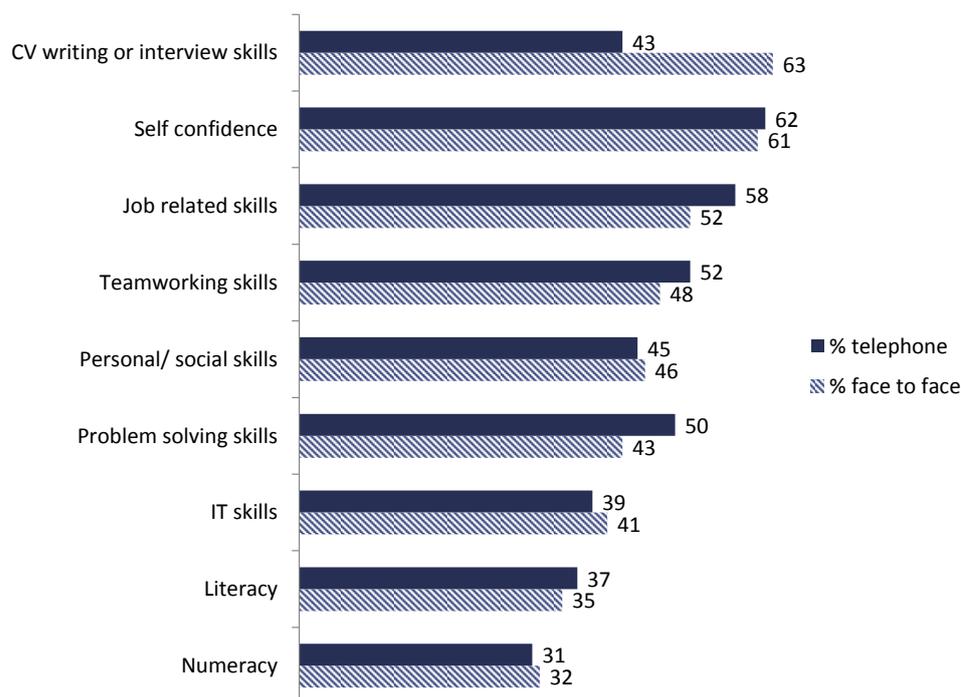
Three-in-five customers (61%) considered that they were now more likely to participate in any learning in future as a result of the information or advice they got from the National Careers Service. This was more common among:

- people with no or low qualifications below Level 2 (68%);
- 18-24 year old NEET young people (65%);
- young people aged 18-24 more generally (64%), compared with those aged over-25 (60%).

6.4 Personal added value among face-to-face and telephone customers

Overall 93% of face-to-face or telephone customers indicated that they had gained some form of Personal Added Value since their contact with the National Careers Service. The most common additions were improvements in CV writing or interview skills (61%), increased self-confidence (61%) and developing skills related to a current or future job (53%, an increase from 51% in Year 3).

Figure 6.6 shows that there were some key differences between customers who used different channels, in particular with those who used the face-to-face service more likely to have improved their CV or interview skills than people who accessed the service by telephone. Telephone customers themselves were more likely to report gaining job-related, team working or problem-solving skills. These differences are linked to the differing profiles in face-to-face versus telephone service users. More unemployed people access the face-to-face service, often referred by Jobcentre Plus, while more people already in work use the telephone service.

Figure 6.6: Skills and personal development outcomes

Base: All progression survey customers (5,066)

As a whole, young people aged 18-19 and 20-24 years old were consistently more likely than older people to report any personal development outcomes, in particular young people who were NEET. For example, seven-in-ten NEET young people reported improved CV writing or interview skills (72%) or increased self-confidence (71%), both higher than among customers overall. Other differences worth highlighting compared to the all-customer average were that:

- people with no or below Level 2 qualifications were more likely to consider they had improved their personal and social skills (49%), their literacy (46%) or their numeracy (40%);
- people whose first language was not English were more likely than average to consider they had gained in self-confidence (73%) or improved their literacy (56%);
- people aged 50 plus were more likely than average to rate improvements in their IT skills (45%).

People who reported gaining Personal Added Value since their contact with the National Careers Service six months before were far more likely to attribute this at least partly to their adviser than they were for employment or learning progression. Consistent with previous years and with other progression measures, face-to-face customers were more likely than telephone ones to attribute some of this role to their adviser, as were customers using telephone advice compared with telephone information.

6.5 Progression among online customers

Progression is measured somewhat differently among online customers, at three months after they completed the website satisfaction survey. Customers are likely to have had varying levels of interaction with the National Careers Service during that time, and of those who completed the progression survey, nearly three-in-ten (28%) had face-to-face contact and one-in-five (18%) had telephone contact with an adviser after they had used the website.

Almost all website visitors (91%) who completed the survey had achieved some form of progression three months on from their visit. This was most commonly learning progression (70%) although almost half (47%) had made progress in employment, either getting or improving a job.

Employment progression among website users

The main types of employment progression among website users were as follows (these figures are not mutually exclusive):

- 25% had progressed into new employment
- 19% had changed career
- 10% had achieved a promotion or pay increase
- 21% had started voluntary work.

These results are similar to Year 3. Almost half (47%) of the people who progressed in employment reported that the National Careers Service website had helped them to achieve this, equivalent to 22% or one-in-five progression customers who took part in the survey.

Learning progression among website users

The most common type of learning or training started by online customers since going on the website remains the same as Year 3; self-teaching to try and improve knowledge or skills without taking part in a formal course (51%). Again as in Year 3, significant minorities had undertaken a course leading to a qualification (28%), a course, instruction or tuition related to their interests, hobbies or personal development (22%), course work that they completed in their own time, other than homework (22%) or some other type of learning or training (34%)³. Overall, eight per cent of people who had visited the website had increased their highest qualification in the three months since they had used the website.

Over half (57%) of online customers felt that they were more likely to do learning in the future as a result of their visit to the website, and almost three-quarters (72%) felt that they would be likely to start learning in the next 12 months, including 42% who felt this was very

³ This sums to more than 100% as people may have done more than one type of learning and courses can fit into more than one category.

likely. Four-in-ten (40%) had opened a Lifelong Learning Account with the National Careers Service since their visit to the website. These are very similar findings to Year 3.

Soft outcomes and Personal Added Value among online customers

Like the telephone and face-to-face customers, website customers were asked if they had achieved one or more of the range of 'softer' outcomes since visiting the National Careers Service website known as 'Personal Added Value'.

Three-quarters of online customers (73%) experienced some form of personal added value in the three months following their visit to the website. Around three-in-five reported an increase in confidence about making decisions regarding their future (61%) or about planning their next career move (56%). Just over half reported feeling more confident about applying for jobs (53%) or courses/ training (52%).

Website users were asked about other benefits they may have experienced since their visit to the site three months previously.

- More interested in doing learning (64%)
- More aware of learning opportunities (66%)
- More aware of job and career opportunities (67%)
- More motivated to find work or to change their job (63%)
- Felt that their chances of finding a job had improved (33%), significantly higher than Year 3.

Most of these customers felt that the National Careers Website has contributed to their progression in these areas (65%, similar to Year 3).

6.6 Career management skills

Alongside satisfaction and progression, developing career management skills among its customers is the third key outcome area for the National Careers Service. This is the first year that career management skills have been examined specifically within the progression survey of face-to-face and telephone customers, utilising the existing questionnaire. To this end, the development of career management skills has been defined as follows:

- The customer has re-used the National Careers Service website or other source of advice, *acted on* the suggestion of their adviser, or followed up this advice by contacting another organisation;
- The customer has *activated* their Lifelong Learning Account;
- The customer has done any learning or training *for career-related reasons* – *informed by* discussion with the National Careers Service; or

- The customer has developed any job related skills, job application/CV skills or confidence – *informed by* discussion with the National Careers Service.
- The customer has improved their ability to make decisions about future careers or learning, has a better idea about where to look for information on jobs or on learning, has increased their motivation to find work or change career, or developed more confidence – *informed by* discussion with the National Careers Service.

Career management skills overall

Altogether, nine-in-ten (90%) face-to-face or telephone customers reported developing career management skills during the six months since their contact with the National Careers Service. This was consistent across different types of customer, with the following exceptions:

- Telephone information customers (86%) were less likely to report the development of career management skills than telephone advice (93%) or face-to-face ones (90%). This may be because they have a lighter-touch intervention but it may also be due to them being more mindful of career-management *before* they called the National Careers Service, as most telephone information customers were seeking advice about doing some job-related learning or training.
- Customers aged 50 plus (87%) were less likely to report building career management skills than younger customers aged 20-24 (92%).
- Customers who were mandated to the National Careers Service by Jobcentre Plus were also less likely to report building career management skills (75%). This is an area that the National Careers Service may want to focus on in future.

In the remainder of this section we focus on a selection of the changes reported by customers since their interaction with the National Careers Service, which equate to improvements in their career management skills.

Better awareness of possible work/career and learning opportunities

Three-quarters of face-to-face and telephone customers (77%) reported their awareness of work/ career opportunities had increased over the past six months. This includes 41% who felt it had increased a lot. Views were again fairly consistent across different types of customer and service channel did not appear to have any influence. What was more important was age, with 30% of those aged 50 plus reporting their awareness of work/ career opportunities had not increased at all, compared with just 14% of 18-24s and 21% of those aged 25-49.

Other key groups less likely than average (22%) to report their awareness of work/career opportunities had not increased were people with a disability (27%) and people who were mandated by Jobcentre Plus (38%).

Around three-quarters (77%) of face to face and telephone customers reported their awareness of learning or training opportunities had increased over the past six months. Again there were no differences according to service channel, and similar patterns by customer type. Older people aged 50 plus were more likely than others to think this had

not increased at all (31%, compared with 22% of those aged 25 to 49) as were people who were mandated by Jobcentre Plus (35%, versus 23% overall).

Increased motivation

Three-quarters (75%) of face-to-face and telephone customers reported that their motivation to find work or change career had improved in the past six months. Telephone advice customers (54%) and information customers (52%) were more likely to report that their motivation had increased a lot, compared to face-to-face customers (48%). Young people aged 18-19 (58%) and 20-24 (54%) were especially likely to report a large increase in motivation, as were those in learning (56%) and who were NEET at the time of their initial contact with the service (55%). Customers of non-white British origin (53%) or who did not speak English as their first language (54%) were also more likely than average to report that their motivation had increased a lot in the six months since they contacted the service.

Customers most likely to report no increase in their motivation over this period were those qualified at Level 4 or above (27%) – who may already have had high motivation in the first place – to be aged 50 plus (32%), or to have been mandated by Jobcentre Plus (40%).

More clarity and confidence about making career/ learning decisions

Three-quarters (76%) of face-to-face and telephone customers also reported that their ability to make decisions about the future in terms of careers, training or learning had improved over the past six months. One-quarter (23%) felt this had not improved at all. There was no difference by service channel, but a number of demographic differences emerged, as follows:

- Customers more likely than average to consider their ability to make career decisions had improved a lot tended to be younger (47% of 18-19 year olds and 45% of 20-24 year olds), in learning (51%), and were not white British (47%) or spoke English as an additional language (48%).
- Customers more likely than average to regard no improvement in their ability to make decisions about the future were a disparate group, and likely to have different reasons why they saw no improvement. They were more likely than average to be aged 50 plus (33%), to have been mandated to the National Careers Service by Jobcentre Plus (36%), or to be qualified at Level 4 or above (27%).

7. How do key results vary across National Careers Service contracting areas?

The face-to-face (and from October 2014, the telephone advice) elements of the National Careers Service are delivered through a number of different area-based contractors across the country. This chapter looks at area-based differences in Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and other relevant results, but starts by looking at the demographic differences in customer profile across the areas.

7.1 Overview of contracting changes from October 2014

From October 2014, the National Careers Service was re-configured under a new contract which meant that some area-based contractors were replaced, either by new providers or by providers who were already delivering the service in other regions.

A range of other changes was introduced from October 2014, the principal one being that area-based contractors moved away from purely delivering face-to-face advice and became responsible for the provision of advice by telephone, as well as diversifying into online and digital methods. The data presented here is predominantly based on face-to-face customers given that these still account for the vast majority of client contact.

7.2 Customer profile in different areas

Area-based contractor differences by age, gender, prior qualification level (specifically the proportion with qualifications below Level 2), ethnicity (specifically the proportion who were White British) and working status (specifically the proportion in work and the proportion unemployed and looking for work at the time of their contact with an adviser) are shown in Table 7.1 (results are shown as row percentages). Profiles which are significantly different to average among particular areas are highlighted.

As shown in Table 7.1, the customer profiles vary somewhat between areas. As in previous years, the London profile is particularly distinct, with a profile that consists of higher than average proportions of: those aged 25-49; higher qualified customers; and non-white British (only 28% of London customers were White British, compared with 73% among all area-based customers). London also had a much higher than average proportion of customers for whom English was not their first language (33% compared with an average of 13%).

Customers in both the North West sub-regions were the most likely to be unemployed and looking for work (75% and 74%). In contrast this applied to less than two-thirds of Thames Valley and South Central clients. The former had the highest proportion of clients in work (25%) while the latter had the highest proportion who were unable to work due to ill-health or disability (15%).

Table 7.1: Profile of customers by area-based contractor

Row percentage (%)	Base:	18-24	25-49	50+	Male	<L2	White British	In work	Unemployed
All	5,521	24	53	23	53	26	73	19	64
East Mids	543	27	50	23	49	24	74	16	68
Central Eastern	302	18	58	24	43	30	72	18	67
London	808	18	63	19	51	22	28	16	70
North East	467	25	47	27	57	26	92	19	68
NW (Greater Manchester)	260	23	50	28	57	32	87	10	74
NW (LCR, Cumbria and Lancs.)	287	20	50	31	50	33	88	10	75
Thames Valley	285	25	51	23	47	28	78	25	57
South East	472	19	52	30	48	31	80	14	70
South West	258	20	52	27	61	25	84	14	66
South Central	411	14	54	31	47	29	84	17	59
West Midlands	631	25	53	22	55	27	71	16	67
Yorks & Humber	797	31	44	25	57	29	83	16	73

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer satisfaction survey

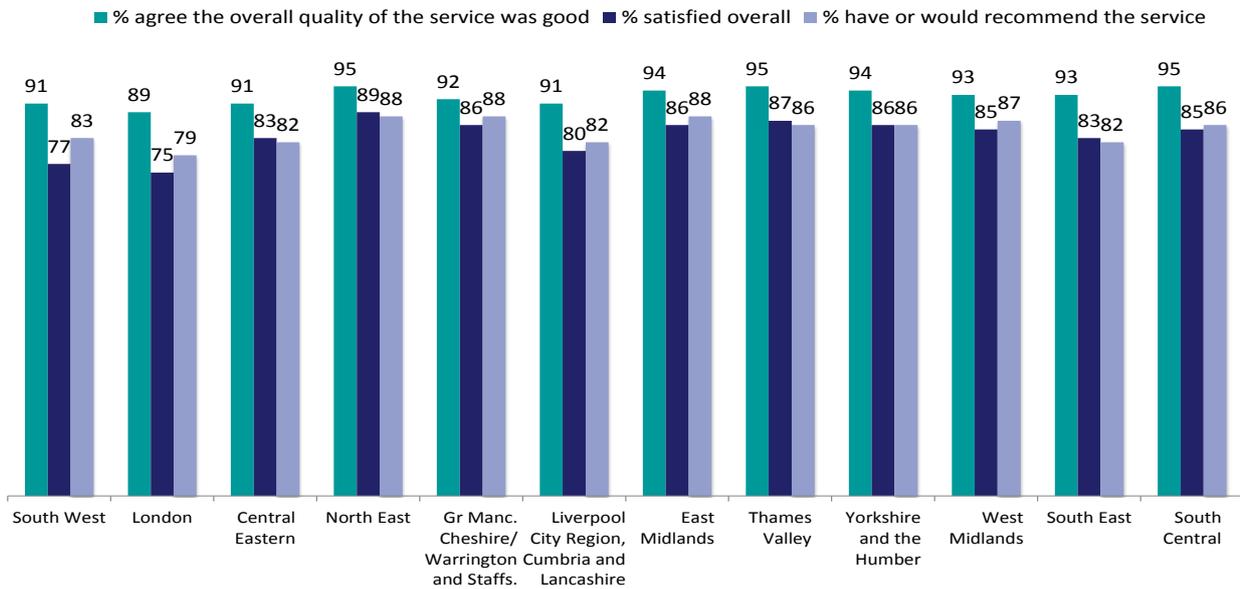
7.3 Satisfaction

Overall satisfaction

Seven of the contracting areas exceeded the average satisfaction level of 83%. The North East was the region with the highest satisfaction level (89%), closely followed by Thames Valley (87%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (86%). The South West and London were the regions where satisfaction was the lowest (77% and 75% respectively).

Satisfaction levels by area were related more closely to how good the customers rated the overall quality of the service, rather than to whether or not the customers would recommend it (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1: Satisfaction, perceived service quality and willingness to recommend the National Careers Service, by area

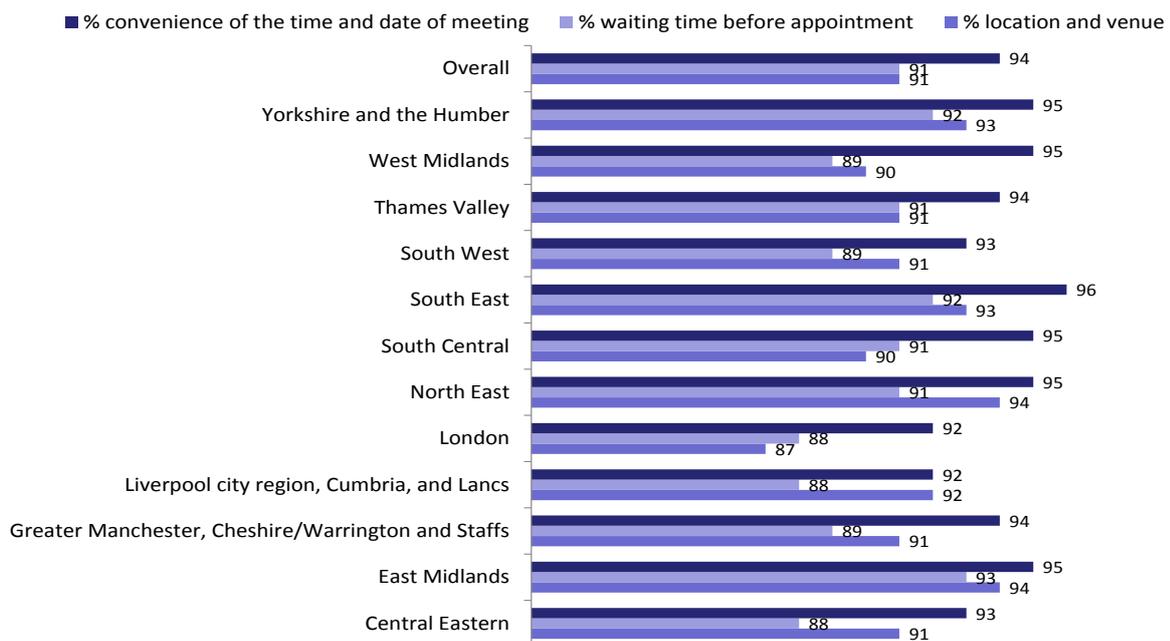


Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer satisfaction survey

Satisfaction with operational aspects

Examining the satisfaction levels on specific aspects of the service across regions, customers from North East, East Midlands, South East and Yorkshire and Humber were more satisfied in logistical aspects such as the location and venue, waiting time before the appointment, and the convenience of the time and date of the meeting (all three satisfaction levels rated above 91%). Customers in London were typically among the least satisfied with all three aspects (Figure 7.2 overleaf), in common with previous years.

Figure 7.2: Satisfaction with logistical/ operational elements of the service, by area



Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer satisfaction survey

Satisfaction with the adviser and with the information or advice received

Customers in the North East were consistently more satisfied with different aspects of the service than other regions (Table 7.2). The professionalism and helpfulness of the adviser, as well as the information and/or advice being clear and easy to understand, played the biggest role in contributing to their high satisfaction levels.

Table 7.2: Satisfaction with the adviser and the advice/information provided, by area

	All	CE	EM	NW -M	NW -L	L	NE	SC	SE	SW	TV	WM	YH
<i>Unweighted base</i>	5521	302	543	260	287	808	467	411	472	258	285	631	797
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Length of time with adviser	91	90	93	91	90	88	93	93	89	91	92	90	91
Professionalism of adviser	95	95	97	95	91	91	97	97	95	94	95	96	94
Helpfulness of adviser	92	92	95	92	89	86	95	95	93	92	94	92	93
Adviser knowledge	90	92	95	93	89	85	94	92	91	88	93	91	91
Adviser understood needs	90	89	91	91	91	84	94	92	89	90	94	90	92
IAG was clear/easy to understand	94	93	96	96	92	92	97	96	95	92	96	94	93
IAG was useful	88	86	89	91	85	84	91	89	86	84	90	88	90
Got IAG to make informed decision	85	85	87	86	83	81	90	83	86	85	87	87	87

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer satisfaction survey

7.3 Progression and career management skills

The vast majority of customers accessing the service in Year 4 (97%) experienced some form of positive outcome in the six months following their intervention (as discussed in Chapter 6). The main measures of progression are shown in Table 7.3, together with development of career management skills.

Table 7.3: Key progression measures and career management skills, by area

	All F2F	EM	CE	L	NE	NW GM	NW LCL	SE	SW DC,S ,D	SW W,G, W	WM	YH
<i>Unweighted base</i>	5066	217	196	368	97	256	557	329	135	323	330	383
Learning progression	70%	69%	70%	69%	72%	71%	72%	66%	73%	63%	69%	69%
Employment progression (excl. voluntary)	41%	38%	47%	41%	39%	40%	42%	46%	47%	38%	41%	45%
Personal Added Value	93%	93%	93%	94%	93%	94%	93%	90%	95%	92%	93%	94%
Any positive progression (excl. voluntary)	97%	97%	96%	97%	95%	97%	96%	94%	98%	96%	98%	98%
Career management skills	91%	90%	91%	87%	90%	91%	90%	88%	89%	92%	90%	92%

Source: Ipsos MORI, National Careers Service customer progression survey

Table 7.3 reveals relatively little variation in progression measures by area. This is to be expected given there has historically been little significant variation, and bearing in mind the reduced sample sizes this year. The key points to note are that learning progression was lower than average in the South East and South West (West of England, Gloucs and Wiltshire).



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